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Year after year, the Mediterranean and its vicinity is the focus of international attention. How events unfold in Mediterranean countries and their neighbours directly affects international relations on a global level. And international geopolitical tensions can always find their reflection somewhere in the Mediterranean. In recent months, the Mediterranean area has undergone a period of uncertainty; unrest and conflicts in the region have drawn attention from around the world thanks to their high impact and visibility. However, there are also less evident movements and transformations taking place that are of greater complexity, yet which, little by little, will determine the region's future.

Elements like the weakening of European democracy, climate change, unpromising economic prospects or the social transformations that accompany the digital era generate dynamics that will shape the future of the EuroMediterranean area in the coming years. Based on each edition's particular focus, the IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook analyses these areas that are so decisive in the region's evolution, both through its articles and the data and information contained in the annexes.

During the course of the next year, the Barcelona Process will commemorate its 25th anniversary. Beyond an assessment in terms of its success or failure (which we will look at in the Yearbook's next edition), at the time of its launch in 1995, I don't think that anyone could have imagined that 25 years later, the European Union, the main driver of the Process that used European leadership to transform EuroMediterranean relations, would be facing one of its worst crises, both externally and internally, and dwindling leadership capacity.

The complex crisis of the EU comprises one of the Keys of the Yearbook, since a strong and united EU is absolutely critical to progress in the development of the EuroMediterranean area. This has been a multi-sided European crisis, fuelled by a multitude of factors. Some of these originate outside of the EU, such as the economic crisis, the security crises – in terms of the challenges posed by Russia or the rise of Islamic terrorism –, or the refugee crisis. Furthermore, the election of President Trump has transformed Europe's long-standing American ally into an unpredictable, unilateral and often aggressive force with regard to EU interests. However, internal factors have also played a key role in this multiple crisis. Firstly, the economic and refugee crises have had an impact on Europe's principal of solidarity; and secondly, the priority of economic integration in Europe's evolution has failed to pave the way to advances in social integration. Meanwhile, the EU's common foreign policy is still relegated to the margins of the Union's most powerful countries' agendas. This multiplicity of factors has led to extreme situations like Brexit or dire threats to the EU’s future, with a weakening of democracy due, most notably, to the reorganization of the far right across Europe.

This rise in exclusionary nationalism and populisms is not a phenomenon unique to Europe, but rather a global trend. Notwithstanding their different nuances, they display an exacerbated unilateralism and wave of authoritarianism, exemplified in what has come to be known as the return of the “strongmen.” With examples at all levels – global (Trump, Putin), European (Orban, Salvini), and Mediterranean (Erdogan, Al-Sisi or Netanyahu) – this phenomenon comprises another of the keys of this edition of the Yearbook,
because of its role both on the global stage and in Mediterranean geopolitics.

Another of the Yearbook’s *Keys* is the topic of migration in the Mediterranean. Recent times have brought more attention than ever to the Mediterranean Sea’s nature as a border. European countries have proved themselves incapable of developing a common European migration policy, in turn fuelling the European crisis, and only succeed in reaching agreements on security issues. Meanwhile, the Mediterranean Sea continues to claim thousands of lives every year, as people try to cross the last frontier before arriving in Europe. Instability in sub-Saharan Africa, the Libyan crisis, European nationalisms, mounting xenophobia and the difficulties for NGOs all converge to create a highly volatile situation. Through the articles in the Yearbook, we analyse this situation, addressing both Europe’s perspective and its weight in public opinion across the region, and the role which corresponds to the countries in the southern Mediterranean.

Lastly, *Keys* also addresses a couple of central elements in Mediterranean geopolitics. On the one hand, there is Turkey’s role in the Mediterranean and its influence in EuroMediterranean politics; and on the other is the situation in Syria, which unfortunately still merits the Yearbook’s analysis. Eight years of war are evidence of the international community’s failure to find a solution to the conflict. Syria is not only the stage for civil war, but has also become the chessboard on which various interconnected geopolitical tensions are settled. Participants in this deadly game are world powers – the US and Russia –, and regional powers – Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey –, as well as the different players, movements and factions of the internal conflict. All these elements come together rendering a negotiated solution all but impossible.

In this edition of the Yearbook, the *Dossier* focuses on digital transformation in Mediterranean societies, especially in the southern countries. The transformations of the digital world, beyond their technical relevance, represent a ground-breaking change in that they reflect a new way of operating and understanding politics, social movements, the economy and information. As is always the case, the *Dossier* addresses the theme from different perspectives and with different sectors in mind. Firstly, there is an analysis of the impact of digitalization on geopolitics, cybersecurity and political or governmental propaganda. Moreover, it deals with the digital economy’s potential as a mechanism of convergence between countries, not forgetting the challenges it poses and the needs it implies, which include stepping up cooperation.

The second part of the *Dossier* is structured around the analysis of the social transformations in the digital era. Specifically, it analyses the changing use of digital tools in Arab social movements, their effect on civil society actions, the transnational dynamics favoured by these transformations or the way in which the media and social media have changed how information is obtained and disseminated. Finally, two articles focus on how digital transformations have had an impact on social movements driven by women and young people.

The short articles found in the *Panorama* section deal with a wide range of the most relevant issues in the Mediterranean area. It is impossible to cite them all here, but the most notable themes addressed include the resolution of the name dispute between Greece and North Macedonia (a dispute ending in an agreement between countries, at last); the protests in Algeria, which have led to the fall of Bouteflika and have opened a period of uncertainty and hope; trade relations with India; the gradual economic empowerment of women in Arab countries; the role of NATO in the Mediterranean; Russia’s energy politics and their geopolitical implications; the export of religious models and the expansion of Maghreb countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Lastly, we cannot end without mentioning the Yearbook’s Annexes. Placing information above all else, the maps, chronologies and statistics contained within these annexes help readers to draw comparisons and better understand and interpret the articles they have read. In the same way that data form the framework for analysing events in the Mediterranean area, these annexes are the basis for the Yearbook’s development.

As in all editions of the Yearbook, our aim is to satisfy the knowledge demands of a readership interested in the Mediterranean. Combining information and analysis, description and reflection, the Yearbook is an essential tool. It offers stakeholders and experts, as well as students and the general public, a broad, comprehensive and inescapable vision of the reality of the Mediterranean region.
Perspectives
I am feeling increasingly optimistic when debating the future of the Mediterranean. Against all odds, I am firmly convinced that the region is finally taking steps in order to reach out and live up to its potential. There are moments in history when we feel more optimistic, even when we are fully aware that not everything is possible and that nothing can be accomplished in the mere blink of an eye.

That was the case 25 years ago, when the Euro-Mediterranean region underwent a period of particularly high expectations. The Oslo Accords opened new perspectives for the resolution of the most dramatic stalemate in our region. The European Union was building a new neighbourhood policy that was far more comprehensive than the exclusively economic agreements that had prevailed through its Global Mediterranean Policy and Renewed Mediterranean Policy of the previous decades. There was a shared understanding that the entire region should come together and work on: (1) the definition of a common area of peace and stability at the Euro-Mediterranean level, through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue; (2) the construction of a zone of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free-trade area; (3) and the rapprochement between peoples through a social, cultural and human partnership aimed at encouraging understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies.

These were the objectives of the Barcelona Process, the most comprehensive effort of regional cooperation ever launched by the EU and its Mediterranean neighbours, which established the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and laid the foundations upon which the European Neighbourhood Policy would come to be edified.

25 years later, we have come to realize that many of the objectives of the Barcelona Process have yet to see the light of day. It nonetheless remains a remarkable milestone in our collective history and is deservedly recognized as a pivotal moment in which we decided, together, to promote a better future for the region.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is very proud to be the natural evolution of these inspirational moments, and we maintain our commitment to live up to the principles and objectives of Barcelona: building a common area of peace and stability, constructing a zone of shared prosperity and promoting a real social, cultural and human partnership.

Next year, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the UfM Secretariat will also celebrate the 10th anniversary of its establishment; a decade in which we believe we have contributed to the relaunching of Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation. Today we have consolidated the UfM as the platform for defining common agendas, for promoting regional dialogue processes and for supporting concrete cooperation projects that can have a positive impact on the lives of our citizens. Most importantly, we feel a renewed commitment on the part of our Member States, which are increasingly engaged in the organization’s activities and give a new impulse to its dialogue and cooperation. This allowed us, for instance, to launch the UfM Regional Forum, which has gathered our Member States’ Ministers of Foreign Affairs on an annual basis since 2015. Or to organize a successful UfM Trade Ministerial Meeting in March 2018, after an eight-year hiatus.
The number and comprehensive scope of UfM Ministerial meetings in recent years – over 25 in sectors as diverse as Employment and Labour, Women Empowerment, Trade, Energy, Water, Environment or Blue Economy – is yet further proof of Euro-Mediterranean countries’ commitment to dialogue as a way to promote a regional approach to their common challenges.

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Since we are increasingly ambitious in our objectives, we focus on guaranteeing that these meetings agree on concrete roadmaps or on common agendas that allow us to move forward on regional cooperation and integration. That was the case, for instance, of the Euro-Mediterranean Water Agenda, an essential framework for the collective management of one of our most precious assets and an instrument to advance our efforts in the protection of the environment in one of the regions most affected by the damaging effects of climate change. These are thematic areas that are at the core of the work developed by the UfM. Moreover, the UfM maintains a special focus on human development, particularly engaging in the promotion of Women and Youth. In gender issues, the well-established UfM Regional Dialogue on Women has been pushing for the full inclusion of young women in all political, social and economic spheres, feeding the debate on a number of pivotal issues and establishing a regional peer-review mechanism through the definition of clear indicators common to all Member States. Likewise, the UfM is currently preparing an ambitious Strategy on Youth and has been supporting youth activism in the region, namely through the empowerment of networks like the Mediterranean Youth Climate Network or the Mediterranean Youth for Water Network.

The reinforcement of regional integration, particularly through the promotion of trade and further economic cooperation, is an essential element for the socio-economic growth of the region. The UfM Business Fora and Conferences on Digital Economy or Creative Industries, to give recent examples, bolster the private sector’s important contribution to the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. Simultaneously, the UfM launched a comprehensive and multi-layered approach to tackle one of the most important challenges in the region, which is unemployment. The Med4Jobs initiative already supports 13 different projects in areas ranging from education and vocational training to job creation and support to small and medium-sized enterprises, which have proved an effective instrument in the improvement of our citizens’ socio-economic perspectives, particularly in the South.

These initiatives have only been developed thanks to the growing engagement of the UfM Member States, and particularly to the full commitment of the UfM Co-Presidency, led by Jordan and the European Commission. In the case of the latter, the active engagement of the Commission has been pivotal to deepening cooperation and increasing the synergies and coherence between the UfM agenda and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The way I see it, perspectives for the years to come are even more positive. We are seeing a new commitment on the part of our members to reinforcing cooperation ties and dialogue, as the region is facing a number of challenges that can only be tackled effectively at a regional level. That has motivated UfM Member States to further engage in regional dialogue, as clearly stated in the Roadmap for Action endorsed by Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 2017. Furthermore, sub-regional cooperation initiatives, whose efforts concur to the objectives of the UfM and have always enjoyed our full support, have also been relaunched and reinforced.

The Agadir Agreement, a comprehensive free trade agreement between Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, seems to be back on track, with new members Lebanon and Palestine in the final stages of accession. Given the regional interest of this ambitious
and important project, the UfM will be launching a series of technical training sessions and capacity building measures for signatory countries, which will be implemented in collaboration with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

Today we have consolidated the UfM as the platform for defining common agendas, for promoting regional dialogue processes and for supporting concrete cooperation projects that can have a positive impact on the lives of our citizens.

The Western Mediterranean Forum (5+5 Dialogue) is also stepping up its efforts, particularly after the recent Summit of the Two Shores in Marseille (23 and 24 June 2019), to boost cooperation between western Mediterranean countries by implementing projects that support human, economic and sustainable development in the region. The UfM, which already supported the activities of the 5+5 Dialogue in many of its thematic meetings, thereby guaranteeing the follow-up and implementation of its projects, has also been associated with this summit since an early stage. Given the positive impact that this process may have for the region, the UfM has not only participated in the different fora in the lead up to the summit and helped prepare and choose the projects submitted, but it has also organized a comprehensive conference under the title Shared views on key issues in the Mediterranean (Barcelona, 22 and 23 May 2019), where representatives from all UfM Member States could bring their worries and aspirations to the table in preparation for the summit. The UfM is also a member of the 5+5 Steering Committee and, as such, engages in the follow-up of the summit.

In the eastern part of the Mediterranean, we see the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) consolidating its efforts to promote regional cooperation, as the first ever High-Level Conference on BSEC-EU Cooperation (Brussels, 18 June 2019) clearly demonstrated. In their latest Ministerial meeting, with which the UfM Secretariat had the honour of being associated, BSEC welcomed a new member, North Macedonia, in a strong sign of its renewed vitality.

Also in the eastern Mediterranean, new efforts to cooperate in the joint management of gas reserves have led to the launching of a new cooperation mechanism between Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Israel, Jordan and Palestine: the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. The objective is to evolve into a full international organization to promote sub-regional cooperation, which hopefully will not remain focused on gas or markets, but will also include other sectors.

The pattern is clear. And the nomination of the Spanish Minister Josep Borrell for the post of High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will also concur to these positive dynamics. His new post will put him at the helm of the Union for the Mediterranean, as its Co-President from the North. I am fully convinced that his experience and long-time engagement with Mediterranean issues make him the most suitable person to steer the UfM to new heights, where our contribution to regional stability, socioeconomic growth and economic integration can be even more efficient, achieve bigger and better results and further contribute to our common objectives of peace and prosperity.
Keys
If one thing has become clear after eight years of war it is that the international community has unequivocally failed when it comes to finding a solution to the Syrian conflict. Despite international intervention being considered at one point, on the grounds of the responsibility to protect the civilian population (RtoP), the fact is that divisions within the Security Council prevented this from happening. The option of a negotiated solution was also unsuccessful, despite, at the outset, the 2012 Geneva Declaration and, later, Resolution 2254 in 2015 laying the foundations for a resolution of the conflict based on the formation of a caretaker government, the approval of a new Constitution and the holding of legislative and presidential elections with international oversight. Both proposals were based on constructive ambiguity, shedding little light on what would become of President Bashar al-Assad, which is the real Gordian knot of the problem.

The first stumbling block in finding a negotiated solution to the Syrian conflict was the intensification of geopolitical tensions. On the one hand, between the United States and Russia, and, on the other, between the regional powers, with Saudi Arabia and Iran leading the pack. This clash has given rise to a proxy war that has totally destabilized the Middle East. The polarization of ideologies has prevented any kind of détente between the parties involved in the conflict and, at the same time, has led to the intensification of sectarianism, with jihadist groups bursting onto the scene, such as the self-named Islamic State (IS) or the al-Nusra Front (now rebranded as the Front for the Conquest of the Levant). In this war by proxy, the regime has received the unconditional support of Iran and Russia, while opposition and rebel groups have been backed to some extent by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Emirates, as well as the US and certain European countries.

The problem has been further aggravated because the contenders in the Syrian conflict are guided by a zero-sum game logic, in which there can only be a winner and a loser. As a result, the middle ground is eliminated, leaving little room for negotiation or agreements as both parties are defending maximalist positions and believe they must win at all costs, any concessions, therefore, being out of the question.

The US and Russia: A New Cold War?

Added to the regional tensions is a changing international scenario in which the United States seems to be pulling out of the Middle East, while Russia is trying to make an impressive comeback. The military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, in the context of the global war on terror declared by George W. Bush after 9/11, ended in similar failures. Hence, Barack Obama’s reluctance to get actively involved in the turbulent waters of the Middle East. After the outbreak of the war in Syria, the US Administration followed an ambivalent policy, condemning Bashar al-Assad’s repressive tactics, but refusing to offer the military technology required by the rebels to repel the regime’s devastating airstrikes. Not even the use of chemical weapons on Ghouta in the summer of 2013, described by Obama himself as a red line, did anything to modify this position. The turning point came in the summer of 2014 with IS’ proclamation of the jihadist caliphate. This sparked the formation of an international coalition to halt the movement and an increase in military aid for the YPG (the Kurdish
People’s Protection Units), the backbone of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which defeated IS on the ground.

Added to the regional tensions is a changing international scenario in which the United States seems to be pulling out of the Middle East, while Russia is trying to make an impressive comeback.

After his arrival in the White House, Donald Trump made a great show of his will to reach an agreement with Russia to combat IS and find a solution to the Syrian conflict. On 11 November 2017, he declared: “We can save many, many, many lives by making a deal with Russia having to do with Syria.”1 Today, the North American Administration seems to have pushed Syria into the background and is focusing all its efforts on Iran. In the summer of 2018, the United States withdrew from the nuclear deal reached three years previous by the G5+1 and, a year later, imposed new economic sanctions on the Iranian regime, which it accuses of destabilizing the Middle East through its interference in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon, with its proxies and local allies. Reinstating sanctions forms part of a further-reaching strategy which entails turning up the pressure on the Iranian regime to strangle it economically. Trump believes this will force Iran to renegotiate the deal from a weak position, which, according to this logic, will lead to the country giving in to substantial concessions. It is also worth noting that Washington does not have sufficient resources to impose a Pax Americana in Syria. Despite President Trump having threatened on numerous occasions to withdraw the 2,000 US soldiers deployed in the country’s northeast, the fact is that the Kurdish card is the only one he can play in the future to have an influence in post-war Syria. American troops are stationed on the eastern banks of the Euphrates River, which is controlled by the YPG. The Kurdish militias have taken advantage of the fight against IS not just to impose their authority in Afrin, Kobane and Jazira, the three cantons of Rojava (Syrian Kurdistan), but also to spread to other predominantly Arab areas, like Raqqa, the former capital of the ephemeral jihadist caliphate, and thereby take control of the country’s main oil and gas fields, which are vital for guaranteeing the survival of Kurdish autonomy. With the YPG, the US is trying to put into practice what it did in Iraq in 1991, when it enforced no-fly zones to stop any kind of attempt by the Iraqi regime to use military force to recover Iraqi Kurdistan. This strategy is considered by the Syrian regime and its allies as a blatant violation of its sovereignty that calls into question its territorial integrity. With things as they are, Trump could settle for a Pax Russica that would put an end to the conflict, as long as it respects his interests, which include Iran withdrawing its troops from the Arab country and Rojava enjoying broad autonomy.

This all leads us to the conclusion that the only international actor capable of imposing a political solution to the Syrian conflict is Russia, a solution which would obviously not be an unbiased one and would imply the perpetuation of Bashar al-Assad’s rule. Since the decision was taken in September 2015 to intervene to avoid the regime’s collapse, Moscow’s influence in Syria and the Middle East has only gained in strength. Russia’s intervention has marked a sea change in the conflict, as since it entered the scene, government forces have recovered a large part of the territory that had been lost, to the extent that the regime now controls two-thirds of the country, with the remaining third in the hands of the US-protected YPG and, to a lesser extent, the diverse rebel factions (which include anything from the jihadist Victory Front, to the recently constituted National Front for Liberation). The Syrian conflict has allowed Russia to return to the Middle East, a hugely important area from a geopolitical standpoint, and to reclaim its prominence on the international panorama. It should be remembered that Moscow has two major military bases on Syrian soil. The bigger of the two is the Tartus naval facility, which is the Russian fleet’s only base throughout the Mediterranean. However, it has also taken

advantage of the situation to build the Khmeimim air base, which is Russia’s biggest outside of its borders. In addition, Russian state-run companies like Soyuzneftegaz have obtained lucrative contracts to exploit Syria’s hydrocarbon reserves over the coming decades, and Moscow is expected to take part in the country’s reconstruction, which, paradoxically, its own air force has helped to destroy during systematic air-strikes on rebel-held areas. This combination of factors has practically made Syria a national security issue for the Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Not only has Russia intervened militarily, but it has also brokered the Astana talks. Where the UN failed, Moscow has achieved certain success with the implementation of de-escalation zones which, despite repeated breaches, have contributed to calming the conflict. It has also managed to garner support from Iran and Turkey, two key actors in the area with troops stationed on Syrian soil, which have also agreed to sponsor the talks held in the Kazakh capital. The Sochi Summit held on 22 November 2017 revealed the understanding that exists between Moscow, Tehran and Ankara through the roadmap drafted to resolve the Syrian conflict.

Russia also maintains close ties with Israel, whose greatest priority is to prevent Iran having a permanent military presence on neighbouring soil, for which it has launched frequent attacks on Revolutionary Guard bases and their weapons depots. In fact, Russia would also be interested in restricting Iranian influence in post-war Syria, to get closer to the Gulf oil monarchies and, in particular, Saudi Arabia, Iran’s biggest rival in the region, whose economic contribution could be key to the reconstruction process. Putin is fully aware that for the Pax Russica to be successful, he needs the support of both Israel and the US, whose interests he needs to keep in mind. Moscow’s two red lines are keeping Assad in power and preserving Syria’s territorial integrity. Everything else is negotiable.

The Great Regional Game

The country that might come off worse from a possible Pax Russica agreed with the US and Israel is Iran. Like Russia, the Iranian regime decided to intervene militarily in Syria to try to prevent the fall of its strategically ally Bashar al-Assad. The survival of the Syrian President is key to guaranteeing the main supply route for Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shia political party and militant group, which stretches from Tehran to Beirut, passing through Baghdad and Damascus. In the opinion of the French political scientist Fatiha Dazi-Héni, “Syria is a major front in Tehran’s geostrategic competition with the United States, its cold war with Saudi Arabia and its war against Salafis and al-Qaeda affiliated groups, whose hatred of Shiism is well known. Tehran perceives the collapse of the Assad regime as an inauspicious move that could checkmate Hezbollah and the Islamic republic.”

Over the last eight years, Iran has lent its political, economic and military support to Bashar, which has been vital in keeping him in power amid a climate of growing internal opposition. As well as giving Syria lines of credit to the value of over 7 billion dollars (half of which is linked to the purchase of crude oil), Tehran has mobilized Hezbollah and other Iraqi, Afghan and Pakistani Shia militias who have been trained and armed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. This situation led Riad Hijab, the opposition leader and former Syrian Prime Minister to denounce that “Syria is occupied by the Iranian regime. The person who runs the country is not Bashar al-Assad but [Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps commander] Qassem Soleimani.” In fact, one of the Trump Administration’s main demands for lifting sanctions on Iran is precisely that it ends its proxy intervention in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen.

The economic crisis that Iran is undergoing as a result of the return of sanctions has forced it to freeze economic support for Bashar al-Assad, enabling Moscow to secure its position, to the detriment of Tehran. In fact, the Iranian foreign agenda is receiving less attention than its domestic one, which now dominates the country’s politics. Minimizing the extent to which sanctions are damaging Iran’s economy has become a priority and it has resumed its nuclear programme by boosting its uranium enrichment to levels prior to the pact with the G5+1. The economic crisis that Iran is undergoing as a result of the return of sanctions has forced it to freeze economic support for Bashar al-Assad, enabling Moscow to secure its position, to the detriment of Tehran. In fact, the Iranian foreign agenda is receiving less attention than its domestic one, which now dominates the country’s politics. Minimizing the extent to which sanctions are damaging Iran’s economy has become a priority and it has resumed its nuclear programme by boosting its uranium enrichment to levels prior to the pact with the G5+1. Therefore, the cost of Iran’s intervention far and away exceeds the returns it has so far yielded. Tehran is

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3 Al-Arabiyya, 11 February 2013.
hoping that the end of the war will not only allow it to establish permanent military bases on Syrian soil, but also to capitalize on the lucrative contracts it has so far signed, which, it is worth noting, includes the concession of a new mobile telephone company and the exploitation of Palmyra’s phosphate mines for a period of 99 years. Less certain is the construction of a 1,500-kilometre oil pipeline to the Mediterranean port of Baniyas to export Iranian oil, especially in a context of returning sanctions and the collapse of the Iranian economy. The US’ military presence in north eastern Syria poses a threat to all these projects. Furthermore, in recent months, Russia has taken important steps to limit Iran’s influence in Syria, in what could be read as a clear attempt to approach the Gulf oil monarchies, so they agree to partake in the country’s reconstruction.

The economic crisis that Iran is undergoing as a result of the return of sanctions has forced it to freeze economic support for Bashar al-Assad, enabling Moscow to secure its position in the Syrian conflict. The so-called Sunni bloc should also be included among the big losers of the Syrian conflict. This heterogeneous bloc, which includes Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Emirates, seems to have thrown in the towel once and for all and resigned themselves to Bashar al-Assad remaining in power. Throughout the eight years of war, the rivalry between the members themselves of this bloc has contributed to weakening the Syrian opposition, which is divided into myriad formations whose very survival depends directly on economic assistance from the Gulf oil monarchies. At the height of the conflict, there were reckoned to be over 1,000 different rebel groups, each dependent on its respective sponsor and their particular strategies. In the case of Saudi Arabia, intervention in the Syrian war was linked with the need to halt Iran’s regional influence, but also to stop the winds of change of the Arab Spring in their tracks. In this regard, it is worth remembering that the US military intervention in the Middle East following the 9/11 attacks had a high cost for Saudi Arabia, as the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq primarily benefited Iran, which saw two of its main regional rivals disappear. The fall of Bashar al-Assad would have allowed Riyadh to recover part of its lost territory and, at the same time, cut off Iranian influence in Lebanese politics through its sponsorship of Hezbollah.

The domino effect caused by the so-called Arab Spring was also something feared by Saudi Arabia. The demands for freedom, democracy and social justice were seen by Riyadh as an existential threat to the Saudi Monarchy. The large-scale popular mobilizations in Bahrain triggered a vigorous response through the sending of troops to brace the Khalifa dynasty. This did nothing to prevent demonstrations being held among Saudi Arabia’s Shia population, which were repressed through the execution of its organizers.

Saudia Arabia responded to Iran’s growing interventionism in the Middle East by stepping up sectarianism both inside and outside the kingdom. On a domestic scale, the Saudi regime emphasized its sectarian policies to “suppress domestic calls for political change, isolate the Shia minority and delay Islamist mobilization.”4 The aim was simply to divide the population along sectarian lines and, in particular, underscore the confessional divide between the Sunni majority and Shia minority. Externally, Saudi Arabia has tried to mobilize the Arab League and Islamic Conference in favour of its ideas, although it has failed to establish a Sunni military coalition to face up to Iran.

In light of the failure of the military option in Syria, the Sunni bloc has been forced to revise its strategy and has set out to normalize ties with Bashar al-Assad with the intention of distancing him from Iran. The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have reopened their embassies in Damascus, Jordan has resumed trade through the Nasib border crossing, Qatar has reestablished direct flights, Egypt has received Syria’s powerful security chief Ali Mamlouk and the Omani Foreign Affairs Minister has met with the Syrian President. All these moves have been accompanied by an intense debate as to whether the moment has arrived for the Arab League to readmit Syria into its

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ranks. This option is gaining increasing support from the likes of Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan and Algeria. As is often the case these days, Saudi Arabia will have the last word on the subject. In all likelihood, for a decision of such magnitude, prior consultation will be sought with the Trump Administration and there will be conditions to try to reduce Iranian influence in post-war Syria.

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This analysis would be incomplete without addressing Turkey’s position, whose errors in calculation have forced it to apply frequent shifts in its strategy. Turkey was one of the first countries to intervene in Syria and is probably the stakeholder that has paid most highly for its involvement in the conflict, due to the arrival of three million refugees on its territory, the intensification of the Kurdish conflict and the terrorist attacks on the tourism industry, as well as the disagreements with Russia and the US concerning the strategy to follow in Syria.

During these eight years, Ankara has gone from calling for al-Assad’s head to settling for establishing a buffer zone around the border to avoid it being controlled by the PYD’s Kurdish militants. Today, President Erdogan’s top priority is to stop a federal state from being established in which Rojava enjoys full autonomy. In an effort to counteract the PYD’s growing weight, Ankara launched the Olive Branch and Euphrates Shield military operations thanks to which it took control of Jarabulus, Azaz and Afrin, where its local allies have developed a systematic campaign to “repatriate” the Kurdish population and “ethnically reconfigure the predominantly Kurdish district” with the arrival of thousands of displaced Sunni Arabs, some of which are from former rebel regions. Ankara has progressively distanced itself from Washington and has been coordinating with Moscow and Tehran to search for a negotiated solution to the Syrian conflict through the Astana talks. In September 2018, Turkey and Russia signed a memorandum to instate a demilitarized zone on the border between the provinces of Hama, Aleppo and Idlib, which is still in place, despite the involved parties’ repeated breaches. Turkey’s main bargaining chip is its military presence in the border area and its alliance with different rebel groups connected with the National Front for Liberation. However, its position has steadily weakened as its local allies have lost ground. At the same time, its struggle against the YPG has given rise to a number of clashes with the Trump Administration. Hence, the only chance its interests will be considered in postwar Syria is if there is a Pax Russica which respects Syria’s territorial integrity and re-instates the centralized State, without offering significant concessions to the Kurdish minority.

A Pax Russica?

The Syrian conflict has become a hostage to regional geopolitics. As it stands today, the only stakeholder with the capacity to impose an agreement is Russia, although it would be no easy task, since the Pax Russica will have to take into account the interests of the main powers present in the country. For Moscow, it is essential that the agreement protects Bashar al-Assad and guarantees Syrian territorial integrity, demands also shared by Iran, a country which has backpedalled on its positions as a consequence of the reinstatement of trade sanctions. Turkey would agree to normalize relations with the Syrian regime if there is a commitment to neutralize the Kurdish militias and put an end to Rojava’s autonomy. Lastly, the Pax Russica will also require the approval of the US and Israel, who demand an end to Iran’s military presence. If he is able to meet the demands of such a diverse range of stakeholders, Putin will have managed to square the circle.

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Turkey in the Mediterranean: Influence on European Policies

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Whatever one might think about Europe’s recent policies in the Mediterranean, paradoxically, they have seldom truly taken Turkey into account, despite its being part of that vast geographical and geopolitical grouping. Republican Turkey has likewise rarely shown a strong commitment to the Mediterranean, undertaking only a few major initiatives in the region, except in cases of conflict. This dual lack of interest is a key factor in determining how Turkey has, or has not, influenced Europe’s Mediterranean policies. Given that, to date, Turkey’s influence has been quite limited on the whole, one must ask whether there are ways to overcome this situation and how it can be done.

The Contrasting Evolution of Turkish Perceptions of the Mediterranean

First, it is necessary to grasp Turkey’s relationship with the Mediterranean, which can only be done by looking to its long history. The Ottoman Empire was built progressively, following a logic of concentric circles. It was dismantled according to a symmetrically inverse logic, losing its territorial conquests one after the other. At the centre of this immense empire, whose power peaked in the 16th century, the Mediterranean had long been conceived of and experienced as a place of expansion and conquest. As the great historian Fernand Braudel recalls in his book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, the Mediterranean region was profoundly influenced at the time by the presence of the Ottoman Empire, which controlled more than 50% of the area of the coastal territories. However, the regions that had once made the Ottoman Empire powerful were also the source of its setbacks. Thus, at different times, the Mediterranean region is perceived in the Turkish collective political imagination as a vector of glory and success or, on the contrary, one of defeats and dark hours.

In 1923, Kemalist Turkey adopted a sort of geopolitical indifference towards the Mediterranean. As he repeatedly stated, Mustafa Kemal’s main goal was to westernize his country, which, at the time, meant Europeanizing it. Consequently, his approach towards foreign policy initiatives was, above all, continental and, thus, overland. This factor was even more important due to the strong distrust towards the Arab worlds, which Kemalist orthodoxy accused of having betrayed the Sublime Porte and of having been the puppet of imperialist plans in revolting against it. Despite a clear willingness to resume more fluid relations with the Arab worlds and reinsert the country within the Mediterranean area beginning in the 1960s, tensions with Greece and the successive Cypriot crises rendered that willingness largely ineffective. In the end, it was not until the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came into power in 2002, and, more specifically, Ahmet Davutoğlu’s political affirmation that

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1 Manuscript completed on 27 March 2019

2 Ahmet Davutoğlu was, successively, a lecturer on international relations, diplomatic adviser to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Foreign Affairs Minister, and Prime Minister, before falling into disgrace in 2016. His theories on foreign policy are most notably laid out in his most well-known work, *Strategic Depth: The International Position of Turkey*, published in 2001 [original title: *Stratejik Derinlik*. Istanbul: Küre Yay, 2001].
the Mediterranean fully regained its place in the considerations and plans of Turkish diplomacy. In Davutoğlu’s view, Turkey ultimately had to re-establish itself as a central power on the international chessboard, capitalizing on the strategic depth of its historical and geographical dimensions. Under this logic, the Mediterranean should be approached as a place of opportunities conducive to the implementation of multiple initiatives by Ankara. A very clearly articulated vision of the Mediterranean thus took shape, aimed at defending and promoting Turkish national interests. Indeed, in 2003-2004, Turkey began to show real activism in the eastern and southern Mediterranean towards many Arab states, most spectacularly in its rapprochement with Syria. The Arab uprisings of 2010-2011 posed a challenge to the Turkish political authorities, who, like many other powers, knew a moment of hesitation and doubt. Should they perpetuate narrow forms of cooperation with the established regimes or, on the contrary, support the growing number of protest movements? They chose the latter option and, in so doing, affirmed a political choice. Ankara would aim to establish a strategic focus with the forces claiming to represent political Islam, especially the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Given the changes that would soon take place in the Arab uprisings, this choice would prove to be a grave mistake and would lead to Turkey’s relative isolation.

The last factor of any framework for analysing Turkish policies in the Mediterranean is the fact that they are implemented in an environment that is partially perceived as a threat. The ruling circles of Turkey’s political authorities and diplomacy regard Cyprus, the Aegean Sea and unsettled disputes with Greece, and relations with Israel as threatening, confictive elements that must not be underestimated. In this brief sketch of Turkish perceptions of the Mediterranean region and the initiatives that Ankara can pursue there, the strictly European dimension is largely absent. A sort of decoupling of Turkey’s European plans and its policy towards the countries around the Mediterranean, especially on its southern and eastern shores, thus persists. Nevertheless, Turkish leaders are cognizant that the more the country can assert itself in the Mediterranean, the more it will be able to underscore its importance to the European Union (EU). Additionally, many countries bordering the Mediterranean may attach great importance to Turkey, as it is itself in a process of dialogue and negotiation with the EU and is thus tactically useful to ensuring that their own interests prevail.

A Critical Review of Europe’s Initiatives in the Mediterranean

The first contemporary Mediterranean partnership was launched in 1995 under the name “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.” More commonly referred to as the Barcelona Process, it brought together the 15 countries of the EU and 12 countries from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, including eight Arab states. The partnership was organized around three areas of activity: policy and security; economy and finance; and social and cultural aspects. The process’s keen intuition lay in its understanding of the inseparable nature of these three areas and of the impossibility of building balanced partnerships between the two shores of the Mediterranean should any of the constituent elements be missing.

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The limitations, however, soon became clear, not least because of the inability to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also due to the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in 2004, which changed the framework for EU countries’ relations with their neighbours. The aim was to create, through bilateral agreements, a periphery of states ruled by “good governance,” itself a concept conceived of by Europeans. The plan to pursue forms of multilateral cooperation based on shared objectives was thus progressively relegated to the back burner. Once partners, the countries of the European periphery became neighbours. The shift was not only semantic: the ENP, which has gradually replaced the Barcelona Process, was trimmed to the dyad of security and trade liberalization, far removed from the
Arab countries’ concerns, as trade opening alone is obviously not a development strategy in itself. The Barcelona Process was thus swiftly rendered ineffective. It was in this context that the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was created in 2008, at the initiative of France, with a view to giving new political impetus to cooperation between Mediterranean countries. But Nicolas Sarkozy’s proposal concealed an ulterior motive, which all even remotely informed observers quickly deciphered. Sarkozy, then still just a candidate in the French presidential election, had repeatedly expressed a strong opposition to the prospect of Turkey’s integration into the EU. The idea was thus to propose to Ankara a status that would allow it to enhance the value of its assets within the UfM as a sort of alternative to EU accession. However, the political manoeuvre was fairly crude and did not fool anyone, at least not the Turkish authorities.

Based on a union of projects with variable geometry, the UfM failed to produce the expected boost. Three negative factors were at play: the continued non-resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which blocked the implementation of efficient projects; the financial and economic crisis that rocked the EU, resulting in its stagnation; and the political instability due to the popular uprisings in several Arab countries beginning in 2011, which, de facto, thwarted the UfM’s ambitions.

Thus, the Mediterranean policies promoted by the EU failed to spark a true Mediterranean partnership. The EU’s inability to project itself as a strategic player and the problems the countries on the southern and eastern shores faced to ultimately take the path of resolute and equitable development clouded this prospect. This is compounded by the fact that, whilst the Arab states on the southern shore still have to meet European requirements, they do not, in turn, benefit from significant advances on the issues that are vital to them, in particular, the challenge of migratory issues. This asymmetry generates a sharp bitterness towards the EU, sinking the Mediterranean projects, which often fail to take concrete form.

In this situation, one might fear that the two shores of the Mediterranean would become increasingly less able to formulate a common vision and projects, and that the partner states would thus weigh the benefits and costs, which would, in future, favour other partners, such as the United States, Russia, India or China. That would mean that political, economic and security issues would not be handled by the regional actors most directly concerned. The challenge is for the states involved in this partnership to be able to build their strategic autonomy over time and be in a position to meet common challenges without suffering humiliation at the hands of foreign powers. These challenges will remain unchanged as long as the partners are not in a position to reactivate the initial three-pronged Barcelona approach. The partnership’s originality lay in a philosophy of action that sought to promote a holistic approach, integrating economic, environmental, political, social and security-related parameters. Unfortunately, this strategic vision is missing in the present stage, and the two shores seem to be growing farther apart rather than closer together.

**Incorporating European Policies into the Mediterranean through Concrete Initiatives**

It is in this context that the unique place that Turkey could occupy in Europe’s policies in the Mediterranean must be considered. This means opening new paths so that the relationship between the EU and Turkey can be part of a new positive horizon that gives meaning to specific initiatives. These considerations are not intended as a roadmap, but rather, much more modestly, a non-exhaustive set of avenues that should be pursued, developed or continued to give form to a will and a project.

European leaders advocate the creation of a reinforced, if not strategic, partnership with Turkey other than accession to the EU. This method has the merit of being clear and preventing fruitless and hypocritical convolutions, although the proposal regularly elicits negative reactions in Turkey. Nevertheless, whilst integrating Ankara into the prospect of a strategic partnership has some strengths, it will ultimately depend on the EU’s ability to project itself as a strategic player with real influence. That is why, given the uncertainty of achieving that, Turkish-European relations should be nurtured with other issues, lest they be stripped of all substance. In other words, how could this project be adapted at the Mediterranean level, which would undoubtedly be a stabilizing factor for the region?

From this perspective, energy issues should be a major area of cooperation. The European Union does
not possess gas and oil and it imports them heavily from Mediterranean states; Turkey, due to its geographical location, is a major energy hub. These structural factors should easily convince the parties to seek synergies and move forward more clearly on joint projects. That would moreover entail opening the “energy” chapter of the accession talks and, in so doing, would demonstrate a tangible willingness to look to the future through the creation of potential Mediterranean partnerships that would be beneficial to all parties.3 Turkey’s integration in this prospect would make sense and would probably amplify a real dynamic to Mediterranean projects on energy issues. From this vantage point, Cyprus takes on considerable importance: strong tensions exist between Turkey and the Greek part of the island over gas exploration in the eastern Mediterranean. These difficulties can be explained by the failure to resolve the Cypriot question, with regard to which the EU has proved powerless as a judge and party since the accession of only the Greek Cypriot part in 2004. In view of the challenges, and despite the difficulties, a European initiative of good offices would nevertheless be opportune, to diffuse the growing tensions and help unblock the situation. Not only would it allow the EU to once again become a player in the eastern Mediterranean sub-region, it would also meet Europe’s objective need to diversify its energy supply sources. Such initiatives would not only recreate a climate of trust conducive to recasting Euro-Turkish relations, they would also be mutually beneficial for the implementation of European projects in the Mediterranean. In addition to the aspects strictly related to gas and oil exploitation and transportation, for the EU, it would also be a chance to develop the strong potential for complementarity that exists with Turkey and to show that no one is obliged to accept the humiliating terms of the United States and its oil companies.

Another element of continuity to promote and deepen is management of the follow-up to the 16 March 2016 agreement, aimed at limiting and controlling the flow of migrants through Turkey. This agreement has been an undeniable quantitative success and has nearly completely stopped arrivals to the Greek coasts. Although many human rights organizations have denounced it for its cynicism, it has indisputably yielded tangible results and dramatically reduced migratory pressure on the European Union. Of course, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had ulterior political motives with regard to how he managed the agreement, but the same holds true for the Europeans, and, from this point of view, there is little place for moral judgments of Turkey here. Additionally, Turkey is committed to reforming its migratory policy: “Four objectives, in particular, have been set: participation in the control of the EU’s external borders, adoption of the same visa policy as the EU, conclusion of an agreement with the EU for the readmission of migrants from Turkish soil, and lifting of the geographical limitation of the 1951 Geneva Convention.”4 Of course, the implementation of these elements depends on the political will that will condition the future of Turkey-EU relations.

Turkey plays a pivotal role in the cooperation between law enforcement services in the fight against terrorist organizations, with their many-sided variations and mutations

In this regard, one complementary factor is the liberalization of the visa system for short-term stays by Turkish nationals. Particularly symbolic, the implementation of this scheme was conditional on compliance with 72 criteria according to a roadmap adopted on 16 December 2013. The European Commission considers that seven of these criteria have yet to be met, the most sensitive being the review of Turkish antiterrorism legislation, which many observers consider insufficiently precise and protective of fundamental rights. Whilst these requirements may seem

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3 The rules of the negotiation process between the EU and candidate states involve the opening of each of 35 chapters of the acquis communautaire, then their closure at the end of the negotiation period. This method is intended to enable the incorporation of Community law into the national law of each candidate country. However, the state of the EU’s negotiations with Turkey is quite deteriorated. For instance, no new chapters have been opened since June 2016. Even more worrying is the European Parliament’s vote, on 13 March 2019, in favour of suspending accession talks with Turkey.

legitimate, it is not very effective to lay them down in an overly threatening way to a country that has been the victim of multiple terrorist operations in recent years. It would probably be more effective to strike a compromise on this point in the exchanges with the Turkish authorities, in order ultimately to overcome the blockages. Although the definition of terrorism is, at best, vague in Turkey and can give rise to very broad interpretations, the emotional burden of this scourge in a country that has repeatedly been the victim of it must not be underestimated. Finally, it is a matter of not giving in to the fantasies of certain European political forces who believe that eliminating visas would automatically lead to a wave of immigration of Turkish origin, a scenario that no serious study supports.

More generally, the fight against terrorism is an example of necessary and effective cooperation between the EU and Turkey. Turkey plays a pivotal role in the cooperation between law enforcement services in the fight against terrorist organizations, with their many-sided variations and mutations. This common struggle exists and, to date, has proven its effectiveness; it should be perpetuated and reinforced. In addition to intelligence services in the narrowest sense, cooperation between the counter-terrorism hubs of the respective ministries of justice should probably be strengthened.

Finally, beyond the institutional or official spheres, imaginative solutions should be sought to create the conditions to improve communication between the two societies, which are gradually drifting apart. These actions should thus seek to promote a “multiplier effect,” either through the association of research centres or think tanks engaged in the analysis of Turkish politics and society in the EU and in Mediterranean countries. This also means a more proactive communication policy, underscoring the value of Turkish achievements in the EU or European ones in Turkey and, in particular, in the Mediterranean region. From this point of view, it would be useful to consider more specifically initiatives targeted at young people, who are penalized in Turkey by the blocking of university and academic exchanges due to the dismissal or suspension of many academics.

Conclusion

The need to rebuild the relationship with Turkey can probably only be met by recasting the European Union and the Mediterranean partnerships themselves. A new page must be written, and it seems more necessary than ever to rethink Turkey in the light of a revitalized and, therefore, more efficient European project.

In this regard, an increasingly unstable and worrying international situation is both the worst and best of things. On one hand, it can encourage the temptation to go it alone, a nostalgic return to the games of the 19th-century Concert of Europe or the old Cold War, which has no future. On the other hand, it is a call for imagination and an invitation to recreate or rethink old solidarities to help them meet the requirements of today’s globalized relations. Reshaping the EU’s Mediterranean policies to respect the diversity of peoples is one way to enable a new and thoughtful consideration of Turkey, without falling prey to condescension or contempt. Let us hope that the current leaders will be able to speak with each other and bring finesse or intuition to relations that teeter between formalism and anathemas on one side and excesses born of a feeling of being underestimated or misunderstood on the other.

Reshaping the EU’s Mediterranean policies to respect the diversity of peoples is one way to enable a new and thoughtful consideration of Turkey

It is impossible for the EU and Turkey not to have a common destiny. Therefore, more than ever before, it is necessary to dispel the distrust that hinders fluid relations with this country and, whether out of ignorance or weakness, prevents them from acquiring the density they need. Endowing them with a Mediterranean dimension would surely be a positive step.
The EU’s Multifaceted Crisis: April 2019

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A little over a decade ago, the European Union seemed to be a haven of peace and prosperity. Its challenges were constructive: how best to manage enlargement? How to implement the at long last validated Lisbon Treaty? How to reconcile with an America whose new President, Barack Obama, had charmed all of Europe? Then, suddenly, Europe found itself facing two violent shocks from abroad: in 2008, the subprime mortgage crisis unfurled from the United States across a swathe of European banks; at the same time, Vladimir Putin’s Russia started an actual war with Georgia. Two independent, but simultaneous disasters: the first raised questions about the future of growth; the second, about the strength of peace in Europe.

In 2008, these questions regarding Europe’s dual vulnerability were all the more destabilizing because the Union had just finished adapting to other recent shocks: enlargement following the demise of the USSR in 1991, the trans-Atlantic crisis of 2003 during the war in Iraq, and the renegotiation of the European institutions. Long before the economic crisis, Europeans had already been weakened by a three-fold crisis: an identity crisis (who is European? where should the EU’s borders stop?); an institutional crisis (how to operate with 25 and more countries?), and a strategic crisis (what about Europe’s autonomy in terms of security?). Ten years later, the European Union remains mired in these multiple crises of operation, growth, identity and, especially, meaning and purpose: what purpose does the Union serve in the 21st century? What does it mean to continue the adventure? European citizens are still waiting for answers. Even more troubling, a large portion of public opinion has moved beyond classic Eurosceptism to genuine Europhobia. Brexit is now threatening the Union with indefinite rot. In other words, Europe has rediscovered the tragedy of history and is still developing more or less effective or definitive crisis exit strategies.

Is globalization to blame, as one of its victims is European integration? Or is the Union’s poor internal governance at fault? Neither of these explanations is satisfactory on its own. In reality, Europe is the victim of external crises, crises that it suffers without having caused; however, their impact is all the stronger because this turbulence from abroad is exacerbated by the very inadequacies of European integration.

External Crises Profoundly Destabilize the European Union

The economic crisis, whose ups and downs continue to this day, was not originally a European crisis. It was an American crisis, caused by the madness of the American banking system and the greed of some bankers. Very quickly, it spread to Europe. European banks (in Ireland) holding “toxic” American securities were destabilized and European stocks plummeted alongside their American counterparts. Several European countries ignored their public deficits, accumulating huge levels of sovereign debt. The Central Bank, the European Commission and Germany demanded strict structural measures and greater restraint in public spending. The middle classes of many countries suffered and paid the price. Ten years later, Europe is still coping with the shock waves of that crisis from abroad.

This economic crisis exacerbated the structural effects of globalization. For three decades, this had
been excellent news for the vast majority of poor countries, which were finally entering the market. But it was a double-edged sword for developed countries, particularly, Europe and the United States. Globalization does indeed enrich rich countries overall, but it considerably increases the wealth differentials in these countries. Inequality soared. The middle classes, once the bedrock of democracy, discovered the risk of impoverishment and lost their traditional support for democratic liberalism. Frustration grew. Donald Trump was elected in the United States and populist and authoritarian movements advanced in Europe. European integration became the scapegoat for the misfortunes of the middle class.

Europe has rediscovered the tragedy of history and is still developing more or less effective or definitive crisis exit strategies

The second crisis to come from abroad concerns Europe’s security. Putin’s Russia decided to cast doubt on the European political order built at the end of the Cold War: first, in Georgia, in 2008, and then in Ukraine. The Russian army’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the more or less clandestine policy of destabilization of the eastern part of Ukraine by the Russian forces were a first in the European order since the end of the Cold War. Additionally, since 2015, Islamist terrorism has emerged as a major threat. In 2015, the European Counter-Terrorism Coordinator spoke of more than 3,000 young Europeans, men and women, who had been seduced by Daesh and were likely to leave for Syria. Four years later, in 2019, the defeat of the Islamic State and the loss of all its territories have not eliminated the risk of a resurgence of terrorist chaos against Europeans. Similarly, in 2015, the European Union was overwhelmed by hundreds of thousands of refugees, from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and many other war zones. These refugee flows, which were exceptionally high for two years, have declined considerably, but the perception remains of a security risk exclusive to a Europe whose borders have never been subject to collective protection.¹

More surprising, and perhaps more serious, within this series of external crises affecting Europe was the reversal of Europe’s American ally. In the name of “America first,” Trump has systematically questioned the very foundations of American power for the last century: economic liberalism on the one hand, political-military alliances on the other, all in the service of a universal democratic ideal. For the last three years, Europeans have had to cope with an American policy that is unpredictable, unilateral, dangerous and sometimes outright aggressive towards allies. Witness the threats of sanctions against European companies that do business with Iran, the blackmail of customs duties on European exports to the US, or the withdrawal from the INF Treaty on which part of Europe’s nuclear security is based. In a few short months, America became a destabilizing force. How not to worry? How not to see in this American drift the greatest shake-up of the West since the end of World War II? Especially since, at the same time, the United Kingdom, the steadfast pillar of American power in Europe, has decided to leave the Union.

Europe Is Also a Victim of Its Own Internal Dysfunction

These recent developments in the international context are not conducive to greater European integration: they weaken, divide, increase heterogeneity within the Union, and fuel a sense of permanent vulnerability, highlighting the inadequacy, if not powerlessness, of traditional European institutions and policies. The European system’s internal failures add to the sense of crisis and widespread malaise in the Union.

— *The betrayal of the principle of solidarity is a strong sign of European disintegration. Even as*

¹ Some will argue that these crises are not entirely external to Europe. At the economic level, neither the Greek nor the Spanish crisis was due to the American subprime mortgage crisis. At the same time, at the strategic level, it was the French and British who, in 2011, decided to intervene in Libya. All of this is true. However, the fact remains that the decade from 2008 to 2018 was, for Europeans, a decade of political and economic weakening due to shocks coming primarily from outside Europe.
economic solidarity worked, for better or worse, in 2010 to help solve the Greek economic crisis, political solidarity was failing in the refugee crisis: Europeans ultimately rejected the Commission’s proposals to equitably distribute refugees amongst Member States, national borders were re-established in the Schengen area, some states built walls, others, such as Poland and Hungary, categorically rejected the very principle of reception on their territory.

— **Democratic weakness** has been another serious failure of Europe in the 2000s. The European Union is constantly lowering the level of its internal democratic guard. In 1999, as a result of the participation of Jörg Haider’s FPO in the Schüssel government, Austria was suspended from certain European formations in the name of the far right’s incompatibility with European values and treaties. Twenty years later, governments openly advocate a certain xenophobia, nationalisms proliferate, and the far right is in power or has partnered with those in power in Austria, Italy, Hungary and Poland in a context of almost general impotence or indifference. Even violations of the rule of law in Poland or Hungary have led only to verbal remonstrances. Yet the defence of democracy and human rights against all types of authoritarianism is the very foundation of European integration.

— **Neglect of the social dimension** is one of the Union’s most serious shortcomings. From the outset, the objective of all Community policies was the creation, improvement and, ultimately, achievement of the market, first common, then single. An entire arsenal of decisions, directives and regulations has been negotiated and adopted to maximize economic convergence amongst Member States and ensure the optimal functioning of the markets. In contrast, the mission of social redistribution of the wealth produced has been left to the states alone. This founding division of labour (the Commission manages the market, the national governments handle the social aspects) worked perfectly when there was growth. For a decade, however, this engine has failed: growth is negligible, public finance is scarce. Populist and sovereigntist movements draw much of their popularity from this social degradation and growing inequality, accusing Europe of serving only the rich to the detriment of the losers of globalization.

— **At the external level, the primacy of nations and the EU’s political non-existence are a major vulnerability.** The initial basic contract of Europe, that of an unrelenting compromise between national sovereignties and the European general interest, seems to have been lost over time in favour of national assertions alone. Every European policy today thus reflects the smallest common interest of the 27 Member States. Nations may be becoming less and less effective at tackling the global challenges of globalization, but they increasingly present themselves as the only appropriate and legitimate level for decision-making, even as their relative weight in the hierarchy of global powers declines. The result of this obsession with national sovereignty is immediate: Europe’s political and physical non-existence in the major international debates has become caricatured. The Union’s foreign policy is non-existent, notwithstanding the numerous joint statements and official communiqués. In the bodies that run the world, whether at the IMF, the World Bank, or the G20, the EU as such does not exist, whilst about ten small European states are represented. In this global concert of nations, the Union is a committed spectator, but not a decision-maker.

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**Violations of the rule of law in Poland or Hungary have led only to verbal remonstrances. Yet the defence of democracy and human rights against all types of authoritarianism is the very foundation of European integration**

— **The rejection of power** is another historical aspect of European integration. During the Cold War, the delegation to the US of all strategic responsibility, in Europe and the world, was justified by the enormity of the Soviet communist threat. Loyal to NATO, the Europeans have thus unlearnt, for more than 60 years, how to deal with
power relations, assume diplomatic and military responsibilities and take charge of their own security. A quarter of a century after the end of the Cold War, with the disappearance of the collective threat and the growing uncertainty of the American ally’s loyalty, does this culture of strategic dependence on the US still make sense?

— Europe also suffers from a staggering communication deficit. Across the political spectrum, Europe’s political leaders have adopted two disastrous habits. The first is the exploitation of Europe in national strategies, to the point where European deadlines are used as opportunities to settle scores between local majority and opposition forces. Second, there is a tendency amongst national leaders to blame all ills on Europe, whilst at the same time taking credit for all successes, including those indebted to European action. In terms of political communication, the assimilation of “bad” with Brussels and “good” with the nation is one of the few cultures that the 27 Member States share and a uniformly devastating practice.

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— Last but not least, Brexit. At the time of writing, Brexit remains a delirious issue for the EU. It is the first time that a Member State has decided to leave. It is also the first time that Europe risks not only its wealth, its image, its credibility, but also, and especially, its meaning and common sense. British procrastination and the sacrosanct legalism of the European institutions are leading the EU to proceed without rhyme or reason, offering voters a grotesque prospect: vote for a parliament that will include members from Britain, which has just voted to exit the EU, which will leave in six months, but which, in the meantime, will have all the rights of a Member State, including the right to block a future for Europe in which it will not participate regardless! How to be excited about the Union in the face of such institutional delirium and such political cowardice on the part of the European heads of state? Whatever the outcome of this madness, the EU will largely have lost its political credibility.

Multiple Debates and Three Scenarios

On the eve of a new term of office, it is clear that Europe cannot continue as if nothing had happened. But whilst this is obvious, it is also the most difficult thing to do. Seventy years of success, habits, institutional networking and, especially, economic and monetary integration make a Copernican revolution in European integration highly unlikely. However, several major issues are still up for debate by Europe’s leaders, who will determine the future scenarios for the EU.

The first major debate has to do with the conditions for growth. What economic policy will be best able to ensure it in this new term of office? The pursuit of austerity, structural reforms, and fiscal discipline at the cost of growing social dissatisfaction? Or, on the contrary, should we focus on reinvigorating consumption, with investments in large traditional or future projects? The second debate concerns the Union’s priorities. Should it maintain the objective of deepening the single market and seeking an optimal market? Should we now add another, more social objective, one that combines the rules of economic liberalism with the need for social redistribution? Then there is the debate between the Union’s economic and political priorities: should Europe be a large, ever-expanding market to increase the common area of prosperity? Or should we also invest in the political arena, building a political Europe capable of defending its interests in the world and of participating in the future negotiations that will determine how globalization is governed? The fourth issue concerns the European method, and it is also decisive: should the gradual integration of policies (banking union, fiscal Europe, social Europe, foreign policy, common defence policy, etc.) continue or has the time come to renationalize EU policies (end of Schengen, exit from the euro, greater control by the European Council as compared to the Commission)? With regard to the pace of Eu-
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European integration, should we wait for everyone to agree on everything to implement a new policy, or should we increase the flexibility, the hard cores, the different speeds of participation? The sixth debate has to do with Europe’s security: should we maintain absolute dependence on NATO and rely on America to defend the EU’s interests in the world or should we, at the same time, build or reinforce the means for a real strategic autonomy for the EU? Depending on how the Member States respond to these major debates, the European Union could take on very different faces. Amongst the many possible scenarios, three seem decisive.

The first is continuity. Nothing changes. The European Union reforms its policies and principles in the margins, but continues to operate with the model defined six decades ago: the market is the objective, the Commission looks after the treaties, respect for the Maastricht criteria remains the basis for growth, enlargement to the Balkans continues, NATO remains the guarantor of Europe’s defence, the states decide the rest. This Europe of continuity is the most likely, as it reflects the natural tendencies of European and national leaders, but it is also the most fragile and the riskiest: indeed, it is this Europe that a good share of opinion no longer wants. It is this Europe that is finding it increasingly difficult, with globalization, to demonstrate its economic, political, social and strategic effectiveness each day.

The second more extreme scenario is disintegration and rupture. The European Union unravels, comes undone, disappears in the long run: either because other countries, after the United Kingdom, decide to leave the Union; because a majority of countries, led by populist and sovereigntist governments, decide to renationalize most of the common policies; or because the Union is overwhelmed by chaos following and because of Britain’s madness or malice, all of which could occur in a relatively short time. This scenario is not the most likely, but its likeliness of coming to pass is growing.

The third scenario is the most virtuous: it involves continuing to build Europe, but on the basis of deep and numerous reforms. To this end, the creation of a social line in the European budget would make it possible to mitigate the negative effects of globalization by allowing the affected middle classes to bounce back through vocational training and outflow from unemployment. Likewise, the conditions for European strategic sovereignty must be urgently created: who can say with certainty that NATO and American protection will continue to exist in 2030?

With regard to the European institutions, it is high time to give them a more political culture, a more political objective, rather than their current legal-technocratic culture, which is no longer enough.

The economic, strategic and political conditions that have allowed Europe to grow and develop for sixty years are over. The Cold War has ended. Europe has expanded considerably into the former communist bloc, economic globalization has disrupted the conditions for global growth, the West has lost its monopoly on power, etc. With regard to the trans-Atlantic relations that have underpinned the defence and security partnership between the US and Europe since 1949, it is an understatement to say that they have been plunged into a state of profound disarray with Trump’s rise to power. In other words, if it is to survive and again become convincing, Europe must respond to the economic, social, strategic and political realities of this first part of the 21st century, not the realities of the 1950s.²

² For a detailed analysis, see: GNESOTTO, Nicole. L’Europe indispensable. CNRS éditions, 2019.
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European Structural Power on the Wane? EU Foreign Policy between External and Internal Challenges

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The European Union’s (EU) foreign policy software needs updating: it appears to be increasingly out of sync with the operating system of international politics. At the turn of the millennium, many had hoped that the EU’s internal model and institutional nature – as a transnational multilateral governance platform based on international law and soft power – would make it well prepared for, and even a potential leader in, the world to come (Howorth, 2010). Yet, post-modern Europe has not seen the advent of the kind of post-Westphalian international system it had hoped for. Instead, the EU finds itself rather ill-equipped in the new era of great-power competition. Its distinctive approach to foreign policy, which has mainly consisted in the export of democratic governance and economic standards, is increasingly under strain at a time where it is both tested externally and contested internally.

This adaptation challenge is indeed made pressing by the evolving international context, as the EU and its Member States need not only to develop the means to pursue their interests globally, but also to push back against the growing tendency of world powers to encroach on Europe’s sovereignty (Leonard and Shapiro, 2019). Russia has taken the conflict over the geopolitical and geo-economic orientation of countries of the post-Soviet space from the Donbas to EU Member States’ domestic politics and informational spheres. China has invested in strategic chunks of European economies and has acquired, as such, significant political leverage. The United States is exploiting its position as Europe’s vital security provider to advance its economic and energy interests on the continent and beyond. More profoundly, under the Trump Administration, the US has increasingly brought into question some of the core principles of the international liberal order, of which it had been the main guarantor and which the EU still regards as the legitimate architecture of world politics.

The erosion of the ruled-based order and the pressure applied by external powers on Europe’s sovereignty constrains its ability to tackle the many security crises and risks present in its neighbourhood, from Ukraine to Syria and from Iran to Bosnia. The EU’s capacity to face off these mounting external challenges, resist geopolitical pressures and foster peace and security in its neighbourhood will, indeed, largely be mediated by its internal cohesion and resilience. Several recent internal developments are undermining both these aspects. In addition to potentially depriving the bloc of some of the UK’s strategic assets, Brexit is reverting the basis of what had been the vector of the EU’s transformative power, namely enlargement or enlargement-lite. The refugee crisis showcased and deepened Europe’s internal divisions and some of the policy responses (or lack thereof) cast a shadow on its soft power. The rise of populist political forces, who have made it to power in several EU Member States, has led to an over-prioritization of domestic politics over European compromise-building, as well as, in some instants, an erosion of the very rule of law norms and standards that the EU purports to promote abroad. All of

1 This article builds on research conducted in the framework of EULISTCO, a collaborative research project that has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 769886. The article solely reflects the author’s views.
these internal developments tend to put pressure on what had been the EU’s core, structural power strategy in external relations.

**EU Foreign Policy and Its Limits in the New World (Dis)order**

The EU disposes of a wide array of foreign policy tools, from military missions and economic sanctions to trade instruments, development aid and visa-free regimes. These tools can be put to use to handle relations with other international actors or to manage crises, but EU foreign policy is more profoundly about shaping (or attempting to shape) the political, economic, social and legal structures in which states and societies evolve and interact — to the extent that some authors have talked of “structural foreign policy” or of the EU as a “structural power” (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014). To protect and advance the interests, security and prosperity of its Member States and their citizens, and to influence actors and outcomes in its region and beyond, the EU seeks to promote certain norms, standards and organizing principles. In other words, EU foreign policy is largely about exporting the EU’s internal model to its external environment and, especially, its immediate neighbourhood. It is about shaping the structures of regional and international politics in the sense of its own constituting principles of multilateral legal order, democratic governance and free market economy.

In that sense, speaking of the EU as a “normative power” does not refer to it taking principled positions or “doing good,” but rather to its tendency to rely on norms as a currency of foreign policy. Promoting and exporting legal, political, economic and administrative norms to its neighbourhood through institution-building or institutional support is not just the vector of EU structural power, it is also a default solution for the EU, as adherence to these norms and principles is what unites and reunites Member States, while interests tend to be more specific and national. Put bluntly, rule of law principles are what EU Member States agree on and can rally around, much more than threat perceptions or economic interests. The EU remains, above all, a multi-level governance structure, meant to foster compromise and generate consensus among its Member States, and its foreign policy is not discharged of this task. As such, generating consensus among Member States represents both a condition for, and a goal of, EU foreign policy making. This has sometimes led the process of collective action to be regarded as being more important than actual outcome and impact.

To promote or support norms, organizing principles and institutions, the EU’s most comprehensive instrument has been the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The two regions generally designated as the eastern and southern neighbourhood have, indeed, been the most important for EU structural power objectives and in terms of EU foreign policy priorities.

The ENP aims to foster political, economic and administrative reforms in the countries bordering the EU by offering a series of financial, trade and mobility incentives. It largely relies on the evaluation tools, conditionality logic and even personnel of the enlargement policy, yet without offering the main and crucial incentive of EU membership. In that sense, the ENP not only incarnates the spearhead of EU foreign policy, it also incarnates some of its structural flaws, namely institutional path-dependency and an inability to go beyond the enlargement template.

The basis and patterns of EU foreign policy described above increasingly find themselves challenged in the emerging international context. This was maybe most evident in Ukraine, where Russia heavily pushed back against EU structural power by using economic coercion to deter Kiev from signing a free trade agreement with Brussels (Cadier, 2014). Vladimir Putin is, rather paradoxically, one of the few world leaders to have explicitly referred to the EU’s “normative power,” but to describe it as it as a threat. In the face of the uncertainties surrounding Ukraine’s geopolitical orientation brought upon by the fall of the Yanukovych regime, Russia eventually annexed Crimea and fostered armed rebellion in Eastern Ukraine. Thus, the EU went from negotiating a free trade agreement with Ukraine to “sleepwalking” into a geopolitical conflict with Russia, failing to read regional dynamics or anticipate Russia’s reaction by relying...

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2 The 16 countries included in the ENP are: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Syria, Palestine, Tunisia and Ukraine.
on an overly technical, institutional and inward-looking approach (Haukkala, 2016).

The EU’s structural foreign policy has hit walls in other regions as well. In the southern neighbourhood, state and non-state actors have sought to circumvent EU normative power or have challenged the political and economic systems in place, including those built around the organizing principles supported by the EU. More profoundly, the EU’s structural foreign policy reaches its limit when confronted with “areas of limited statehood,” that is, to zones where there is no central authority able to control the monopoly of violence, deliver public goods and implement or enforce the governance norms that the EU seeks to export (Börzel and Risse, 2018).

At the global level, by pulling out of non-proliferation and the global commons framework, such as the Iran deal or the Paris climate deal, and by contesting the legitimacy of international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization or UNESCO, the US feeds into this trend of contesting established rule-based orders.

In the southern neighbourhood, state and non-state actors have sought to circumvent EU normative power

The growing proclivity of Russia, China and the US to put their geopolitical weight behind contesting the norms, principles and institutions that the EU had sought to promote in its neighbourhood and, to a lesser extent, across the globe places important constraints on its structural foreign policy. This approach is, in addition, undermined by several internal developments.

Brexit and the Spectre of Dis-enlargement

It seems hard to gauge the potential effects of Brexit on EU foreign policy as the process is still ongoing and the concrete outcome still unknown. Referring to other policy areas and to the UK’s lukewarm engagement and numerous opt-outs, some have suggested that the consequences of seeing the UK leave the Union might, in fact, be limited. This may be most eloquently incarnated by the bon mot of former MEP Jean-Louis Bourlanges, who quipped that, before Brexit, the UK had one foot in and one foot out of the Union while, after Brexit, it will be the other way around. Things are, however, set to look somehow different for foreign policy.

The UK has undeniably been one of the Union’s foreign policy heavyweights: its departure will deprive the bloc of its diplomatic, economic and military resources and this is bound to undermine the EU’s international clout (Hill, 2019). London has one of the broadest diplomatic networks in the world, holds a permanent seat at the UN Security Council and retains privileged strategic ties in the Commonwealth and with the US. The UK has been the second biggest economy in the EU, the fourth largest contributor to the EU’s budget and a key purveyor of development aid around the globe. Lastly, the UK is, along with France, one of only two powers in the EU capable of rapidly and consequentially projecting military force and holding a nuclear deterrent.

Interestingly though, several analysts argue that the UK’s formal departure might not overly affect the outputs of EU security and defence policy and, maybe, not even London’s contribution to this policy. They notably anticipate that, since “Global Britain” is more a rhetorical device than a feasible strategy and as London will seek to overcome its damaged credibility and make up for lost institutional ties, the UK will retain major incentives to continue collaborating with – and maintaining its commitments to – other European countries in the fields of defence and security (Martill and Sus, 2018). If anything, one of the concrete impacts of Brexit has been, not the demise, but the acceleration of EU defence integration (albeit modest), notably through initiatives such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) or the European Defence Fund. In addition, with Brexit, London has set a precedent but not an example. Contrary to what many had feared, there seems to be no “domino effect.” Seeing the UK leaving the EU has not led other governments or political forces to follow or advocate the same path for their country. On the contrary, in the recent campaign for the European parliamentary elections many populist parties actually amended their rhetoric and political strategy from leaving to transforming the EU from within.

Brexit risks, however, constraining the EU’s structural foreign policy and diminishing its structural power.
Notably with reference to the waves of 2004 and 2007, enlargement is generally dubbed the EU’s “greatest foreign policy success.” Yet, except maybe for the Western Balkans and only in the medium to long-term, the EU’s enlargement policy has stalled, or is perhaps even dead. Some of the negative externalities of the recent waves of enlargement have already cast a shadow on the policy: the accession of Cyprus led to a paralysis of EU-NATO cooperation, the European Commission had to suspend EU funding to Bulgaria as reforms were incomplete, and there is, more generally, a realization, in the face of recent rule of law violations by Hungary or Poland, that EU institutions are rather helpless when a Member State that has already joined decides to do away with the EU’s core principles. Brexit seems bound to be yet another nail in the coffin of the EU’s enlargement policy: not only was the UK the Member State most supportive of the process, but Brexit signals more profoundly a reversal of what had been the EU’s main foreign policy dynamic. This dynamic had run its course by many accounts, but there is nevertheless a strong symbol in seeing the EU, for the first time, not enlarge but shrink.

The Refugee Crisis and Europe’s Normative Fracture

In 2015, the number of migrants – whether refugees fleeing wars, economic migrants or asylum seekers – reached unprecedented proportions, nearing 1.3 million. While such influx, displacements and relocation of populations certainly comes with complex human, logistical and societal issues, it is also the lack or uncoordinated nature of policy responses that contributed to turning the refugee crisis into an EU crisis. As emphasized by Anne-Marie Le Gloannec, this crisis has “demonstrated the paralysis of EU institutions and national governments, undermined solidarity between Member States and gnawed at the democratic fabric of Europe” (Le Gloannec, 2018). The Bulgarian political analyst Ivan Krastev went as far as labelling it “Europe’s 9/11.”

Some of the root causes of the EU’s failures in handling the refugee influx originate in foreign policy shortcomings. The EU and its Member States had largely sought to delegate the management of the bloc’s external borders to neighbouring countries. As such, their migration policies often found themselves at the mercy of the whims and deficits of unstable governments or authoritarian regimes. More profoundly, the political crisis around migration revealed and deepened fractures in and between European states and societies. It crystallized certain divisions into entrenched polarizations, between South and North (along lines already drawn by the euro crisis), and more acutely between East and West.

While it has failed to maintain cohesion and have a decisive imprint at the EU level on foreign policy dossiers of importance to central Europe (such as Russia or energy security), the Visegrad Group found its unity and negatively emerged as a political force in Europe around the rejection of refugee relocation schemes, which they saw as being forced upon them by western Europe (Kazharski, 2018). The migrant crisis has, indeed, “laid bare a widespread perception across central and eastern Europe that western Europe (and hence the EU) is trying to force on them a multicultural model of society which in their eyes has ‘entirely failed’” (Rupnik, 2016). A concrete political consequence of the crisis has been that populations in the region now place more faith in their national governments than in the EU, while the opposite was true before 2015 (Krastev, 2017).

The crisis did not only bring a fragmentation of – and fractures in – European polities and societies, but also led to a growing contestation of the model underpinning the EU’s normative power and, thereby, to its weakening. Essentially, national governments found themselves torn between, on the one hand, international norms and obligations and, on the other hand, national conditions, historical experiences, economic resources and societal resilience (Le Gloannec, 2018) - and they clearly prioritized the latter. The albeit temporary reinstatement of borders among Schengen countries cast a shadow on the free movement of persons, one of the EU’s core founding principles. The refugee crisis and its mishandling also created a political climate detrimental to any form of population mobility coming from outside the EU, and yet such mobility is one of the main vectors of the EU’s structural power in its neighbourhood, as testified by the leverage gained through the granting of visa-free regimes. More profoundly, many saw the migrant crisis and its consequences as a manifestation that the West’s (and Europe’s) “ambition to export its values and institutions has resulted in a
profound identity crisis in Western societies” (Krastev, 2017). Populist parties have been feeding off this identity crisis.

**The Rise of Populism and Contradictions of Illiberal Foreign Policy**

In recent years, the rise of populism has moved from being, simply, a trend in domestic and electoral politics, to becoming, in addition, a foreign policy matter. Populist parties have indeed risen to power in several EU Member States – such as Hungary, Austria, Poland or Italy – and thus hold the reins of their countries’ European and foreign policies. This is to such an extent that, in the face of this trend, analysts are endeavouring to picture how an “illiberal Europe” might (or might not) work (Grabbe and Lehne, 2018). To anticipate the concrete implications that the advent of populist governments might have on EU foreign policy, there is no need to engage in scenario-building or prospective analysis, however. It is sufficient to consider how those already in office have handled national foreign policy making.

Contrary to how sensationalist (or partisan) claims might have it, populist governments do not adopt reckless, devil-may-care attitudes in international affairs, nor necessarily bring about revolutionary changes in foreign policy. In spite of their radical political rhetoric at home, Hungary’s Viktor Orban and Italy’s Matteo Salvini have not fundamentally altered their countries’ positions in NATO or towards Russia. In addition, populists do not adopt distinctive or common ideas when it comes to foreign policy. Populist parties from the far left and the far right tend, for instance, to disagree on migration or military operations abroad, but they respectively share some views on these dossiers with various mainstream parties. Similarly, several populist parties display pro-Russian preferences, although this is not the case of Poland’s Law and Justice party, which, on the contrary, is one of the most confrontational towards Moscow. The fact that populist parties do not appear overly committed to certain ideas in foreign affairs is exemplified by their readiness to strike rather improbable diplomatic alliances – such as between Orban and Salvini on migration – or to adopt temporary stances which contradict their long-standing positions – such as when the former Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski threatened to veto Ukraine’s (future and hypothetical) accession to the EU.

More than their ideas, what is distinctive of populists in foreign policy is their style (Cadier, 2019). Whether understood as an ideology, a discourse or a strategy, populism can be understood as a political logic that sees society as being fundamentally structured by an opposition between a “pure people” and a “corrupt elite.” This translates into anti-pluralist and anti-elitist postures, as well as into a tendency to perceive policy making as a common-sense application of common will (Müller, 2016). This political practice spills over into foreign policy in several ways.

More than their ideas, what is distinctive of populists in foreign policy is their style.

First, populists’ anti-pluralism often leads them to regard foreign policy as the continuation of domestic politics by other means, that is as a way either to attack their current political opposition or to distinguish themselves from the previous government. Not only did Poland’s Law and Justice make the country the only Member State that opposed Donald Tusk’s re-election as President of the European Council, its Foreign Minister went as far as denouncing the election as being “rigged.” 4 Second, populists’ distinctive communication style, their anti-elitism and claim to conduct foreign policy in the name of “the people,” often leads them to disregard diplomatic codes and norms and to overlook diplomatic expertise. Matteo Salvini’s diplomacy is, in this regard, a case in point. Third, to elude the contradiction of becoming themselves the “elites” by acceding to power, populists claim that old or foreign elites are (still) active behind the scene, which leads them to indulge in conspiracy theories. For instance, in the summer of 2017, the former Polish Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz described the student protests against his govern-

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3 See: Verbeek and Zaslove, 2015; Dennison and Pardijs, 2016.

ment’s reform of the justice system as a “hybrid war” being waged against his country. This peculiar populist style in foreign policy making could have implications both for the process and the substance of EU foreign policy (Cadier, 2019). On the one hand, by over-prioritizing domestic politics and by showing a proclivity for “undiplomatic” diplomacy and conspiracy theories, governing populist parties risk further complicating consensus-seeking and compromise-building at the EU level. Yet, EU Member States’ ability to act collectively – and the mere possibility of an EU foreign policy – depends precisely on this process. On the other hand, the fact that some EU Member States bring into question some of the rule of law standards and norms of democratic governance at home risks weakening the EU’s legitimacy in exporting them. As such, maybe even more than Brexit or the refugee crisis, the rise of populism is likely to cast a shadow on the EU’s structural power.

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The humanitarian crisis that originated from the Syrian conflict has posed a great challenge for the countries of the EU. It is undoubtedly a milestone in the mandates of the Juncker Commission and Donald Tusk’s EU Council Presidency and has been marked by the varying responses of the Member States. In all likelihood, the result of these responses will be partially reflected in the result of the May 2019 European elections. Almost all the signs suggest that both the composition of the Parliament and that of the Commission will be marked by the consequences of the management of refugees and the discourses on identity that are resounding around European ministries with gathering strength.

It is widely understood that the European Union’s development has been based on successive crises and reforms and counter-reforms of the treaties which enable Europe’s trustworthy governance. However, it is perhaps since the Constitutional Treaty failed in 2005 until the present day when European institutionality has most had to deal with multiple crises occurring at the same time. The approval of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 was the recognition of a failure and attempt to rescue a federalizing project reeling from a mortal wound inflicted by the French and Dutch rejection. The incorporation of the central and eastern European states into the community space did nothing to help things progress, due to the number of countries and the problems associated with a complicated transition.

After, or rather in parallel with, Lisbon, during the last three months of 2007, the effects of the eurozone crisis began to be felt. The global economic crisis had a considerable impact on all the Member States, but especially those of southern Europe, particularly Spain and Greece, and, to a lesser extent, Portugal. Bailouts of different natures were implemented, along with the so-called “austerity” policies, which left deep wounds in the societies they affected and produced levels of social inequalities on the Old Continent unheard of since the Second World War. Welfare states began to languish, endangering a social peace that had miraculously been maintained for more than 30 years. And then came Tahrir, 15M, Occupy Wall Street and many other citizen movements demanding democratic regeneration.

In the EU’s neighbourhood these have been years of intense political and social upheaval. The Maidan protests and the end of cooperation with Russia on the eastern border. The misleadingly-named Arab springs, from Tunisia to Syria, Libya to Egypt on the southern border and the arrival of people fleeing the conflicts. These conflicts in the east and the south of the community borders brought into question how the neighbourhood was being managed from Brussels and the European capitals.

And it was in this context, with a notably absent strategic and geopolitical reading of both the internal and external dimension of the situation, that the EU found itself with masses of people waiting at the entrance to the oasis to enjoy the rights symbolized by the 12 gold stars on a blue background. The humanitarian crisis reached Europe in 2015, following a long and con-
voluted journey which began in 2011 and passed through countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Libya and Turkey, while Brussels and its leaders looked on with apathy and inaction.

The Dilemmas of the Development of a Common European Immigration and Asylum Policy

So it was after 2015 that the debate on how migration and asylum policies should be coordinated from the EU began to intensify. Although it is true that 2019 marks 20 years since the beginning of the development of a European policy on this matter, it would also be true to say that little progress has been made in that time (Pinyol-Jiménez, 2019).

The issue of managing human mobility is, perhaps, one of the most complex of all. It is a phenomenon which is difficult to tackle insomuch that it directly affects the basic principle of states’ sovereignty over access to their territory. This logic holds true for voluntary migration, but not for forced migration, such as for asylum seekers and refugees. In this second case, signatory states to the Geneva Convention have the obligation to manage asylum applications as laid down in international law.

These conflicts in the east and the south of the community borders brought into question how the neighbourhood was being managed from Brussels and the European capitals

In the case of the EU, the problem is even more complicated, since certain competences in the area of migration and asylum have been shifted from the Member States towards the supranational body, the Commission. This situation generates a certain amount of confusion regarding the clarity of competences in specific areas, since these are shared between the states and the Commission. Europe’s regulatory capacity is limited to the design of a legislative framework which is later developed and implemented by each one of the Member States.

It is in this context of unclear competences, ill-defined concepts and obligations, an EU in institutional and political crisis, in which major north/south and east/west divides have been opened, and masses of refugees arriving at the Schengen borders seeking international protection, that the question has had to be addressed of what to do and how to do it.

Faced with the dilemma of managing refugees from the heart of the EU, different approaches have been proposed, each accompanied by its respective implementation plan. To date, however, none of them have approached the phenomenon of human mobility as an inevitable fact in the context of globalization. The different ideas that have been put on the table have opted for offering partial responses. These, should they be put into practice, will not only fail to resolve the problem of managing people in movement, but will also fuel anti-immigration and populist discourses, as none of them resolve the central issue, which is how to manage mobility.

It is likely that the different positions in relation to the European Agenda on Migration (2015), and the subsequent proposal for refugee quotas adopted by the Member States, has been the clearest sign of the procedural crisis and the crisis in the political direction to follow in the context of the EU (Ferrero-Turrión, 2016).

The different approaches to the humanitarian crisis allow an almost Cartesian division of the EU today, bringing us face to face with the real diversity of Europe. Not only can the traditional divide still be observed between the countries of the North and those of the South, or, effectively, host and asylum countries, but there is also a new group of countries offering a new interpretation on how to manage the migratory phenomenon; those which have joined the EU since 2004. So it seems reasonable to assume that to advance in the development of a European migratory architecture, it is crucial to reach an agreement between what we might call the Europes of Migration. These Europes can be defined both by their historical approaches to the migratory phenomenon, and by their geographical distribution (Ferrero-Turrión, 2018).

Central Europe has been the traditional destination for foreign workers, but also for asylum seekers. A large part of its economic development depends on them. The Scandinavian countries, for their part, have historically received asylum seekers and have the ca-
The EU Multifaceted Crisis

IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook 2019

 capacies, infrastructure and civic culture needed to manage this. Then, we have the countries of the South, traditionally countries of emigration, converted much more recently into reception countries due to the economic boom in the early 21st century. Furthermore, these countries are located at the EU’s external borders. Lastly, are the eastern European countries, which have become the EU’s eastern border following their EU accession in 2004. Despite the fact that in this geographic area there have always been internal migratory movements, diversity is seen as being linked with national and transnational minorities which originate from the same region. This is the fundamental reason behind the presence of large numbers of economic migrants of Slavic origin in the Visegrad countries. Like the case of central Europe, these Slavic migrants are their economic drivers and are what they call “our migrants.”

In this context, the only way of reaching an agreement on the development of a truly European migration policy is finding consensus between these four approaches and all-encompassing ways of understanding migratory processes. Considering this as our premise, it is also essential that clear limits are established for the negotiations, which can only be those laid down by international and European law, in other words, the rule of law, as approved by all EU Member States on accession. Once these limits have been recognized, as in any negotiation, the different interests must be put on the table of the European Council, so whoever is sitting around that table and whatever balances of power arise from this will be decisive for the future.

Today, what we have observed has been the constant dodges of the Member States regarding the implementation of a real solution to managing migratory flows and the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) (Sanahuja, 2016). The agreements they have managed to reach rest exclusively on the premise that migration is a phenomenon that affects the security of host societies. This approach overlooks other essential questions, such as the ordered management of migratory flows or holistic and inclusive integration policies. For the time being, attention has been focused on just one of the components of migratory policy: border control and the persecution of irregularities. The underlying aim is to halt the flows of migrants and refugees heading for the EU, an aim approached through different areas: border externalization and securitization and the criminalization of assistance. The tools that have been used to put this idea into practice are based on dialogue with the countries of origin and transit (departure) through incentives linked with development cooperation.

It is surprising to observe the regression generated by this strategy to contain flows. Traditionally, the EU has always implemented immigration policies towards third country nationals linked strictly to the control of departures from their countries of origin. The bilateral agreements signed by Spain during the first five years of this century addressed this question regarding the basis of mutual cooperation between origin, transit and destination countries, but development aid was never conditioned by this issue. In fact, the proposal to link both areas, migration and development, was put on the table during the Seville European Council held during the Spanish Presidency. The result of the vote in the Council was the proposal’s rejection.

The different ideas that have been put on the table have opted for offering partial responses. These, should they be put into practice, will not only fail to resolve the problem of managing people in movement, but will also fuel anti-immigration and populist discourses.

Today, however, the decisions adopted by the Council are drifting in the opposite direction. Far from continuing with a doctrine that refused to apply positive conditionality to development policies, the path being taken leads in the opposite direction. It is staggering to see that the adoption of such an approach does not correspond with extensive empirical research that has clearly shown that far from halting migration, development cooperation policies create better conditions for departure from developing countries (OCDE; OIT).
The European Debate in the Context of the Humanitarian Crisis (2015-2016)

The debate on migration policy in the EU is nothing new, although it is true that the European Council has changed its approach to the issue. To understand the agreements adopted it is essential to understand the context in which they were reached. During 2015 and 2016, the EU was in a situation of internal collapse, partly resulting from various factors: the institutional crisis triggered by Brexit, an economic and social crisis which led to an increase in populist and Eurosceptic positions and the failing of the European Neighbourhood Policy on the eastern border as a consequence of the Ukrainian conflict. The arrivals of people seeking international protection also began to reveal the EU’s incapacity to govern its southern border.

In the different European Councils, these four matters had to be dealt with at the same time, which gave rise to constant negotiations and positions in the interest of nations and regions. The Baltic states and Poland, together with Sweden, advocated strengthening the eastern border through the deployment of NATO troops; France and Germany were trying to find a solution to Brexit; the presence of Eurosceptic and anti-immigration/Islamophobic movements increased in the public arena throughout the continent; and Greece and Italy appealed to European solidarity in managing the migration flows. Tensions between the divided interests of the southern and eastern neighbourhoods increased. And, meanwhile, a group of countries, known as the Visegrad Group (Czech Rep., Slovakia, Hungary, Poland) unified their positions on how to approach the migration issue. Although the four Visegrad countries have different positions regarding how a democracy should operate and their approaches towards the EU, with different levels of confrontation with Brussels, they decided to set up a compact group to negotiate the migration issue from a strong position. They all agreed on rejecting the mandatory refugee quotas, increasing security and bolstering the EU’s external borders. They knew that if they worked together as a group they would have greater clout and enhanced capacities to lead political positions in Europe with the support of other countries. And they were right (Ferrero-Turrón, 2018).

In the June 2015 European Council, the Juncker Commission proposed a redefinition of an already existing mechanism in article 78.3 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU, which stipulated "In the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterized by a sudden inflow of nationals from third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, may adopt provisional measures for the benefits of the Member State(s) concerned. It shall act after consulting the European Parliament." This legal basis, therefore, allowed for the introduction of the so-called resettlement and relocation quotas, which, in any case, would already have been accepted by the group of Member States.

The conflict between the Council President Donald Tusk and the President of the Commission Jean Claude Juncker on the mandatory nature, or not, of the quotas is perhaps the episode which is most representative of the tensions between the Member States. The positions on whether or not the resettlement and relocation quotas should be voluntary polarized the debate. The June 2015 European Council will be remembered for the heated discussion between the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and the Prime Minister of Latvia Laimdota Straujuma on migration and the priority between the southern and eastern borders. "If this is your idea of Europe, you can keep it. Either there’s solidarity or don’t waste our time," Renzi told his counterparts. In the end, voluntary quotas were approved as a "temporary and exceptional" mechanism to help refugees in Italy and Greece.

The Conclusions of this Council laid down the conditions for the distribution in accordance with "objective, quantifiable and verifiable criteria that reflect the

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capacity of the Member States to absorb and integrate refugees.” The indicators used for establishing quotas were population size, absorption capacity and GDP, to ensure good integration into economic structures. With this distribution, countries like France and Germany were obliged to accept around 15-20% of the total number of refugees; while Romania and Hungary, for example, were allocated 4% and 2% respectively. The Member States committed to 40,000 resettlements of people coming from Italy, Greece and Hungary in a period of two years.

In the next informal meeting of Heads of State and Government of the EU in September 2015, negotiations continued on the measures to be adopted regarding the arrivals of refugees. The number of people to be received by the Member States was increased with an additional 120,000 people, on top of the 40,000 which had already been approved in June, thereby bringing the total number of relocations (from European countries) to 160,000 and resettlements (from third countries) to 22,000. Likewise, in this meeting, the final declaration omitted any mention that might raise doubts about the mandatory nature of the quotas, which are, in fact, not mentioned at all. Furthermore, once again there was emphasis on prioritizing security and public order with regard to hosting refugees, as well as on adopting the necessary measures to avoid potential secondary movements. Despite all the concessions made, the declaration did not receive the unanimous backing of the Council, with Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania voting against it.

Again, the area of security dominated over migrant reception policy. The informal meeting’s declaration also included greater externalization of policies towards Turkey, the Balkans and Africa; the impossible reform of the European Asylum Policy, blocked on an almost permanent basis; and the strengthening of the Madad Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis. Already in 2016, added to the aforementioned securitization and externalization, came the criminalization of the voluntary sector, with accusations that the rescue missions in the Mediterranean were creating a pull effect.

In 2018, there were new proposals made, this time linked with the opening of landing platforms for migrants trying to enter the EU. This option is still being studied under two variables: that these platforms be located on European or African soil. This kind of choice merely serves to show how much distrust is being created by the current management mechanisms. In the EU, migration policies have evolved towards policies which belong to the area of national security, overlooking those areas that had always been on the political agenda, such as those related with human rights.

In addition, none of the Member States fulfilled the commitment made in 2015 on the number of relocations. In June 2017, at the end of the two-year deadline, only 34,689 resettlements had been undertaken, 22% of the total agreed upon. The debate that has unfolded on the issue of the quotas paints a severe and precise picture of the different stances towards the migration policy model to be developed in Europe. This was well demonstrated by the appeals to the Court of Justice of the EU over the legality of the Council’s mandate in the distribution of refugees.

Refugee Management as a Symptom of the Political Crisis in the EU

The debate on the quotas may have been one of the triggers of the political crisis, which deepened with the increase in Eurosceptic and populist positions since the eruption of the economic and euro crisis; Greece, Spain, Italy, Ireland and Portugal being right in the middle of it all.

The debate of the quotas paints a severe and precise picture of the different stances towards the migration policy model to be developed in Europe.

While with the debt crisis the split was not so brusque, probably because most Visegrad countries are not in the eurozone, the fracture as a consequence of the poor management of the tools outlined in the treaties has caused an unprecedented institutional and political earthquake. The unification of criteria and strong-
er position of the Visegrad countries on the application of the principle of solidarity among the Member States, which, they argue, is a direct attack on their sovereignty and a security threat, alongside those states that appealed for compliance with that principle as an essential element of the construction of Europe, has opened a Pandora’s box regarding the EU’s destiny.

In the new political cycle beginning in the EU as of May 2019, we will almost certainly be faced with debates and stances we could never have imagined. With the influence of social democrats and conservatives giving way to nationalist-populist parties that can only produce discourses which link security with migration, which, incidentally, they began. It is, without doubt, a decisive moment for confronting the dilemma of Europe’s destiny. It would be a grave mistake to assume that everything that so many have fought for will last forever.

**Bibliography**


What academic literature is increasingly calling the populist radical right – called in political and journalistic language, national populism, right-wing nationalism, the far right and in a number of other ways – has become a frequent presence in parliaments, institutions and public debates across the Continent. The political space to the right of the Christian Democrats has had some influence in Austria, France and Belgium since the 1980s. However, the emergence of that space as a major player in most EU countries happened mostly after 2000, and started to accelerate around the time of the 2008 financial crisis. 2018 was a year of reorganization and, to some extent, change of leadership and points of reference. With the UK in disarray over the Brexit discussions and after the disappointing results of Marine Le Pen’s Front National in France’s national elections in 2017, two new figures emerged as the most influential leaders: Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Matteo Salvini, who became the Deputy Prime Minister of Italy.

The populist radical right is not a cohesive political family, nor is there consensus (not least amongst the parties often grouped under that label) about its shared common ideological tenets. However, the parties that it comprises show increasing interest in collaborating across borders and shaping Europe. It is thus interesting to recall changes in the European populist radical right’s power and influence, attempts to unite the family, internal ideological disagreements and influence over the Euro-Mediterranean project.

Coming back to Centre Stage

At the end of 2016, mainstream and progressive European politicians, commentators and activists were in a state of commotion: after the shock of the results of the British EU membership referendum and of the US election, they felt the ground moving under their feet. In 2017, the Netherlands, France and Germany were going to hold elections at a time when their mainstream parties were at a historical low. The populist radical right was on the rise. If national populists could also win in one of the founding countries of core Europe, pundits warned, the whole of European integration would be doomed. Macron’s solid victory in France, and the realization that both the Netherlands and Germany could – not without difficulty – form governments without the populist radical right, radically changed the mood, which, by the end of 2017, was one of confidence.

Italian elections in March 2018 pierced that complacency. After a campaign that saw a spike in populist rhetoric and anti-immigrant discourse, not one, but two versions of populism – Five Stars’ personalist, ideologically fluid one, and the Lega’s rightist, anti-immigrant version – were the winners and came together to form a government. Once in government, skilful use of ideology and coalition tactics soon put Salvini in a de facto senior role in the coalition, despite the Lega’s numerical inferiority in Parliament. The lead gradually translated into support in opinion polls. In France and the Netherlands, the populist radical right slowly came to terms with its inability to oust mainstream politicians from power. Marine Le Pen deftly dealt with internal challenges in her newly renamed “Rassemblement National,” while Geert Wilders’ Party for Freedom saw its preeminent position in this ide-
ological space challenged by Thierry Baudet’s Forum voor Democratie, a more conservative party. The populist radical right continued to make gains in elections across the Continent. In Sweden, the Swedish Democrats had the largest increase of any contender, and consolidated their role as the third largest party. In Bavaria, despite the drastic turn towards anti-immigrant positions of Angela Merkel’s allies of the Christian Social Union (CSU), Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) ended up in fourth place, with over 10% of the vote. In October, Poland saw another victory go to the Law and Justice Party (PiS, in its Polish acronym), despite the strong performance of the opposition in large cities. Finally, in December, Spain ceased to be one of the few European countries without national populist influence when Vox entered the Andalusian regional parliament with 11% of the vote.

National populists governed, fully or in part, 170 million Europeans; about one in three. Even when kept out of power, these parties wielded larger-than-ever influence over public discourse.

If 2018 had started with a mood of relief and some degree of complacency in relation to national populism, the year ended on a more sombre note for the pro-European mainstream. Parties of the populist radical right were firmly holding power in Hungary and Poland, formed part of the governing coalition in Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Italy, Norway and Switzerland, and supported the government in Denmark. National populists governed, fully or in part, 170 million Europeans; about one in three. Even when kept out of power by their small numbers or by “cordon sanitaire” policies of other parties, like in France, Germany or Sweden, these parties wielded larger-than-ever influence over public discourse. They presented themselves as the only true alternative to the status quo, despite the fact that, in western Europe, they only accounted for around 10% of votes, as an average. In the EU, only Ireland, Malta and Portugal kept national populism outside institutions.

No Longer Outsiders

In Europe, the populist radical right is no longer an insurgent force of the political fringe. National populist politicians have an active role in EU affairs, with a sizeable presence in the European Council and Parliament. They also command many of the online conversations and a good chunk of social media political activity. Political debates, in particular the one around immigration, often revolve around national populist narratives, proposals and frames. Moreover, where it governs, in particular in Poland and Hungary, there has been a reduction in media pluralism and the space for critical civil society organizations, and open abuse of public resources to bolster government messages. Paradoxically, what had perhaps been the greatest national populist victory, Brexit, forced a re-alignment of the Continental populist radical right. European audiences took due note of the descent of the once-admired British parliamentarism into a humiliating state of chaos over Brexit in the second half of 2018. Similarly, southern European audiences, starting with the Greek population, had realized that leaving the European currency would not be smooth. One by one, the parties of the populist radical right ditched their proposals to leave the common currency, or the Union altogether. Instead, these parties saw the opportunity to shape European debates and policies and to gain a growing share of institutional power.

In June 2018, the Hungarian Viktor Orban made a speech at a conference held in memory of Helmut Kohl in Budapest. On that occasion, he addressed European Christian Democrats directly with a clear message: in order to stop their decline, they should follow the Austrian and Hungarian example. Christian democrats should abandon the anti-populist fronts, enter into coalitions with the anti-immigration parties and embrace “Christian politics […] able to protect people, our nations, families, our culture rooted in Christianity and equality between men and women: in other words, our European way of life.”

His confident position, tempting the mainstream right with an alternative to Angela Merkel’s leadership, would soon be unsettled. On 12 September 2018, the European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the report² of Dutch Green MEP Judit Sargentini, which called on the EU Council to start a disciplinary procedure against Hungary under Article 7 of the Treaty of the European Union for a serious breach of the values on which the Union is founded. The report was approved by a two-thirds majority, which included numerous parliamentarians belonging to the European People’s Party (EPP), to which the party of Prime Minister Orban, Fidesz, belonged. The answer of the Conservative family to Orban’s proposal to join forces with the anti-immigration populists was a resounding no, and, rather than discussing Orban’s ideas, the EPP spent the following months debating what to do with Fidesz, with voices in favour of suspension of membership rights or even outright expulsion.

Paradoxically, what had perhaps been the greatest national populist victory, Brexit, forced a re-alignment of the Continental populist radical right

As Orban tried and failed to form a large pan-European coalition between the centre-right and the national populists, others tried to bring together the parties of the populist radical right. After falling out of grace and leaving Donald Trump’s administration, Steve Bannon, America’s best known leader of the alt-right, created the Movement. From Brussels, this pan-European organization promised to support national populists in extending their political influence and success at the ballot box. The idea was met with a mixed reception by the parties it intended to back, some of which rejected it outright. Rather than becoming the centre of that ideological space, the Movement joined a network of groups that connected ultraconservative and far-right activism and political parties to donors, advisors and supporters from other European countries, the United States and Russia. An investigation by openDemocracy revealed the role of such international links in Vox’s spectacular rise in Spain.³ The most successful political leaders of the populist radical right, both in power and outside of it, slowly came together, their eyes fixed on the May 2019 European Parliament election, but paying close attention to national opportunities to extend the success of the political family.

A Boisterous, Disunited Family

As a political family, however, the populist radical right is still far from the levels of cohesion and mutual support found in other traditional European political families, such as the liberals or the social democrats. In the 2014-2019 European Parliament, the parties to the right of the Christian Democrats were split into four different spaces. A few never managed to sit in any political group, shunned by others as too extreme; this is the case of Greece’s Golden Dawn or Hungary’s Jobbik. Europe of Nations and Freedom was the group most clearly identified with the populist radical right, and Austria’s Freedom Party, Belgium’s Flemish Interest, France’s Front National, Italy’s Lega and the Netherlands’ Party for Freedom were all part of it. But the British UKIP and Germany’s AfD sat in the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group, with the MEPs of the Italian Five Star Movement. And the Polish Law and Justice, Danish People’s Party or the Finns Party were part of the European Conservatives and Reformists, sitting together with British Conservative MEPs. 2018, in particular, was a year of defections: dozens of MEPs changed group. These groups were not only porous in their borders, but had the lowest rates of voting coincidence of all EP groups. None of this is surprising, given the national animosities and the conflicting interests that will oppose nationalists from different countries, but also given the deep differences that run through this political space.

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² European Parliament. “Report on a proposal calling on the Council to determine, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded (2017/2131(INL))” Rapporteur: Judith Sargentini Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, 4 July 2018

Firstly, the limits of the family are fuzzy. The populist radical right has struggled to distance itself from extreme parties of a neo-fascist (and even neo-Nazi) ideology, parties linked to militias who see democratic politics in purely instrumental terms, such as Golden Dawn in Greece, or Marian Kotleba’s People’s Party Our Slovakia. The populist radical right across Europe maintains ambiguous attitudes towards far-right extremism and, often, extremist individuals become part of their political structures, with their leaders struggling to shake off these extremist associations in order to attract more voters. On the other hand, a number of successful populist parties and leaders are not fully part of the radical right family, but have many points in common: Beppe Grillo’s 5 Stelle in Italy, Andrej Babis’ ANO in Czechia or Pawel Kukiz’s Kukiz’15 are perhaps the most salient examples.

As a political family, however, the populist radical right is still far from the levels of cohesion and mutual support found in other traditional European political families.

A generally conservative outlook and the defence of a Europe of nations based on Christian values has been a common characteristic of national populism across Europe. One common point is the rejection of political correctness and “liberal oppression,” in particular a reaction against feminism. However, there are significant differences as far as the linked issues of gender equality and LGBT rights are concerned. While the populist radical right in southern, central and eastern Europe are unequivocally aligned with conservative, and even reactionary positions, in western and northern Europe, anti-immigration and, in particular, anti-Muslim feelings trump that instinct. Starting in the Netherlands, and then spreading towards Scandinavia and the rest of western Europe, the populist radical right embraces a narrative of protecting a Western tradition of secularism, tolerance and gender equality against the threat of a neo-medieval religious zeal, allegedly brought by migrants.

Neither is there uniformity on economic issues. Some parties have a support base largely made up of blue collar workers, in particular France’s Rassemblement National (45% of its voters are working class) and Austria’s FPÖ (48%). Others are particularly successful with rural voters in remote areas, such as Poland’s PiS or Hungary’s Fidesz. Still others are successful with voters in relatively affluent areas and in the upper middle classes, such as Italy’s Lega or Spain’s Vox. Their economic policies are therefore different, depending both on conviction and on the social groups they target. The welfare chauvinism that characterizes the discourse of France’s Rassemblement National differs markedly from the naked neoliberalism embraced by Spain’s Vox. Some parties focus strongly on reducing taxes (Lega in Italy, for instance) or the opposition to bailouts and financial solidarity (the topic that sparked the birth of AfD in Germany, also important for Austria’s FPÖ). Others have expansive fiscal agendas and propose new welfare measures (such as family support policies implemented by Fidesz in Hungary and PiS in Poland), and some (like the Finns Party) actually advocate tax hikes on capital gains and wealthy individuals.

Finally, divergences are also visible in the realm of foreign policy. Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in relation to Russia. Some parties of the populist radical right have openly shown their closeness to Russia, and Italy’s Lega and Austria’s FPÖ even have party-to-party agreements with Vladimir Putin’s United Russia party. Investigative journalism has exposed the Kremlin’s links with the Front National in France, Jobbik in Hungary, Golden Dawn in Greece and other parties of the far right. This does not go down well with their ideological peers in places like Poland, Scandinavia and the Baltic States, who strongly oppose Russian influence in Europe.

The Euro-Mediterranean Project and the Populist Radical Right

Foreign policy is low on the agenda of the populist radical right. However, their domestic agenda does significantly reflect their worldviews, and their role, not only in institutions, but also in forming opinion, should not be underestimated. Notwithstanding an

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overall indifference, four factors have a direct influence on the Euro-Mediterranean project: anti-immigration sentiment, Islamophobia, antisemitism and relations with Israel.

Immigration or, rather, the central goal of stopping immigration, is a crucial factor in the foreign policies of those parties. Given that the Mediterranean has become the hottest point for irregular migration into Europe, they have given it their attention. The most salient case is Italy’s Lega, which not only campaigned on the issue, but also, once in power, implemented measures such as the closure of Italian ports to ships engaging in search and rescue operations. The views of these actors on relations with southern Mediterranean actors (even including Libyan warlords) can be simplistic and based on a single premise: southern Mediterranean governments should be convinced to stop the flow of migrants at all costs.

Islamophobia runs deep in Europe’s populist radical right. A constant culture war against Muslims and a large array of issues related to their communities (like the construction of mosques, religious dress or halal food in school canteens) is central to the tactics and policy proposals of these parties. The institutionalization of practices that disproportionately target Muslim communities and individuals in countering terrorism and violent extremism (such as stop-and-search based on ethnic profiling, community and electronic surveillance, or arbitrary obstacles to Muslim-led organizations) further compounds the situation. In some cases, governments implement these measures precisely to appease populists, rather than on sound security policy grounds. All this happens in full view of the governments and populations of the southern Mediterranean, which can only feel alienated as they see Europe drifting further apart.

Antisemitism has also started to show its ugly face again. In 2018, over 500 officially recorded anti-Semitic incidents took place in France, a 74% increase on the previous year, including the murder at home of 85-year-old Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll. That same year the German government recorded 1,646 attacks, 62 of them violent. The EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency published a report in December 2018 which showed that nearly nine in 10 EU Jews believe that anti-Semitism had grown during the previous five years in their country.5 Although only the most radical parties of the extreme right will openly engage in open antisemitic discourse, dog-whistle antisemitism has found a place in the imagery and lexicon of some of these parties, and in particular in the cyber spaces where their messages spread. Conspiracy theories and deliberate misinformation peddled by their leaders draw on old antisemitic patterns and themes. In European societies, antisemitism comes from very different corners – not just the extreme right, but also some groups within the left and inside Muslim communities – with implicit and explicit links to the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Finally, Israel’s foreign policy under Benjamin Netanyahu has explicitly courted some of the leaders of the populist radical right as part of its outreach to central and eastern Europe. In order to break unity of action inside the EU on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other issues, such as Iran, Israeli diplomacy targeted, in particular, the Visegrad Four (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) and Romania. Netanyahu established particularly close relations with Viktor Orban, with whom he showed ideological affinity, despite the concerns expressed by Hungary’s Jewish community and a large part of the Israeli public and press. The closeness was such that the Visegrad Four agreed to hold their first yearly summit outside their own region in Jerusalem, at Netanyahu’s invitation, in early 2019. A bilateral crisis between Israel and Poland over Netanyahu’s remarks about Polish complicity in the Holocaust led to the meeting’s cancellation. The Israeli charm offensive in the sub-region, which also targeted Romania and other coun-

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tries and was aimed at convincing these states to move their embassies to Jerusalem, is a crucial factor in undermining the EU’s unity and, therefore, credibility in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The ideological affinities of Netanyahu with the nationalist right of central Europe (from Islamophobia to anti-liberalism, from nationalism to an anti-Soros discourse) have played a prominent role in this rapprochement.

Conclusion

As 2018 ended, Europe was getting ready for European Parliament elections in May 2019. The populist radical right was in everyone’s mind, grabbing the headlines and imposing the political agenda. It could boast growing support in the polls and, for the first time, it seemed able to coordinate in order to have a common voice and strategy in Europe. Rather than seeking to undermine or break the Union, national populists increasingly showed their ambition to rule it, and to use their growing power to steer European integration and institutions closer to their ideological line.

This image of strength, however, could not mask the structural weaknesses, the disappointments and, above all, the internal divisions that beset the populist radical right at European level. Their isolation is also noteworthy. Fidesz’s government in Budapest and PiS’s in Warsaw were under scrutiny by the European Commission and by international media, and the attractiveness of their model, even to their immediate neighbours, was limited. By pushing Italy towards an illiberal corner and creating tensions with important allies, in particular Emmanuel Macron’s France, and with the European institutions, Matteo Salvini seriously undermined the country’s influence at a time that Britain’s imminent leave was about to open fresh opportunities for large European states.

Rather than seeking to undermine or break the Union, national populists increasingly showed their ambition to rule it

As a new permanent presence in the European landscape, it is important to pay attention to the populist radical right, not so much in terms of an existential threat to the EU, but rather to understand the ways in which its presence and growth shifts the political grounds on which EU policies are decided. For the Euro-Mediterranean project, this means understanding the new limits and dangers brought into play by the rise of the populist radical right, with its open Islamophobia and coded anti-Semitism, its fixation with immigration and its openness to external powers, such as Russia or Israel. Just like every other internal and external policy of the EU, the Euro-Mediterranean project will need to adapt to the influence of this new political actor in the European arena.
On 5 April 2019, Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini announced the creation of the “European Alliance of Peoples and Nations,” intended to bring together all the sovereigntist and Eurosceptic forces in the context of the European elections of 26 May 2019. The new alliance rejected “bureaucrats, do-gooders and bankers” under the slogan “Towards a common sense Europe: peoples rise up.” This announcement seems to foreshadow a vote primarily between, in the words of French President Emmanuel Macron speaking one year earlier, “demagogic” “nationalists” on one side and Europeanist “progressives” on the other. Whilst that framing of the European elections is both a political strategy and a considerable oversimplification of a much more complex reality, it nevertheless illustrates the potentially destabilizing impact of the European issue for national party systems. As for Mr Salvini’s remarks, they, too, illustrate the importance of a phenomenon, namely, “populism.” A generic category first coined in the field of politics, in academia, “populism” refers to a type of discourse and mobilization based on the opposition, expressed in moral terms, between allegedly corrupt elites (political, intellectual, financial, etc.) and an inherently virtuous, supposedly homogeneous people, for whom the populist leader alone claims to be able to speak. Across the world, the phenomenon as a whole seems to encompass the election or maintenance in power of authoritarian leaders, the cultivation of transgressive language and behaviour, and the rejection of intermediate bodies as just another parasitic element feeding off the direct relationship between leaders and peoples. Unlike in Latin America, where it can also refer to a means of mobilization aimed at resuscitating populations that have been dominated in the political game, in Europe populism is most often associated with anti-democratic forms of mobilization that operate by means of exclusion (of minorities, elites, etc.). Consequently, in Europe, the term “populist” is strongly disqualifying and is sometimes used to lump together, under a single label, political forces (on the far right, on the anti-capitalist left), movement organizations (e.g. Pegida in Germany) and social movements (the “indignados,” or “indignant ones,” in southern Europe, the “gilets jaunes,” or “yellow vests,” in France) that might at first glance seem to be united in their shared rejection of “elites” and the EU but are actually quite heterogeneous. European populisms have very different timelines and dynamics, depending on the context (especially, the...
different paths followed by Western and post-Communist Europe). However, the 2008 economic and financial crisis, the sovereign debt crisis that began to weaken the eurozone in 2010, and, finally, the increased migratory pressure faced by several EU countries (a pressure that culminated, in the summer of 2015, in Germany, with the acceptance of more than one million refugees) have been accompanied, across the continent, by the revitalization of existing “populist” parties and the creation of new ones that, if not “populist” per se, can at least be considered protest parties, whether on the anti-capitalist left (Podemos (We Can) in Spain, Aufstehen (Stand Up) in Germany, etc.) or the far right (the German AfD, the Czech SPD, etc.). There are even some parties that deliberately blur the distinction between left and right (e.g. the Cinque Stelle, or Five-Star, movement in Italy).

Beyond the timeline of this “multi-crisis,” the question is to what extent do European populisms, whilst part of the aforementioned worldwide trend, also fall within a temporality and set of dynamics specific to the context of the construction of Europe. The European Community may originally have been created to stave off the “risk” of populism. However, because it bypasses the principle of popular legitimacy in favour of an elitist, weakly parliamentary process, the deep integration that it involves indirectly fans the flames of populist mobilizations through its effects on national societies and political systems. Nevertheless, although the politicization, over the last thirty years, of European issues has helped to deeply transform national parties, we are not witnessing an overall repositioning of the latter around a transnational divide that pits sovereigntist populists against mainstream pro-European political forces.

**Between Technocratic Governance and Political Demand: The Limits of a Strategy of Depoliticizing European Issues**

At the global level, the emergence of populism has, since the early 1990s, generally been attributed to two types of factors related to the existence of populist “demand” and “supply.” First, a number of trends or situations fuel the demand for a “populist” political option. These include the postmodern condition (decline of the great mobilizing ideologies, of class identities), globalization (economic, cultural), and growing dissatisfaction with the political offer of mainstream parties, which are regarded as all the same and no longer representing two clearly identifiable competing alternatives. Second, populist mobilizations entail the establishment of lasting organizations, usually partisan, highly personalized, and centred on the figure of a popular and charismatic leader claiming to have a monopoly on representing the voice of the people.

In terms of electoral behaviour and voting methods, they have made it possible for several “populist” political parties to accumulate a number of resources.

However, in many ways, the construction of Europe impacts both factors. For one thing, it exacerbates the redistribution of resources (economic, financial, political) caused by globalization. At the same time, by depoliticizing the choices made in the name of a “best practice” backed by technocratic legitimacy, it contributes to the erosion of politics or even the weakening of intermediate bodies. Both are trends in which some see the main causes of populism. For another, because European elections function according to different rules from those governing the “front-line” national polls (legislative or presidential elections), in terms of electoral behaviour and voting methods, they have made it possible for several “populist” political parties that lack parliamentary representation at the national level but are represented in the European Parliament to accumulate a number of resources (financial, political), which they then invest, sometimes successfully, in the national electoral arena.

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8 Svoboda a plná demokracie: Freedom and Direct Democracy.
10 One notable example is the French RN, which has been continuously represented in the European Parliament since 1984, but had no representation in the French national parliament from 1988 to 2012.
In this regard, the destabilizing impact of the construction of Europe on national party systems is all the more powerful because European issues themselves have gradually been reclassified, over the last thirty years, as political and election issues. Although for several decades (with the exception of the United Kingdom) mainstream parties managed to protect themselves from the potentially corrosive effects of European issues (which cause rifts within them whilst exacerbating differences amongst their voters) by refraining from making them election issues, this strategy of depoliticization was gradually defeated by three trends. First, with the establishment of the Economic and Monetary Union in the early 1990s, the EU became an organization whose decisions directly affect the redistributive logic within its Member States, making it difficult not to make it an election issue. Second, political parties’ and people’s positions on the construction of Europe are increasingly closely correlated with their positions on highly politicized subjects, such as immigration or minority rights. Third, if deepening the logic of integration ultimately entails redrawing the boundaries of collective solidarity (on financial, migratory and energy issues), the EU cannot base that change on the existence of a European people in whose name that solidarity would be practiced. As an “empty place” devoid of people, it is the main target of a type of discourse that absolutizes the latter.

It is thus in the name of the people that a number of political parties have sought to politicize European issues, most often in an illiberal way. This has been particularly true of the sovereignist or even anti-European “populist” formations resulting from schisms in the mainstream parties. Such formations would include, for example, the sovereignist party Debout la France (Stand Up France), which emerged in 2008 following a split with the French UMP, or Germany’s AfD, created in 2013, mostly by former members of the CDU and the liberal FDP party, in response to the sovereign debt crisis in the eurozone. This politicization is also embraced by single-issue parties, whose main goal is to get their country out of the EU, from the British UKIP (created in 1993) to the Dutch Forum for Democracy (FvD) (founded in 2016). Although these parties contribute to the politicization of European issues in an essentially illiberal way (here, rejection of the EU goes hand in hand with rejection of immigration and cultural and societal pluralism), they nevertheless give voice to a dissatisfaction with how democracy is functioning amongst the mainstream parties’ voters, in particular by calling for regular referenda on European issues.

As we have seen, the tension at the heart of Europe’s construction exacerbates the dynamics underlying populist mobilizations, namely, the existence of a predominantly technocratic form of government that cultivates the illusion of being apolitical, even as it drives an integration process that is eminently political, insofar as it strongly impacts the distribution of resources (between employees, between territories) within the Member States. Nevertheless, the gradual politicization of European issues in national electoral arenas has not led, in its current state, to a general reshuffling of alignments pitting Eurosceptic populists against mainstream “Europeanist” parties.

The tension at the heart of Europe’s construction exacerbates the dynamics underlying populist mobilizations

Towards a Repositioning of Alignments around the “Populists” vs “Europeanists” Divide?

Twenty years before Macron’s framing of the European elections, the political scientist Stefano Bartolini outlined the scenario of a global repositioning of political alignments within the Member States and at the EU level around an opposition between, on one hand, globally pro-European mainstream parties and, on the other, the political forces that he referred

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13 In the sense that the latter would favour either maintaining the institutional status quo within the EU or deepening the integration dynamic.
to as “anti-establishment” at the time, advocating alternatives to the current EU and its policies. What has actually come of this repositioning?

As noted, the use of the term “populist” makes it possible to (wrongly) equate forces that at first glance seem similar in their opposition to the EU but are actually situated at opposite ends of the political spectrum, namely, the anti-capitalist left and the far right. A global repositioning of alignments based on the struggle between “populists” and “Europeanists” would thus bring together the voters of both political “families,” at least in their shared hatred of the EU and “elites,” in the model of the Italian coalition government including both the League and the Cinque Stelle movement (although the latter’s position on the left is clearly open to debate). However, as we will see, whilst certain evolutions within Europe’s anti-capitalist left might point to a degree of convergence, on a limited number of issues, with far-right “populists,” such a realignment is currently impossible due to the divisions within each of these political “families” and the existence of differences between their constituencies that are unlikely to be overcome.

In terms of their positions, at first glance, some points of convergence between the anti-capitalist left and the far right do seem to be emerging. This is especially true of their relationship with the EU. Although most of the parties concerned no longer object to EU membership on principle, they nevertheless retain a certain ambiguity in this regard. Thus, whilst the French RN, the Austrian FPÖ or the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) party have, for electoral reasons, abandoned their principled and explicit opposition to the EU and the euro, the parties on the anti-capitalist left comprising the “Now, the people!” electoral alliance call for “casting off the shackles of the European treaties,” albeit without explicitly advocating leaving the Union. Likewise, although the anti-capitalist left does not share the far right’s xenophobia, it is nevertheless affected by migratory issues. That is the case of Die Linke (the Left Party) in Germany, which, since 2018, has had to compete with the new Aufstehen party, which favours a restrictive migratory policy, or La France Insoumise (France Unbowed or LFI), which is divided on the issue. Finally, the anti-capitalist left and the far right overlap on the crucial geopolitical issue of EU-Russia relations, with support for some of Vladimir Putin’s actions sometimes being found in similar votes by the ENF16 and EUL17 groups in the European Parliament (e.g. on the issue of the sanctions adopted by the EU following the annexation of Crimea).

The use of the term “populist” makes it possible to equate forces that at first glance seem similar in their opposition to the EU but are actually situated at opposite ends of the political spectrum.

Nevertheless, the scenario of a global repositioning that would bring together “populists” from opposite ends of national political spaces in a shared hatred of the EU is made unlikely, first, by the extreme diversity of positions within each of these “families,” whose ability to transnationalize their action thus remains weak. Within the anti-capitalist left, “Now, the people!” suffers from the absence of the heavyweight Die Linke party, as well as from the unique position of the LFI, which, unlike its partners, continues to raise the possibility of leaving the EU. Similarly, the establishment of a sovereigntist alliance bringing together nationalist conservative and far-right parties, united by a shared rejection of multiculturalism and societal liberalism, is compromised, amongst other things, by the demarcation strategies that set some parties against others (the Polish PiS, for example, wants to avoid any risk of being equated with the French RN). It is further hindered by profound differences on socio-economic issues and, especially, on how open the common market should be to the rest of the world (with the French RN espousing more protectionist views than economically neo-liberal formations such as the Austrian FPÖ or the German AfD).

15 Namely, Podemos, La France Insoumise (LFI), Portugal’s Bloco de Esquerda and the Nordic socialist left parties.  
16 Europe of Nations and Freedom: group encompassing the far-right parties.  
17 European United Left: group encompassing the parties on the anti-capitalist left.
Furthermore, the existence of profound differences between voters of the far right and the anti-capitalist left shows that the common hostility towards “elites” and scepticism towards the EU coexist with vastly different worldviews. This can be seen, for example, in a comparison of the voters of the French RN and German AfD, on one hand, and those of the French LFI and Die Linke, on the other: other than a deep shared dissatisfaction with the functioning of representative democracy, fears regarding economic globalization and a certain hostility towards the US superpower, the voters of the anti-capitalist left and the far right have quite clearly distinguishable positions on the issues of migration, the relationship with Islam and even membership in the EU and the eurozone, with the former being mostly in favour of religious pluralism, concerned by xenophobia and, for the most part, supporting the idea of the construction of Europe on principle.\(^{18}\)

If lumping the far right and anti-capitalist left under the same “populist” label, due to the allegedly similar threat they pose to the EU’s survival, is more a matter of political discourse than empirical observation, in the author’s view, a more serious risk lies in the blurring of the boundary between “populism” and mainstream parties within the large party families embodied mainly by the European People’s Party (EPP) and the Party of European Socialists (PES). Within the former, the blurring of the distinction between the conservative right, the sovereigntist right and the far right, eloquently symbolized by the meeting between Salvini and Viktor Orbán on 28 August 2018, is exemplified by the existence of coalitions or agreements between conservative and far-right forces at both the national level (e.g. the ÖVP/FPÖ government coalition in Austria) and the regional level (e.g. agreement between the People’s Party (PP) and Vox in Andalusia). It is further illustrated by the authoritarian drift of certain conservative (FIDESZ) and/or sovereigntist (PiS) right-wing governments, for whom the people’s will, embodied solely by majority rule, cannot be limited by either the constitutional courts or the shared exercise of sovereignty at the European level. As for the PES, it has not sanctioned the member parties that have entered into governmental alliances with nationalist or far-right parties, be it the former Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico’s SMER-SD, which was a Slovak National Party (SNS) coalition partner from 2006 to 2010, then again from 2016 to 2018, or Austria’s SPÖ, an FPÖ coalition partner in the Austrian state of Burgenland since 2015.

The populist “risk” thus lies primarily within the political families of the so-called mainstream parties, rather than in the inaccurate equating of far-right and anti-capitalist-left “populism.” From this point of view, the perfectly “euro-compatible” populism that the political scientist Peter Mair\(^{19}\) saw at work in the mode of government of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, which short-circuited intra-partisan democracy in favour of a highly personalized leadership, disregarding intermediary bodies and dismissing the left/right divide, viewed as outdated, in the name of a “best practice” that was supposedly neutral and equally beneficial to all, is just as likely to fuel dissatisfaction with the functioning of representative democracy, as can be seen in many EU countries (an attitude itself strongly correlated with scepticism regarding EU membership), as the populism of the “extremes.”

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\(^{18}\) Some 89% of LFI voters say that they are broadly supportive of the European construction project versus 40% of RN voters (CEVIPOF, *Enquête électorale française 2019*; https://sciencespo.fr.cevipof/files/rapport_ipsos_fevrier_2019). In Germany, Die Linke voters consider that a candidate’s commitment to greater cooperation between EU countries would increase their likelihood of voting for him or her, unlike AfD voters (Populismusbarometer 2018, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin und Bertelsmann Stiftung, p. 15).

\(^{19}\) Mair, P. *Populist democracy, party democracy and the Blair paradox*. Florence: European University Institute, Workshop on populism, 14-15 January 2000.
Nationalism is coming back and with a strength that has rarely been seen since the 1930s. And with the return of nationalism, as if often the case, come the strongmen. If there were any doubts about the return of a political ideology that was responsible for the most devastating event of the 20th century, these were washed away with Donald Trump’s election in November 2017. The new President of the United States came to power under an unquestionably nationalist and populist banner, with “America First” written all over it. America First was the name of a non-interventionist association steeped in antisemitism created in Chicago in 1940 in opposition to the United States’ participation in World War II. Its leaders included the aviator Charles Lindbergh, a sympathizer of the Nazi regime. The name of this far-right anti-war lobby was an echo from the verses “Deutschland über alles/über alles in der Welt” (Germany above all, above all in the world), lines from the German national anthem that were subsequently removed from the official version adopted by post-war Germany.

A full cycle has just come to completion with the arrival of Trump in the White House. The United States had led 70 years of liberal globalization through a system of multilateral institutions set up under the country’s own initiative following victory over Germany and Japan in World War II. That undertaking, headed by President Roosevelt and brought to fruition by Truman, changed the isolationist and unilateralist tradition that the great American nation had been known for since its foundation. So, the current President’s slogan does not only connect with the nationalism apparent during the rise of fascism, but also revitalizes a line of foreign policy in Washington which, until now, was thought to have been definitively thrown on the scrap heap.

**Nationalisms and Populisms**

The return of nationalism also marks the return of populisms, a controversial but useful term to describe numerous movements and parties that have emerged from the right and left in reaction to the economic and political crises. They are the result of newly impoverished populations, the declassing of the middle classes and a divorce between citizens and the elite, which quickly translates into a defamation of institutions, traditional parties and representative democracy. The syncretism of nationalism – the nation before all else – and populism – the people against the elite – inevitably requires a leader who embodies the nation and becomes the voice and expression of the people. This is an evanescent figure of political action, who only acquires a voice and face if the people identifies with and places its trust in a single and singular leadership. Let’s call him a “strongman,” although in reality he is a commander, a boss or a Führer, words still reviled in common parlance.

This apparent return to the past contains something new that openly differentiates it from previous populist incarnations. The strength and breadth of the current national populisms would not be possible without

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two intertwined singularities that did not exist during the time of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco: economic globalization and technology. The crisis that hit the former is at the root of the populist wave sweeping across the globe, triggered by the collapse of Wall Street in 2008, the Great Recession and its subsequent monetary, social and political shockwaves. These have reached all around the world not just affecting the West, as would have been the case before the decolonization that took place 80 years ago. The latter, particularly social media and mobile telephony, provides populist movements with new, exceptional instruments for peaceful mobilization. These have transformed party systems and the very idea of democracy, by bringing into question interventions in the economy, trade, journalism and politics.

There is a dual nature to the impact new technologies have on politics. They were instrumental in the 2011 Arab Springs, weapons of liberation against the strongmen of a fading era. Yet, they are also weapons of action and even control for the men of the new, emerging times. They served to topple Mubarak, but were used by Trump in his rise to power, in the referendum-winning Brexit campaign and by Putin in his hybrid wars in Ukraine or his electoral interference in Western countries. They are part of the fourth industrial revolution, which revolves around big data and Artificial Intelligence, but are also key factors behind the latest wave of totalitarian population control, implemented by autocratic states like Russia, China or Saudi Arabia.

Nobody better embodies the new technological strongman than Donald Trump, directing the political world from his unpredictable Twitter account. His is a model example of populist nationalism, as indeed he is of the strongman. Individualist, erratic and out of control, yet with his eyes firmly fixed on his grip on power, Trump is admired and invoked by populist leaders throughout the world on his march towards personal power through the ballot box. Trump, in turn, admires those who imitate him, but perhaps more still the strongmen whose paths have not included the ballot box, such as, Xi Jinping in China, Kim Jong-un in North Korea, Vladimir Putin in Russia and Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia.

Masculinization of Power

One after the other, nationalist and populist leaders are democratically elected to govern as institutionalized and recognized autocrats in authoritarian regimes. Their strongman geopolitics gathers strength in the alliances and relations they weave with one another. And, we say men because, if there is something that typifies this new era of personalized power, it is the heavy masculinization of power and ideology, which is, at times, openly anti-feminist and hostile toward “gender ideology” and the rights of minorities and sexual identities. Absolute personal power has always been masculine, but in its more contemporary incarnation, male-chauvinism, anti-feminism and an aversion toward homosexuality have become the programmes and banners flaunted at the ballot boxes for obtaining democratic consensus.

The rise of populist leaders could also be associated with today’s geopolitics of hate, their success stories at the polls clearly owing to the effectiveness of a discourse of resentment and loathing towards the other, whether this be foreigners, immigrants, muslims, sexual minorities or even underprivileged social groups. Duterte wins elections in the Philippines under a banner of physical and extrajudicial extermination of drug dealers. Narendra Modi has won a landslide victory in India with a programme that is anti-Muslim and based on Hindu supremacy. Bolsonaro has risen to power in Brazil on another programme of exclusion: of leftists, the poor, indigenous peoples and sexual minorities. The same can be said of Viktor Orban in Hungary, Matteo Salvini in Italy, the Law and Justice Party of Jaroslav Kaczynski in Poland and Marine le Pen in France, all of whom peddle an agenda that exploits fear and the continent’s wave of immigration.
The strongmen are coming back. Although, strictly speaking, they have not really ever left, despite the relative democratic progress made since 1989 with the breakup of the communist bloc and disappearance of the Soviet Union. A substantial cohort of strongmen, prior to the current generation, arose from the frustrated or false transitions in the old socialist camp, a direct result of leadership succession in the communist parties: this was the case of Milosevic in Serbia, and his Croat counterfigure, Franjo Tudjman; it is also the case of a good number of ex-communist dictators who emerged from the defunct Soviet Union: Alexander Lukashenko en Belorussia, Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan (who died in 2016), Nursultan Nazarbayez in Kazakastan, until his apparent resignation in 2019, or Ilham Aliev, the second President from the same family clan, in Azerbaijan.

It was the same after decolonization, especially in Africa where authoritarian regimes sprang up everywhere and mostly around a figure that people considered charismatic and the personification of the newly-liberated nation. The sole exception was Algeria’s single-party regime, although in its last phase it also came to identify with the personal power and false charisma of a figure like Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Brought down by the popular revolts which began last February in protest over his fraudulent perpetuation in power, Bouteflika even went so far as to organize a new presidential election for this year, despite his age and ailing health rendering him unfit for any kind of public activity.

Presidencies for Life

The post-colonial world produced a model of personal dictatorship under the guise of presidencies for life, which was repeated in numerous African countries. This imitation of the monarchical system included copying the model of family succession; something that arose in the dying moments of these regimes. It is not by chance that the fall of Ben Ali, Mubarak and Gaddafi in 2011 came about just when the dictators began to envisage hereditary solutions. Neither is it a coincidence that the highest levels of stability and repressive control during the Arab Springs was to be seen in monarchical regimes such as Morocco and Saudi Arabia. In these countries the succession debate, assuming there is one, is encapsulated within the ruling families, even when no succession regulations are in place, as is very often the case.

The strongmen in what used to be called Third World countries have based themselves on a solid structure of military and police power, the underpinning governance of post-colonial countries. The most successful model, however, sees the army and party fused as one, as is the case in the People’s Republic of China. Until the arrival of Xi Jinping, this was the most explicit example of a depersonalized, collegial dictatorship, although it has now returned to its old ways of accumulating personal power, even bordering on a Maoist-style personality cult.

The Russian case is an odd one, as the root of power there does not lie in the army, but instead the intelligence services, following the end of the party-state structure. However, a new oligarchical class, largely arising from former communist cadres preying on public resources in the privatization era, has been built on the new electoral base or “constituency." The case of Vladimir Putin, although not corresponding to the nationalist-populist model, serves as direct inspiration for many of its leaders, from Trump to Orban, and corresponds with many of its ideological traits – nationalism, conservatism, anti-feminism – in its case embellished by the ideas of Russian neo-imperialism and a Euro-Asianist pseudophilosophy.

Decline of the Military Dictator

One of the defining traits of the era is the decline of the explicit figure of the military dictator, although it has not entirely disappeared, particularly thanks to Egypt, once a key player in Arab politics. After the failure of the Arab uprisings and especially of political Islam in power, with the exception of Tunisia, the military can continue to proclaim the advantages of dictatorship for the sake of political stability, maintaining the economic order (with its geostrategically invaluable byproduct the energy supply), containing migratory movements and the fight against terrorism. The dictatorship of the field marshal Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, transformed into the President elect and near enough President for life, is a fine example, as it directly opposes the Islamic democracy of Mohamed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood government, violently defeated a year after his presidential victory. It also serves as a model for Libya, where Sisi’s replica, the
Benghazi-based warlord general Khalifa Haftar, aspires to take power with the backing of the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, France and the United States, in the name of the fight against Islamic terrorism.

The fall of Bouteflika, a young and populist Foreign Minister in the first years of independence, is highly significant for the post-colonial world. His figure brings together the symbology of the third-worldism that triumphed in the 60s, following the Cuban and Algerian revolutions, with a standard of decadence and corruption in the twenty years of his opaque, conspiratorial and nepotistic presidency, compounded by high energy prices and an Algerian population exhausted by almost an entire decade of civil war. Bouteflika’s defeat comes alongside that of Omar al-Bashir, the Sudanese dictator, and shortly after the fall of two historic decolonization leaders-turned-dictators, namely, Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and Jose Eduardo dos Santos in Angola.

The era of all-powerful presidencies for life seems to be coming to an end. However, the model retained by the conservatism of the Gulf Arab monarchies and their Western allies, especially the US oil oligarchy and now, more specifically, Donald Trump and his family, is one of regimes removed from any kind of democratic inclination, which is actually considered as a danger to stability, a concession to political Islam and an open door to disorder and, eventually, terrorism. The same model applies to general Ahmed Gaid Salah in Algeria, an effective repressor from the ousted corrupt ruling elite who has become a self-designated guarantor of an ordered transition. A similar story is unfolding in Sudan, where a military junta has taken power after the fall of the dictator el-Bashir, as a result of popular protests.

A Democratic Path

The strongmen that are most worthy of our attention, because they are part of the current populist movement, are those that rise to power through the ballot box, thanks to electoral victories within democratic and even liberal systems, a circumstance that is neither a guarantee of anything, nor exceptional in history: Adolph Hitler was also voted into power. And the centre of gravity of these democratic geopolitics can be found in the White House, the official residence of Donald Trump since 20 January 2017.

The arrival of a media and real estate magnate as the supreme authority of the US, after beating all republican candidates in the primaries and defeating the former State Secretary and first lady Hillary Clinton in electoral colleges, although not in the popular vote, was an earthquake whose tremors were felt all around the globe. Imitating US voters and imitating Trump are now issues at the top of every far-right agenda. Not only is Trump a model, but also a promoter. He likes strongmen, dictators, authoritarians and despots, or at least those with special or excessive powers. Even before his election, there was a close connection with autocrats already in power, especially those at the head of past or future superpowers. Vladimir Putin is one example, the real winner of elections in which he not only gave Trump his backing, but in which he also invested efforts, energy and espionage to avoid Clinton’s victory. And then there is Xi Jinping, China’s paramount leader since 2012, who Trump has lavishly flattered since the first day of his Presidency, aware of the collision course both countries are on.

The only countries outside the radius of his sympathies are those designated as part of his Axis of Evil. These, naturally, include Maduro’s Venezuela, for strictly geopolitical reasons that were justified with candid shamelessness by Trump’s National Security Advisor, John Bolton. He made reference to the old Monroe Doctrine, under which the United States, in the early 19th century, claimed its right to intervene in all of the territory of the American continent without any European power having any right to interfere. There is also Iran, under Ayatollah Khomeini, despite this country still being in the hands of a reformist president such as Hassan Rouhani. His power in the face of the country’s revolutionary militarism is slowly weakening thanks to Trump’s dramatic withdrawal from the multilateral nuclear agreement and the tightening of the siege on the Iranian economy.

The Turkish Case

But the most remarkable case on the contemporary panorama is that of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in power thanks to the impeccable democratic rise of his moderate Islamist AKP party (Justice and Development). From 2003 to 2014 he served as the Prime Minister of a parliamentary republic, and has since become the all-powerful President of a presidentialist Turkey. The
war in neighbouring Syria, arrival of refugees, Islamic State actions and military coup in July 2016 have given the Turkish strongman the occasion to harden his regime, accumulate power, purge the army, police, judiciary and media of any opposition and fill the country’s prisons with suspects.

Unlike Putin, who rose to power following Yeltsin’s appointment, and with the acquiescence of the new Russian oligarchs, Erdogan did so democratically, thanks to his popularity and a well-rooted Islamism, especially among the working classes. The final result is a convergence in a kind of presidency that enjoys dictatorial powers and holds all the strings of economic power.

Despite his authoritarianism, Erdogan is still a model for political Islam to counterpoint Saudi Arabia’s feudal and theocratic version

Despite his authoritarianism, Erdogan is still a model for political Islam to counterpoint Saudi Arabia’s feudal and theocratic version. In the latter, the drift towards consolidating personal power has materialized with the appointment of Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) as crown prince. MbS is the young son of King Salman bin Abdelaziz and the first of the royal princes in line to take over from the second generation since the founding of the kingdom in 1932 by Abdelaziz bin Saud, father of the current King and grandfather of the Prince. The consolidation of MbS’ power in Riyadh, with a modernizing, yet no less authoritarian, programme, has required the full support of a Trumpist White House. It has also entailed changes in the line of succession established at the death of King Abdullah, as well as a far-reaching purge inside the royal family and among the ruling class. The alliance between Washington and Riyadh is a central element of Trump’s foreign policy in the Middle East. Trump’s withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal is consistent with his alignment with Netanyahu and MbS, both openly against the uranium enrichment programme being halted in exchange for the unfreezing of Iranian assets in the West and authorization for a civilian nuclear plant, monitored and inspected by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Riyadh and Tehran are vying for regional hegemony, especially through their involvement in the wars in Syria and Yemen. But their confrontation also forms part of a cold war with greater geopolitical repercussions between the Muslim Brotherhood and Saudi Arabia, unleashed with particular virulence following the Arab Springs in 2011. Participating on the Saudi front are the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, while Turkey and Qatar are firmly on the side of the Brotherhood.

Orban, an Apostle of Non-liberalism

The return to the extreme personalization of politics is not following the same well-trodden paths of the past, but rather adopts new forms, closely linked to the use of social media and changes in systems of political identification and militancy. These are now more determined by a personal and sentimental bond with a leader than any kind of knowledge of party programmes and ideas. Or, to put it another way, the programme consists of a leader’s personality, and support for that programme is attained through identification with the personality.

Strongmen geopolitics can also be interpreted as the expression of the crisis in liberal or representative democracies. Its most devout contemporary apostle is the Hungarian Viktor Orban, who has managed to appropriate the idea of illiberal democracy as something new and the best political model for the needs of today’s world. Separation of powers, respect for minorities, rule of law, pluralism and democratic representation are apparently obsolete and ineffective concepts for whoever wants to lead the way and compete on a global panorama dominated by powers like Russia, China or a Trumpist United States. The idea of authoritarian capitalism, which overrides the luxuries of liberalism and democracy and is limited to the market, is nothing new. It should come as no surprise that it finds its mirror in China’s current political system, which serves as an alluring model for national populists like Orban. After all, the communist Deng Xiaoping, founder of China’s current socioeconomic system, was inspired by ideas that were authoritarian and prematurely illiberal – before the term even been coined – and shaped by another founding father, that of the successful city-state of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew. Now we have ridden out the storm of the economic recession, it is the great democratic recession that is hitting us full in the face.
An overall view of 2018 indicates a similar trend to almost a decade ago, in 2009, in terms of the number of people crossing the Mediterranean towards the European Union (EU). However, although the figures may be comparable, the context is very different, and so too is the way people are viewing this Mediterranean migration. As a consequence, the approach towards how it is managed has also changed. The institutional response to these flows has gradually mutated towards a perspective no longer exclusively related to control and security, but also based on a hostile rejection of managing migration and hosting arrivals to the EU from the south shore of the Mediterranean.

Since 2009, 2.1 million people have arrived in the EU after crossing the Mediterranean, a million of those in 2015 alone, a flow clearly dictated by the war raging in Syria. To understand the situation that unfolded during that year, we should recall that in October 2015 alone, more people crossed the Mediterranean than in all of 2018. Despite the reduced flow, the proportion of people who have died during the crossing has increased. In 2015, for every 269 arrivals, one person died, while in 2018, the ratio was one death to every 51 arrivals.

Also, throughout 2018, we can see a clear trend of most arrivals being concentrated in the western Mediterranean, with decreasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria or Asian countries, and increasing numbers with another migration profile, coming from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan countries.

This situation has generated a complex scenario as there are currently a range of mobility types in the Mediterranean economic migrants, forced migrants or refugee, which are being managed using containment policies and programmes developed in response to a humanitarian crisis caused by a specific military conflict, i.e., the war in Syria. But this management does not seem to adequately take into account the migratory dynamics playing out in large areas of West Africa, the Sahel and East Africa, and which condition mobility in the Mediterranean. These contradicting logics are especially apparent in Libya, which, in turn, serves as a metaphor for the region. It is a country with an unstable political, economic and social situation, with ongoing internal warring and migration routes controlled by smugglers. However, search and rescue actions have been handed over to the Libyan coast guard, which depend upon a weak state with a proven incapacity to control and eradicate people smugglers. Parallel to this, there is a dynamic being institutionalized that holds a mirror to European democracies: the criminalization of NGOs working in the Mediterranean to rescue people left adrift. In short, priority is given to these people’s containment and return to a country that offers no guarantees for the most basic of their human rights.

The Figures in 2018

The element most worthy of note in 2018 is the continuance of the downward trend in arrivals to the north shore of the Mediterranean. Already in 2017, this figure was 50% less than in 2016, and in 2018 it went down by 24% as compared with 2017. In addition to this reduction in the overall figures for the region, geographical variations should also be noted. As indicated in Chart 1, in 2018, Spain became the main...
entry point for arrivals, up by 131% with respect to the previous year, while Italy’s arrival figures continued to plummet, with some 100,000 arrivals less than in 2017. In Greece the downward trend was reversed, with nearly 15,000 more arrivals, after the dramatic reduction in 2017 (see Chart 1).

The Regional Context

The figures for human movement in the Mediterranean are classified according to three geographic corridors, but each one has a specific geographic context and, in addition, differentiated dynamics which continued throughout 2018. The eastern corridor is closely linked with Syrian refugees and people from countries further afield like Afghanistan or Iraq. The border with Greece, with its geographic particularities, is the main gathering point, and the EU Turkey agreement1 the main instrument implemented to manage these movements. The central corridor’s main player is Libya and its dynamic is closely linked with the country’s instability and the fact that it borders Niger and Sudan, which channel migration and refugee flows from Central and East Africa, respectively. EU-Libya relations2 and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) constitute the complex and fragile framework here for the management of these human movements. In this case, the geography gives Italy a leading role on the northern shore. Finally, the western corridor channels the flows from West Africa and the Maghreb towards Europe. This corridor is managed through the EU Trust Fund for Africa3 (which also affects the central corridor) and on a broader level within the framework of the 2013 Mobility Partnership Agreement, as well as the different

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1 On 18 March 2016, EU Heads of State or Government and Turkey agreed on the EU-Turkey Statement to end irregular migration flows from Turkey to the EU, ensure improved reception conditions for refugees in Turkey and open up organized, safe and legal channels to Europe for Syrian refugees.


3 In the framework of the EU Trust Fund for Africa, in July 2018, the European Commission approved three new migration-related programmes in Northern Africa totalling more than €90 million.
Keys

regional dialogues that jointly address migration, specifically the Rabat Process, where Spain and Morocco (and their bilateral relations) have a central role.

The Central Route as a Focus of Instability

In 2018, the central Mediterranean route saw a fall in arrivals to Italy, as well as a rise in deaths at sea. This change with respect to 2017 owes primarily to three factors. First, since the beginning of 2017, a series of migration policies have been implemented in Libya and in the Sahel region in cooperation with the EU, with the aim of lowering the number of arrivals to Italy. These include EU support for the Libyan coast guard on the country’s west coast. Second, in mid-2018, the Libyan authorities declared that an area that had previously only been managed by the Italian coast guard would now be coordinated by the Libyan search and rescue service. This measure allowed the Libyan authorities to return people rescued from shipwrecks instead of taking them to the shores of Italy, i.e., EU territory. Finally, mid-2017 onwards saw an increase in legal actions and political condemnation against NGOs and private rescue ships, which were forced to stop a large portion of their activities in 2018, after governments from different countries, most notoriously Italy, seized the ships that were rescuing people at sea.

This context deserves special attention as, according to UNHCR estimates, in Libya there are around 670,000 refugees living in harsh conditions, with a multitude of abuses and human rights violations, registered by the United Nations and carried out by civil servants, armed groups, smugglers or traffickers. It should be noted here that the increase in arrivals through the western corridor is not a response to diverting flows from the central corridor to the western one. Although in the case of flows from West Africa (people from Guinea, Mali or the Ivory Coast) this diversion has been observed, for the main migrant groups, such as those coming from Eritrea, Nigeria or Sudan, the number of arrivals to Spain has been nil or negligible. However, it is a dynamic worthy of attention as the short and mid-term effects of this rerouting are as of yet unknown, especially in light of Italy’s current block on refugees.

Likewise, during 2018 a double dynamic can be observed. On the one hand, Libya, as a country with a fragile and limited rule of law, remains a destination country for people looking for work, which is easier to find than in the EU, albeit under deplorable conditions. It is also preferred as a transit country to Tunisia, Algeria or Egypt, where borders are increasingly militarized and there are ever greater difficulties in reaching the Mediterranean coast and boarding a ship. It is also highly significant that Libya has a weak state and porous borders with Niger and Sudan, and increasingly so with Chad, channels through which the country is often accessed. The second dynamic that has been observed is that efforts made by the EU to contain the flow of people on Libya’s southern borders have had a destabilizing effect in these areas. Traditional inter-border trade relations have been affected and people-trafficking rings have set up new routes that are both less stable and less safe. Since April 2018, it has been observed that migration routes towards Libya, as well as those within the country, have become more diverse and there has been an increase in the number of smuggling centres in the country’s east as a result of these migration measures.

Efforts made by the EU to contain the flow of people on Libya’s southern borders have had a destabilizing effect in these areas

The Eastern and Western Routes: Shared and Externalized Management

Morocco and Turkey are the countries most involved in these two corridors. They are also transit countries,

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4 REACH/UNHCR. “Mixed Migration Dynamics in Libya: the impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya,” 2018 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/reach_lyb_so_mixed_migration_routes_and_dynamics_in_libya.pdf.


but, unlike in Libya, these are countries with a strong state and close ties to the EU, and can thereby establish cooperative ties both bilaterally with neighbouring countries on the north shore, and multilaterally with the EU.

The situation of the western corridor has specific traits as, in this case, the management of these flows has become a political bargaining chip between the Moroccan government and Spain, and by extension the EU. For West African nationals to reach their embarkation point in the north of Morocco, they have to cross the entire country, and the State may have a greater or lesser degree of control over these people, not forgetting that at the embarkation points there are Moroccans (the main group) and Algerians (the fourth biggest group). In fact, Morocco has been a country of transit and origin for migration flows for more than a decade. The region is no stranger to the use of migration as a political bargaining chip; this was also the case with Turkey during the negotiation of the 2016 agreement with the EU. The response from Brussels always takes the same line: to offer neighbouring countries in the south support and financial incentives to control migration and thereby externalize part of this management and control. In the case of Morocco, in July 2018, the European Commission approved a programme to improve maritime border management in the Maghreb worth 55 million euros.

The eastern Mediterranean corridor is basically a flow of refugees, and, as such, its management and control is different. Simply looking at the profile of people arriving in Greece from Turkey shows that almost 40% of them are children (almost quadrupling the figure for the other two paths), 23% are women (twice as many as arrive in Spain or Italy), leaving 40% men (half of those arriving by the central and western routes). Furthermore, the main countries of origin of these people are Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, where the reasons for leaving the country are closely linked with political instability and violence. According to official figures, in Turkey there are almost 145,000 refugees in camps, and an additional million and a half (two million depending on the source) that live outside the refugee camps. The EU gives support to these people, who, as a rule, have settled in big cities through the Emergency Social Safety Net. For the management of refugees looking to arrive in the EU through Greece, the EU-Turkey agreement is still effective, under which, during 2018, 7,000 refugees in Turkey were transferred to different countries of the EU, while a further 5,000 in hotspots on different Greek islands were “returned” to Turkey on the grounds that they failed to meet the requirements for asylum application. According to UNHCR, there are still around 12,000 people in Greek hotspots waiting to either be given refugee status in the EU or, if they are unsuccessful, transferred to Turkey. The approved funding within the agreement, 3 billion euros transferred to date (out of a total budget of 6 billion) is to help Turkish hosting communities.

The response from Brussels always takes the same line: to offer neighbouring countries in the south support and financial incentives to control migration and thereby externalize part of this management and control.

To sum up, throughout 2018, there was a marked trend to increase containment measures in the eastern and western corridors through cooperation on matters of management and control, with particular emphasis on the externalization of management towards the transit countries of Morocco and Turkey. Supported by the EU Member States, these measures are aimed at restricting access to the Union’s territory, while in turn allowing the EU to disregard the potential failure of transit countries to respect people’s basic rights. The same model applies to the central corridor, in addition to which is the hostility with which Italy rejects any kind of management not within the established externalization frameworks. This increases the defencelessness and vulnerability of people in Libya, where in 2018, unlike in Morocco or Turkey and despite the work of international agencies and EU cooperation, migrants were reportedly still the victims of basic human rights abuses and violations, if not casualties of the sea crossing.
Migrations in the Mediterranean

Is It Possible to Develop a Common European Policy on Immigration and Asylum?

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Twenty Years of a European Immigration and Asylum Policy “under Construction”

Next year, it will be twenty years since work began in Tampere on a common immigration and asylum policy for the European Union. From a diachronic perspective, incorporating immigration and asylum issues into the community space seems to have been a decision taken more out of circumstantial necessity: the 1957 Treaty of Rome provided for the free movement of people as one of its goals, but above all aimed at Member State citizens’ work mobility. The definition of an area of free movement as per the Schengen Agreement reached in 1985 obliged Member States to go beyond the simple exchange of information: the disappearance of internal borders made the external borders of this common space a priority, and, therefore, a more detailed consensus was required regarding who could access it, how and on what grounds.

It is in this context that the Tampere European Council set the process in motion of developing a common European immigration and asylum policy, based on four main areas which would be maintained, with greater or lesser success, throughout these twenty years. The constituent elements of the common immigration and asylum policy include (1) partnerships with countries of origin; (2) the establishment of a common European asylum system; (3) the management of migration flows and (4) the fair treatment of third country nationals residing in the territory of Member States. It is worth mentioning that through both the lines of work presented in Tampere and the tone that characterizes the conclusions, a proportionate balance was sought in creating a space of freedom, security and justice, in which immigration and asylum policies would play a key role.

From 1999 until today, considerable advances have been made in immigration and asylum in the European Union. They should not be downplayed, as they are contributions that have led to the creation of a remarkable regulatory framework for managing the entry and residence of immigrants and refugees in the territory of the European Union, and because they are the constituent instruments of one of the only supranational migration policies. Nevertheless, it is an unfinished and complex process with some major weaknesses, upon which it is worth reflecting.

Four Anomalies of the European Immigration and Asylum Policy

The conclusions of Tampere (1999), the Work Programme of The Hague (2004) and Stockholm (2009), and the European Agenda on Migration (2015) are the roadmaps which have marked the progress in the development of a European immigration and asylum policy in the last 20 years, and which have upheld the aforementioned four main working areas (Pinyol-Jiménez, 2018).

Although there is evident coherence in the themes followed by the work programmes, the development process has actually served to make major modifica-

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1 Conclusions of the Tampere European Council (1999). They can be found at www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/tam_en.htm.
tions in the specific aims of this policy, thereby highlighting four anomalies that have accompanied (and affected) the whole process.

Firstly, the upholding of the intergovernmental decision-making principle on matters of immigration and asylum. The supranational logic in these areas has generated deep mistrust among Member States, for whom most competences in immigration and asylum have been reserved. This tension between the intergovernmental and supranational dynamics has had a crucial impact on the development of this European policy. Partly, this is because it has limited the areas for consensus and led to a sectoralized fragmentation of the immigration and asylum policy in order to be able to advance. In a bid to achieve, albeit minimal, consensus, right from the start the Commission has accepted fragmentation and regulatory disunion in the European immigration and asylum policy, always allowing for a broad margin of discretion when it comes to its application by the individual states (Carrera et al., 2018). Thus, instead of progressing on general entry and residence mechanisms for non-EU nationals, for example, advances have been made in the procedures which regulate entry on the grounds of family reunification, study or for highly-skilled workers, to cite a few examples. On the other hand, and more importantly, this difficulty in reaching consensus and thereby developing supranational instruments has enabled the parallel development of a European policy dedicated to “legal” immigration and the fight against irregular immigration, with differentiated decision-making procedures (Jakobson & Lauren, 2018). This anomalous situation was not corrected until the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which scrapped the requirement of unanimity and introduced qualified majority voting for all matters on immigration and asylum policy. During the first decade, therefore, issues on immigration and asylum were slow to move forwards as regards conditions for entry and residence for third country nationals in the European area. However, policymaking was much more streamlined when tackling irregular immigration, which developed as a separate policy in its own right and is thereby closely linked with a second key anomaly in European immigration and asylum policy.

The ability to achieve consensus, basically on issues related with border control and the fight against irregular immigration, implied a de facto understanding of immigration as a threat to national security. The fact that migration issues, in the European context, are discussed in the justice and home affairs councils, reinforces this view of immigration as a security issue. The securitized view of migration has distorted not only the public debate, but also the instruments of the common immigration and asylum policy, as this, essentially, has served more to develop a framework of actions and instruments to prevent irregularities on the maritime border. Reaching agreements to maintain maritime border control operations has been easier than reforming the common asylum system or revising the entry guidelines for highly qualified workers, for example. It has basically meant understanding immigration policy as one of border control, when the former implies so much more than this instrument-turned-goal. This securitization of the migration phenomenon, and the EU’s weak response in recent years to change the situation, has placed the Schengen system of allowing the free movement of persons under tension, clearly affected the right to asylum in European countries (restricting access for asylum seekers) and weakened the principle of solidarity that sustains the European project, as demonstrated by the failure to relocate asylum seekers from the hotspots of Italy and Greece.

Instead of progressing on general entry and residence mechanisms for non-EU nationals, advances have been made in the procedures which regulate entry

A third anomaly is connected with the kind of relations developed with migrants’ countries of origin and transit. The logic of co-responsibility sought in Tampere and which can also be found in different proposals of

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the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility since 2005, have been subject to a logic of dependence on dialogue with third countries on the issue of migration. Third country collaboration has required linking the EU’s migration policy with its external action. However, these relations have been mainly focused on fighting irregular immigration, essentially leading to resources being allocated to strengthen border controls in neighbouring countries, signing readmission agreements with these and working to put an end to the “root causes” of migration. A double dynamic has been established, which, on the one hand, has led to the externalization of border control (Lavenex & Uçar‐ er, 2002), delegating the responsibility of their “protection” to neighbouring countries, and, on the other, a revision of development cooperation to focus it on the origin and transit countries of the migrant flows. The first dynamic, however, has simply served to place European Union member countries in a weak position in relation to their partners, who have understood migration management as an instrument with which they can negotiate with the European Union to benefit their own interests (in other areas) (Landau et al., 2018), or through which they can guarantee a certain permissiveness in areas such as their own human rights issues at home, to mention one.

The securitized view of migration has distorted the instruments of the common immigration and asylum policy

Finally, a fourth important anomaly has been the lack of communication regarding the objectives, competences and action areas of the European immigration and asylum policy, particularly with regard to its limitations and shortcomings. This lack of a community narrative, accompanied by the development of instruments mainly focused on fighting irregular immigration, perceived as a threat, has also generated adverse effects. Firstly, a lack of knowledge regarding the material limits and regulatory capacities of the European Commission in terms of immigration, integration and asylum, has been intelligently used by certain member countries who have preferred to blame a European Union detached from its decisions (or lack of) on the subject of migration. Some political leaders have stated that the European Union did not serve to protect the shared borders; others that it reduced national sovereignty in matters of migration to intolerable levels; and others that it did not adequately respond to the urgent humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean. In this debate on the responsibility of the “European Union,” the key decision-making actors in the area of immigration and asylum in the European Union have not been identified and there have not been sufficient explanations on the limits of community actions in immigration and asylum or the Commission’s limits regarding procedures and areas of action. And, more importantly, there has been no contemplation of the changes needed to look for alternatives and propose solutions. This “unmanagement” has fueled the eurosceptic discourse throughout Europe, but also a growing discourse towards criminalizing immigration and normalizing xenophobic rhetoric in many European countries.

Twenty years after the journey began, now seems a good time to reflect and question whether or not there is room to continue moving forwards, and, if so, in which direction, to develop a genuine European immigration and asylum policy.

Three Requirements to Move forwards in Managing Immigration and Asylum in the EU

There have been undeniable advances in immigration and asylum in the European Union in the last two decades, and these have enabled the creation of a body of related rules and regulations in the European Union. However, the instruments, actions and mechanisms that have been developed can not exactly be considered as public policy. This is firstly because the aims established in this area are sufficiently ambiguous not to resolve many of the challenges posed by migration management in the community space; and, secondly, since the competence in this area is still in the hands of the Member States, some of the objectives of the common European policy could not be developed in their entirety or have apparently been paralysed by the individual action of these countries. And there are no coercive mechanisms that could put things on the right track.

The common European policy on immigration and asylum, therefore, does not achieve any of these three
things. It is not a comprehensive policy, but rather the sum of actions and instruments aimed at achieving limited goals (and which are less ambitious than those initially defined), especially focused on border control. More steps have been taken to build a common framework for managing the external borders than for managing immigration and asylum; two areas of action that, although interrelated, are clearly distinguishable. It is not common because the decisions that are agreed upon demonstrate how the ultimate competence lies in the individual will of each Member State. The failure to comply with decisions that are taken and community regulations reveals the Commission’s weakness vis-à-vis the Member States when it comes to ensuring they comply with current legislation. And finally, it does not consider immigration and asylum in European terms, but rather in relation to the realities of each Member State, thus preventing a comprehensive view of this phenomenon in the European area and, therefore, in the responses that are required for this space.

More steps have been taken to build a common framework for managing the external borders than for managing immigration and asylum

Advancing in the harmonization of national policies on immigration and asylum today seems more feasible that talking about a common European policy on immigration and asylum in its strictest sense. Because that is what the Member States have decided, independently. But also because the development of a common policy in these matters requires advances to be made in the convergence of other areas, such as labour markets, the standardization of qualifications or the access to (and quality of) public services, to mention but a few areas that have an impact on people’s mobility, especially in a space without internal borders. The constitution of a comprehensive and common European policy on immigration and asylum seems like a tough goal to achieve at the present time, and it needs to be understood as something to work towards, rather than a realistic objective, which, in any case, can only be understood in the long term. Nevertheless, the room for improvement in the short and medium term is substantial, assuming there is a will to do so.

In this regard, it is essential to recover the principle of solidarity on which a large part of the European project is founded. If the trust between Member States breaks down and these countries view the immigration and asylum issue as a stage for a downsized confrontation, then not only will advances be unlikely, but there will also be a regression in the protection of universal rights, such as asylum, which are laid out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The failure of the refugee relocation process from the hotspots of Greece and Italy does not bode well for the future. Solidarity requires overcoming state dynamics and contemplating spaces for consensus on issues that go beyond border protection. The revision of the Dublin Regulation, which incorporates a deeper revision of the European Asylum System, seems crucial in this regard. At the same time, the European Commission will ideally recover its initiative in matters of immigration and asylum, offering innovative proposals for the Member States which break with the passive dynamics that seem to have marked community action since 2010.

At the same time, the principle of responsibility must surely be raised, which obliges Member States to improve their compliance with existing community regulations, without constantly questioning the progress made thus far. Responsibility should also mean opening informed debates on the channels for accessing European territory, moving beyond a focus on maritime border control. Along these lines, relations with third countries, neighbouring countries or migrants’ origin and/or transit countries are a priority, but so too is giving these substance, beyond demanding they play the role of border police. The risks of externalization do not only have an impact on safeguarding the rights of people in transit, but also on the principle of security, about which this network on relations revolves. Exploring contracts given at coun-

3 It is enough to follow Hungary’s slow infringement procedure initiated by the Commission and now in the hands of the European Court of Justice for its failure to comply with European asylum and return legislation. See: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-469_en.htm.
try of origin, the possibility of study visas or the improvement of family reunification procedures could be some considerations for the European agenda.

It is essential to recover the principle of solidarity on which a large part of the European project is founded

Finally, no progress can be made if the principle of coherence is not revived, which implies coordinating actions related with migration and asylum management within the logic of the principles and freedoms that form the foundations of the European project. Building spaces that infringe on people’s rights or normalizing the violation of people’s rights simply because they are foreign (De Lucas, 2017) is a danger that the European Union should aim to avoid. In the area of asylum, and assuming there is a binding international and European regulation, the first clear steps towards building a shared European asylum model could be taken with greater immediacy. This should contemplate people’s reasons for entry, establish a fair distribution among receiving countries and safeguard the rights of people fleeing conflict in a way which is harmonized right across the European territory.

By Way of a Conclusion: Recovering the Spirit of Tampere to Move Forwards

Developing a European immigration and asylum policy or moving forwards in the definition of common instruments in these matters is an essential requirement for guaranteeing the proper functioning of the European area of free movement, one of the milestones most positively valued by Europeans. Even when migratory movements are seen as a solution to Europe’s demographic imbalances, not enough attention is given to the economic and social inequalities that exist between the countries of the EU and the countries in its vicinity, or to the inequalities that exist between and within member countries. The EU’s immigration and asylum policies have to be developed with these realities, among others, in mind. Advancing in this common policy cannot only be done through the prism of border control. More comprehensive channels of action must be explored and ones clearly more linked with other European policies, such as social protection or foreign relations, and in connection with other areas, such as labour markets or public services, which also require greater convergence.

A shared framework needs to be developed which allows the EU and its Member States to define and discuss which goals to follow in the area of migration, which instruments need to be developed to achieve these, which legislative pieces are missing and which specific actions need to be implemented for these to be introduced. And to do so, it seems crucial that we recover the spirit of Tampere, which understood immigration and asylum policies as an essential instrument for guaranteeing a shared space of security, freedom and justice, and not as a shield to protect against mobility (or diversity), as it is so often understood in this period of history. And, at the same time, greater attention needs to be given to the incorporation of migrants into their host societies and co-existence in countries that are increasingly diverse, putting an end to any related discrimination, and fighting against the hate speech which attacks diversity.

In coordinating this comprehensive policy, national policies have proved insufficient. The Global Compact for Migration, approved last December in the context of the United Nations, is undoubtedly the clearest example of the need for multi-level and multilateral dialogue on migration and asylum to ensure that people’s mobility has a positive effect on origin, transit and destination societies, as well as on migrants themselves. On the European stage, this collaboration has been progressing for two decades now, with mixed results. It seems like the right time for a full revision, coinciding with the new work programme to be approved by the next Commission, which will take over in October 2019. A Tampere 2.0


5 See www.iom.int/global-compact-migration.
(Lisa, 2018) will need renewed regulations and instruments, but it can benefit from the efforts and advances achieved thus far. Under the principles of solidarity, responsibility and coherence, recovering the spirit of Tampere can be understood as a way of reclaiming the essence of the European project, as it is laid out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

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Public Opinion toward Immigration, Refugees, and Identity in Europe: A Closer Look at What Europeans Think and How Immigration Debates Have Become So Relevant

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Recent dramatic changes in Europe’s political landscape are closely related to an increase in support for parties that take a strong stance against immigration. The purpose of this article is to provide a nuanced picture of public opinion on the issue of immigration, and specifically refugees, provide some background on why these issues are important, and examine how the issue has been instrumentalized by authoritarian populists in Europe to mobilize the public in their support.

During the 2015 refugee and migration peak, migration policy once again came into the spotlight as the continent experienced a sharp surge in arrivals, with numbers reaching a million. Since 2015, migration flows across the Mediterranean have decreased dramatically, to 390,000 in 2016 (over 360,000 of whom arrived by sea), and 141,472 in 2018. Italy and Greece were at the forefront of the crisis, with thousands arriving at their shores and borders. The images of thousands of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Germany have also become part of Europeans’ collective memory and shaped the course of politics in the country and the continent.

The number of Greece sea arrivals dropped dramatically following the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 from over 850,000 arrivals in 2015, to only 170,000 in 2016. In March 2019, the European Commission declared the refugee and migrant “crisis” over. As the Mediterranean route becomes harder to cross, Spain is now the main entry point for crossing into Europe. By the latter part of 2018, Spain was receiving twice as many migrants as Greece and six times as many as Italy, although most were coming from Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Gambia, instead of the Middle East.

Immigration is now a prominent feature on the political agenda of parties across Europe, with extreme-right populist leaders across the continent campaigning on an anti-immigration agenda and instrumentalizing fears about immigration to present an us vs. them discourse to rally supporters. Even in countries with low levels of migration, such as Hungary, leaders like Victor Orbán have made immigration a central plank in their platform.

Despite the decrease in arrivals, according to the Eurobarometer, immigration is still considered the main...
concern by 40 percent of Europeans.\(^7\) How is it that, despite significant changes on migration flows and policy, this remains such a contested issue?

The public is often presented as divided into two camps: those who hold open views and wholly support immigration, and those who strongly oppose it. More in Common’s studies reveal that, in most countries, these two groups exist, but they do not constitute the majority of the population

Public opinion on immigration is often discussed at the level of preference (e.g. do Europeans want more or less migration?) or assessment (e.g. is immigration good or bad for the country?). Why and how it has become so prominent (or issue-salient) and the nuances amongst the public are less discussed.

Public opinion on immigration is also often discussed in the context of a divided citizenry. In this way, the public is often presented as divided into two camps: those who hold open views and wholly support immigration, and those who strongly oppose it. More in Common’s studies reveal that, in most countries, these two groups exist, but they do not constitute the majority of the population. There are other segments of the population who hold more ambiguous and flexible views.\(^8\)

**Why Is Immigration Such a Big Deal in Europe?**

The challenge of immigration is far greater than a management and integration challenge. Debates about immigration have become highly emotional and are now a central feature of the agenda of authoritarian populist parties. Immigration has become a divisive issue even in countries such as the United States, where immigration had always been seen more favourably. Immigration has generally been viewed more negatively in Europe. While on the aggregate there has been a small decrease in negative sentiment overall, it seems that attitudes towards immigration in Europe are mixed, although they still tend to skew more to the negative. While most Europeans (38%) believe that immigration is more of a problem than an opportunity, many also believe that immigration is both a problem and an opportunity in equal measures (31\%).\(^9\) However, this does not necessarily mean that Europeans feel negatively towards immigrants themselves, as most also think that immigrants have had a positive impact on society overall (42\%). In fact, 72 percent agree that immigrants make it easier to fill jobs for which it is difficult to find workers.\(^10\)

The prominence of immigration in national debates is likely the result of a combination of factors. Firstly, immigration is connected to many other issues. The challenges around managing immigration flows and the refugee crisis reveal many of the system’s failures. In Europe, a lack of coordination and mismanagement displayed what many perceived as a lack of control and sovereignty. In this way, immigration is a policy area that is seen as showcasing a state’s ability (or inability) to exercise sovereignty by admitting or excluding non-citizens. The British referendum on the European Union is a prime example of this, made evident by the slogan of the Leave campaign: “Take Back Control.” Secondly, the current backlash against immigration is happening against a backdrop of fast economic, technological and demographic shifts that were exacerbated by the 2007 financial crisis, as well as in a context of decreasing trust in politics and institutions. Europe saw unemployment rates peak in 2013 at 11 percent, almost twice as high as they were before the financial crisis began. The situation has particularly affected southern Europe, where countries such as Spain and Greece saw rates reach over 25 percent


\(^8\) See More in Common’s studies at www.moreincommon.com.


\(^10\) Ibid.
at their peak. While levels of unemployment have improved over the years, these countries continue to have high rates today (14 percent and 18 percent respectively).11

Thirdly, the topic of immigration bridges issues of security and identity; religion and terrorism; political correctness and stifled discourse; globalization and the economy; divides between voters and elites; and the declining trust in governments, institutions and the media. In this way, attitudes towards immigration cannot be analysed in isolation, as they are not developed in a void but rather in relation to the wider European context. These links are willingly reinforced by those who oppose immigration. Immigrants are often portrayed as posing a security threat to the nation, but this threat is extended to encompass threats to traditions and local culture as well as public health risks. In Italy, 39 percent believe that immigrants pose a public health risk,12 and 42 percent of Greeks hold the same belief.13 In this way, the public’s anxieties are heightened by arrivals being presented as a danger to society.

Finally, debates around immigration are also extremely connected to specific notions and insecurities about national identity. Group identities influence people’s attitudes and behaviours. Immigration debates bring to the fore differences in attitudes towards national identity (and the importance given to it) amongst the population and between those who have more open and closed views. Immigration is used to redefine who belongs to an “us” defined in opposition to a “them.” Concerns over the strength of one’s national identity increase when immigrants are framed through this lens. It becomes an issue that reflects fears about the destruction of one’s in-group, traditions and way of life and reinforces cultural insecurities. Both as a result and a cause, it is an issue that can be, and has been, easily instrumentalized by those with authoritarian populist tendencies.

**Attitudinal Segmentation: Key Findings**

For the past three years, More in Common has been analysing public attitudes in established democracies to better understand the forces that are driving us apart, and what can bring us back together. Working with social psychologists and leading market research firms, we have commissioned detailed national studies in the United States, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Greece. National segmentation studies provide unique insights into the landscape of public opinion because they create a more complete picture of how people see the world, connecting their views across a wide range of issues to their values, group identity and demographics. In More in Common’s segmentation studies, groups are defined by their attitudes and beliefs, not demographics. From this research, we have identified several cross-cutting findings, with national specificities.

**The Public Is Not Divided into Two Groups at Loggerheads with Each Other**

In all countries where More in Common has conducted research, the data has revealed that, based on attitudes and underlying beliefs, no society can be accurately described as divided into two groups. In all countries, we observed the existence of at least one very welcoming group (“the open group”) and one very opposed group (“the closed group”). They are the most vocal and actively engaged with this topic. The views of the most open and closed groups are more frequently present in social and traditional media than the views of those who have less strident attitudes. They have a disproportionate effect on public discourse, creating a distorted impression that their views represent those of most of the public. As a result, they have a larger effect on shaping the narrative around immigration.

However, most Europeans hold a variety of views which are more flexible, ambiguous and sometimes conflicting. For example, most believe in the moral imperative of welcoming refugees while at the same time worry that most people trying to enter Europe as refugees are not really refugees.

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There Are Generally Two or Three Distinctive Middle Groups, Whose Characteristics Are Country Specific

Aggregate analysis at the European level allows for the identification of trends, but it fails to capture the country-level nuances that stem from historical and socio-cultural particularities. Middle groups are less ideological and less actively involved in the topic. While there are several middle groups in all the countries where More in Common has conducted studies, the characteristics of the middle groups are specific to each one of them. There are greater similarities between the most open and closed segments, which helps explain similar overall trends in public discourse across Europe. Open segments across countries are welcoming across a range of issues, while the most closed segments display similar levels of anger, connect immigration to security, health and cultural threats, and

Source: UNHCR Desperate journeys 2018
often share nativist attitudes. Even between similarly open/closed segments, however, there are national differences. For example, open segments in northern Europe tend to view globalization positively, whereas Greece’s equivalent group does not share this sentiment.

**Example: Disengaged segments across Europe.**

In three European countries – the Netherlands, Italy and Greece – and in the United States, statistical analysis has identified middle segments which showcase lower levels of engagement with the topic of immigration and refugees or which are reluctant to engage with the topic.

— *Dutch Disengaged.* These are characterized by having less interest in social and political issues. They take a neutral stance with regards to practically all matters relating to immigration and the influence of immigrants on the Netherlands. Their disengagement seems to be motivated by a reluctance to engage in debate and their concern that immigration causes division in society. They feel that there is a lot of pressure in the Netherlands to be in favour of or against refugees.

— *Italian Disengaged Moderates.* They often do not express a view on issues of national identity, immigration and refugees. They do not believe that there is pressure to speak and think a certain way on immigration issues, and, when they do express their views, they are likely to voice positive attitudes that are more aligned with the views of the Italian open segments. They tend to empathize and identify with immigrants and refugees, and if they display scepticism it is because they see themselves in a similar struggle to improve their situation in an unconducive environment.

— *Greek Instinctive Pragmatists.* They are less engaged than other segments in their country but are very different from Italian and Dutch disengaged segments. Instinctive Pragmatists are unique in holding optimistic views about the economic consequences of globalization and they are also the most likely to believe in the economic benefits of immigration. However, they hold colder than average feelings towards immigrants, refugees and Muslims, and are very concerned about terrorism. They believe that allowing refugees into the country increases security risks, which results in an overall opposition. They are the segment less likely to feel comfortable expressing their views on these topics in Greece.

On some issues, there are significant differences between northern and southern European countries’ response to the refugee and migration crisis. Italians and Greeks view globalization far more negatively. While most open segments across Europe tend to have a positive view of the economic impact of globalization, this is not true for the Greek Multiculturalists (81 percent view it negatively) and the Italian Cosmopolitans (50 percent disagree it has been positive).

The views of the most open and closed groups are more frequently present in social and traditional media than the views of those who have less strident attitudes. They have a disproportionate effect on public discourse, creating a distorted impression that their views represent those of most of the public.

There are also differences in Euroscepticism and feelings towards the EU. Italians and Greeks feel that the European Union has not done enough to support their countries. Notably, in line with the views of open segments in other countries, Italian Cosmopolitans and Catholic Humanitarians (both open groups) display very low levels of support for the idea of distancing the country from the EU. However, in Greece, both the most open segment (37 percent) and the most closed segment (47 percent) are more likely to support distancing.

In Germany, France and the Netherlands, there is a widespread sense that there is pressure to speak in a certain way about issues related to immigration and refugees. This is not true of Italy and Greece, where citizens feel that they can express their views comfortably.
Most Europeans Understand the Technical Difference between Immigrants and Refugees, but They Are Both Seen as “the Other”

The prominence of debate about immigration policies in recent years has raised awareness regarding the distinctions between different forms of migration. Europeans demonstrate relatively high levels of understanding of the definitional differences between refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and economic migrants and high levels of support for the principle of asylum.

Yet when prompted to allocate attributes to each category, Europeans show how both immigrants and refugees are lumped together in a larger category of “the other,” rather than really being perceived differently.

In France, Germany and the Netherlands, More in Common conducted tests to see whether at the rational and subconscious levels citizens really distinguish between the two groups. The results show how there is little difference in how they perceive each of them.

The subsuming of all newcomers into an “other” group is related to the belief that many trying to claim asylum in Europe are in fact economic migrants, but this association is also constantly reinforced by authoritarian populists that promote an us vs. them discourse.

In circumstances of increasingly polarized or fractured countries, people are more likely to view issues through the lens of the potential gains or losses to the in-group. Xenophobic populists intensify the strength of group identities by advancing polarizing narratives centred on conflict between the interests of nationals (“us”) vs. those of immigrants, the modern times out-group of choice (along with Muslims). Public debate in European countries where authoritarian populists are gaining supporters (such as Spain, Italy, Germany, France or Hungary, among others) clearly display this playbook.

Conclusions

Debates on immigration are rarely only about immigration itself. Behind grand statements about immigration, whether positive or negative, lie particular conceptions of who we are as citizens and what a nation ought to do and be. In Europe, the conversation has been as much about responding to the refugee and migration flows from the southern shores of the Mediterranean as about the capacity of countries on the northern shores to create a social project that people can feel that they belong to. Rejection of mi-
grants and refugees is often a sign of unease with us – with ourselves – as much as it is about reticence about them – the other.

Debates on immigration are rarely only about immigration itself. Behind grand statements about immigration, whether positive or negative, lie particular conceptions of who we are as citizens and what a nation ought to do and be.

Insecurities around culture and identity in times of vast economic inequality and rapid change are aptly exploited by far-right authoritarian populist parties. They prey on people’s fears and elevate them, a strategy that is easy to follow. In doing so, attention is channelled towards the migration issue, as has been evident across the continent. Yet talking about current challenges does not need to go hand in hand with turning against migrants or focusing the public debate on this topic. France is a clear example of this. While the National Rally centred much of its discourse (and much of its decades’ long rise) on an anti-migration platform, the recent national conversation and the Gilets Jaunes movement hardly ever mention immigration. Perhaps immigration has been force fed to angry disenfranchised masses as the most convenient frame for channelling their discontent.

Across Europe, significant numbers of citizens are expressing a profound sense of a loss of control and all-time low levels of trust in institutions and the system. Leaders such as Matteo Salvini have aptly identified and exploited people’s pressure points and learnt how to respond to them in an effective and skilfully-communicated way. It is thus concerning that Salvini will claim to have stopped the refugee influx into Italy and regained control for Italians when for years Italians felt that they had a weak and corrupt state.

Similarly, in Spain, Santiago Abascal has positioned his extreme far-right party Vox as the party of order and anti-migration. In the 2019 elections, they went from 0 seats in Congress to 24.

If far-right authoritarian populists are seen as the only parties providing genuine real control and rule of law, they are likely to extend their political gains. They will be able to entrench us vs. them narratives, redefine narrower and nativist conceptions of national identity, and further erode liberal democracy.

Many of the anxieties and concerns that citizens express are valid and legitimate and deserve the attention of pundits and leaders alike. However, in order to understand public opinion on immigration, its study cannot be detached from the wider context and its connection with a greater array of issues.
Migrations in the Mediterranean

Euro-Mediterranean Migration Dynamics: The Role of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries

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The Mediterranean is one of the regions most affected by migration issues due to its specificities as a border region separating two sides of an area characterized by strong asymmetries in levels of development. The severity of migration issues for the countries of the Mediterranean Basin, especially those on the southern and eastern shores (southern and eastern Mediterranean countries or SEMCs) has taken on an unprecedented scale, especially since the events of the “Arab Spring.” The uncontrolled dynamics of the illegal migration flows hoping to make it to Europe has placed the stability of the entire region in danger, especially in 2015.

The diverse policies pursued by the SEMCs, whether deliberately or as a result of mechanisms agreed with the European Union, is an encouraging step. But these policies are far from effective for reasons having to do with both the SEMCs themselves and their largest partner, the European Union. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to disparage all the policies implemented by certain southern Mediterranean countries. Some have been successful in terms of absorbing the migration shock and transforming the challenges it poses into a development dividend for the sake of stability and regional prosperity. This would be the case of the prospects of Morocco’s new immigration and asylum policy.

In any event, the transition to a new approach to migration governance that integrates the national, regional and international levels is the only option to provide substantive responses to the problem of illegal immigration, which raises issues with a strong impact on stability and the Euro-Mediterranean area.

The Mediterranean: A Region Strongly Affected by Migration

At present, the international debate on migration is highly controversial, pitting those who continue to defend the virtues of mobility as a source of growth and cultural enrichment against those who focus instead on the economic, social and security risks that mobility entails.

The Mediterranean, considered one of the main international migration corridors, is particularly concerned by these issues. Whilst European countries’ migration policies were once marked by their openness and incentivizing nature, they have gradually hardened and today seem to prioritize selective or chosen immigration aimed at meeting skilled labour needs.

This reversal in the trend is due to several cyclical and structural factors. The challenging economic situation in some host countries and the uncontrollable scale of illegal immigration to Europe have further rekindled xenophobic tensions and led several countries on the northern shore to make security considerations the main determinant of their migration policies, both within and outside their borders.

The sociopolitical transformations that some MENA countries have experienced, as well as the persistence of areas of tension in Africa, largely explain this situation. In addition to these factors, the migration dynamics are also due to the environmental crisis affecting many countries throughout the Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa.
Recent data on irregular migration flows in the Mediterranean\(^1\) show a clear decline, especially with regard to the eastern route, which, in 2015, reached alarming proportions (more than 800,000 irregular arrivals) before returning to very moderate levels of around 23,000 arrivals in 2018. The flows along the central route remain dynamic, albeit with a downward trend, averaging 150,000 arrivals a year between 2015 and 2018.

The international debate is highly controversial, Pitting those who continue to defend the virtues of mobility against those who focus instead on the economic, social and security risks.

Whilst the activity along these two routes seems to be gradually declining, activity along the western route has increased somewhat, as evidenced by the rise in the number of arrivals, which grew from nearly 7,000 in 2015 to 23,143 in 2017 and 56,644 in 2018.

A Complex Migration Problem Due to the Multidimensional Nature of the Issues Involved

Due to their multidimensional nature, migratory phenomena in the Mediterranean pose complex questions for both countries of origin and transit and host countries. The main issues can be summarized as follows:

- **At the legal and regulatory level**: national and international regulations on migration are not fully aligned. Several host countries continue to put national considerations at the centre of their migration policy even as the bilateral agreements concluded remain marked by strong asymmetries that do not take into account the priorities of the countries of origin and transit, some of which have become host countries as well.

- **At the economic level**: Migrants’ contribution to host countries’ economic growth is widely recognized. Amongst other things, it makes it possible to fill the host countries’ labour shortages due to their aging populations. For the countries of origin, migrants’ remittances play an important role in the external financial balances and contribute to the dynamics of domestic demand. This virtuous circle is today constrained by several factors related, especially, to the difficulties of integrating migrants into the host countries due to the rise in xenophobia and the costs borne by the countries of origin in terms of brain drain.

- **At the security level**: The strong interconnection between terrorist groups and trafficking networks involved in illegal immigration and human trafficking is a serious threat. Certain critical areas, such as the Sahel, have become fertile ground for illegal migration activities that are highly profitable for the terrorist groups operating in the region. At the same time, they offer them opportunities to recruit new candidates for illegal immigration, who generally have few prospects and, therefore, are vulnerable to indoctrination.

- **At the environmental level**: The forced displacement of populations due to the impact of climate change is an emerging form of migration which could grow more intense in the future, especially in countries with a severely limited ability to adapt. This situation poses major legal challenges, not only in terms of recognition by the international community of the status of climate refugee, but also in terms of cooperation policy aimed at developing the resilience of countries vulnerable to climate change.

Policies Implemented by SEMCs, Whose Effectiveness Is Far from Satisfactory

To address the multiple challenges caused by the growing migratory pressures they face, SEMCs have resorted to several mechanisms. They are essentially

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the product of cooperation agreements\(^2\) concluded on a bilateral basis with the European Union to counter illegal immigration flows, whether involving their own nationals or those from neighbouring regions. These agreements include, amongst other things, measures to strengthen border control and for the systematic exchange of information, as well as the implementation of certain humanitarian actions.

**The policies pursued by the SEMCs to combat irregular migration are constrained by the inherent limits of their development model**

An assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms put into place by the SEMCs suggests that the outcomes achieved to date fall far short of the expected goals. Several factors corroborate this assertion:

- The continuous influx of irregular migrants is itself proof of the ineffectiveness of the measures taken to address it. In addition to the poor economic performance and growing social exclusion of certain age groups, particularly young people, the lack of negotiating power of the countries of origin hardly helps create the right conditions to tackle this phenomenon according to a holistic and integrated vision.
- The situation of pervasive instability in some SEMCs complicates the phenomenon of irregular migration by creating alternative pathways that are almost impossible to control. The limited capabilities of sending countries or transit countries such as Libya, plagued by an acute internal crisis, hinder the process of combatting the illegal migration networks that take advantage of failed and vulnerable states.
- Most policies are not part of a comprehensive framework. The Sahel region is a major source of migrants and fertile ground for several criminal organizations. With the exception of Morocco, which has embarked on a renewed migration policy that takes this problem into account, the other countries still have a long way to go to develop policies to integrate the sub-Saharan context as a key parameter for reabsorption in the migration equation.

**Morocco’s Experience with Migration Governance: Strengths and Weaknesses**

Due to its geographical position at the gateway to Europe, Morocco is strongly affected by migration issues. Once a country of origin of illegal immigration and a transit point for sub-Saharan immigration to

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\(^2\) The EU has chosen to conclude cooperation agreements with the refugees’ countries of transit and/or origin. The readmission agreements in force with “third” states are not a new approach in the history of European migration policies. The case of the EU and Turkey is the most illustrative. An agreement was concluded on 18 March 2016 with Turkey to halt migration flows in the Aegean Sea in exchange for financial support amounting to 3 billion euros and greater facilities for the granting of visas to Turks. That said, in the particular case of Syrians, this so-called bartering mechanism follows a one-for-one rule: for every Syrian returned to Turkey, another Syrian who has already obtained refugee status from the UNHCR will be resettled in Europe. This agreement has significantly contributed to the decline in migration flows along the eastern route.
Europe, it has increasingly become a host country for migrants. The hardening of Europe’s migration policy and the country’s own opening towards Africa, consecrated in January 2017 by the Kingdom’s return to its institutional family, are the two factors that explain this situation.

In advocating a comprehensive and integrated approach that takes both human and security considerations into account, Morocco has chosen a migration policy with a human face. This is evidenced by its adoption, in 2013, of a new immigration and asylum strategy that resulted in the regularization of the situation of nearly 23,096 immigrants in late 2014. More recently, a second regularization operation was launched on 15 December 2016, according to more flexible criteria than the first wave. As a result of this operation, 20,000 applications (out of a total of 28,400), representing 113 nationalities, were granted through late October 2018, 48% of which corresponded to women.

The over weighting of security considerations to curb the risks and threats of migration has revealed its limits

These regularization operations were transmitted through measures promoting access by migrants to the health and education systems under the same conditions as Moroccan citizens. Likewise, Morocco has opened the doors of its Office of Vocational Training and Employment Promotion (OFPPT from the French) to migrants whose status has been regularized to allow them to receive qualifying training and boost their chances of finding decent work. With regard to access to housing, the 2015 Finance Act provided for the possibility for regular migrants to take advantage of state-subsidized housing under the same conditions as nationals.

Notwithstanding the positive nature of Morocco’s approach to adopting a flexible migration policy for African nationals, it is certainly not devoid of risk, for the following main reasons:

— The efforts to integrate sub-Saharan migrants face cultural and socioeconomic constraints, albeit tacit and sporadic ones, that could grow should xenophobic behaviour take root.

— The succession of regularization operations could be a pull factor for other potential migrants, overwhelming the country’s absorption capacity and posing significant socioeconomic and security challenges.

— The stabilizing effect of the policy of regularizing sub-Saharan migrants could be a temporary fix rather than a perfect substitute for the initial plan to migrate to Europe. That risk would jeopardize the strength of Morocco’s regional and international commitments in this area, forcing it to adopt less flexible positions on migration management.

Towards Efficient Migration Governance that Better Addresses the Mutual Interests of Both Shores of the Mediterranean

Given the severity of the migration issues and the associated multifaceted threats, the use of new approaches to the regulation and governance of migration between the two shores of the Mediterranean is inevitable.

These new approaches are justified by several considerations that reflect both the inefficiency of security measures alone to guarantee a lasting solution to the phenomenon of irregular immigration and the inability of the countries of origin, some of which have

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3 This strategy is a logical continuation of the report prepared by the National Human Rights Council entitled “Étrangers et droits de l’Homme au Maroc: Pour une politique d’asile et d’immigration radicalement nouvelle” (Foreigners and Human Rights in Morocco: For a Dramatically New Asylum and Immigration Policy). It is broken down into four strategic objectives: facilitate the integration of regular immigrants, update the regulatory framework, put an appropriate institutional framework into place, and manage the migratory flows whilst respecting human rights.


6 Communiqué du CNDH. www.cndh.org.ma/fr/communiques/la-commission-nationale-de-recours-de-la-deuxieme-operation-de-regularisation-assouplit.
also become host countries, to implement appropriate policies to eradicate this scourge and substantially limit its human and security costs.

The Imperative to Promote a Common and Shared Perception of Migration Issues Far Removed from Political One-Upmanship

It is widely accepted today that the overweighting of security considerations to curb the risks and threats of migration has revealed its limits. The proliferation of maritime patrols, the sophistication of the means of technical control, the creation of immigrant identification and detention centres and even the conclusion of agreements with the countries of origin of the migration have helped to secure, to some extent, the EU’s external borders. Nevertheless, the persistence of the phenomenon offers irrefutable proof that the efforts made attack the symptoms, rather than the root, of the problem. To overcome this constraint, knowledge of migratory phenomena in the Mediterranean must be strengthened in order to better understand and grasp the underlying causes. To this end, the implementation of a regional monitoring centre specialized in the study of all aspects of migration in the Mediterranean would be a strategic move. Endowed with the right human and material resources, such a structure could play a unifying role, coordinating the research efforts of research centres in the partner countries. The priority areas to be considered would include cross-disciplinary and prospective studies to strengthen proactive capabilities and propose innovative solutions to the identified problems based on international best practices in migration governance.

The Importance of Favouring Structural Approaches to Provide Substantive Responses to Migration Phenomena

Policies to combat illegal immigration in particular should be part of any human development approach to ensure conditions of economic and social stability in sending countries. To this end, priority should be given to changing the development models currently in place in these countries and to public and related policies to turn them into genuine levers for creating wealth and reducing all aspects of inequality.

This effort to transform the development model will require major internal reforms. However, it will also require substantial external support from European countries. This support should be centred on strengthening institutional capabilities and supporting economic and social development projects in the sending countries. Large-scale promotion of revenue-generating activities in disadvantaged areas is one of the actions needed to provide substantive responses to this thorny issue.

The countries of North Africa, should pool their resources and coordinate their efforts to enhance the effectiveness of their actions to dismantle human trafficking networks and to relentlessly combat terrorist organizations and transnational crime.

The Opportunity to Promote Enhanced Subregional, Regional and Intercontinental Cooperation

The transition to a constructive migration policy would entail, above all, substantially strengthening the cooperation between the countries of the southern Mediterranean basin. These countries have an interest in setting aside their political differences to better address their common challenges. The countries of North Africa, one of the main outlets of irregular migration to Europe, should pool their resources and coordinate their efforts to enhance the effectiveness of their actions to dismantle human trafficking networks and to relentlessly combat terrorist organizations and transnational crime, whose connections with illegal immigration networks hardly need proving.

The bilateral approach pursued to date by the European Union in the fight against illegal immigration should be replaced by multilateral agreements bringing together all the envisaged measures under a coherent and unified mechanism. The simultaneous relaxation of procedures to promote regular and orderly migration that meets the needs of both shores of the Mediterranean would also be a very suitable policy. Of course, migration is not an exclusively Mediterranean phenomenon. It is fuelled by the dynamics of...
the flows from sub-Saharan African countries. Today these flows are an additional pressure on North African countries in particular and heavily condition their ability to work towards better regulation of migration flows. To stabilize these flows and keep them at acceptable levels, it is crucial to focus efforts on supporting the political stability of the countries sending migrants and to encourage the implementation of revenue-generating socioeconomic projects. Priority should likewise be given to support for climate change adaptation, which will ultimately be the main cause of forced displacements of African populations to North Africa and, from there, to Europe. Improving local populations’ access to basic resources such as water and energy is an absolute priority, and rightly so.

Migration is not an exclusively Mediterranean phenomenon. It is fuelled by the dynamics of the flows from sub-Saharan African countries.

The Need to Involve Non-governmental Actors in the Design and Implementation of Policies to Combat Illegal Immigration

The fight against illegal immigration requires solidarity and collective ownership of the issues involved by all stakeholders. Consequently, the role of the media and of civil-society players is essential to support efforts to raise awareness, especially amongst people, with regard to the risks and dangers of illegal immigration. Civil-society associations that work with migration both in host countries and in countries of origin should be strongly supported. Citizen initiatives pursued under the auspices of NGOs, through support for the creation of microenterprises and cooperatives, would not only highlight the value of local know-how and create revenue and jobs, but also give hope to the vulnerable segments of the population who view migration as the only way out.

Given their proximity to migrants, these associations could thus be an important channel for awareness raising, support and protection of migrants’ fundamental rights, including migrants in irregular situations. They could also play a vital role in mitigating the impact of the increase in smuggling activities and in illegal organizations involved in human trafficking.

Conclusion

A key point on the cooperation agenda at the Mediterranean level, migration is of critical importance, drawing its substance from the interconnected issues associated with it. Its reduction to a mere security issue has, based on the evidence, been inconclusive and often counterproductive. The big challenge is to transform the migration risk into a development opportunity. Achieving this goal requires a true paradigm shift that will turn the Mediterranean into an area of shared prosperity able to resolve the multiple divides separating the two shores. Taking the depth of Africa into account is also a priority to address the roots of the problem.

Whilst this new cooperation paradigm, which has yet to be built, fundamentally involves states, its efficient implementation will not be possible without the assistance of non-governmental organizations, which are clearly the enduring channels for “win-win” regional cooperation. Migration could be, in many ways, a powerful lever, enabling the Mediterranean to regain its leadership and attractiveness in the new geo-strategic balances that lie on the horizon.
Dossier: Social Movements, Digital Transformations and Changes in the Mediterranean Region
Poverty and Inequalities Continue to Plague Much of the Arab Region

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The Arab region is undergoing its most difficult and tumultuous moment since the birth of the modern Arab state system a century ago. The late 2010/early 2011 uprisings that erupted in half a dozen Arab countries were the most dramatic expression of a century-long trend of individuals seeking to become citizens and play their part in shaping stable societies and acceptable states. In their aftermath, the region has experienced a number of consequences that have led to the current situation of the 400 million Arab citizens of the 22 member states of the Arab League. Iran, Israel and Turkey are major non-Arab powers in the Middle East region that have a considerable influence, but the core conditions that drive the trajectory of the entire region are to be found inside the Arab countries themselves.

Expanding populations, erratic economic growth, mismanagement of economic and natural resources, a total absence of citizen participation in policy-making through democratic institutions, and continuing warfare and other political violence have combined to bring the Arab region to where it is today: plagued by a series of troubling realities in a number of connected domains. The most important are education, labour, income, poverty, inequalities, vulnerability, social protection, political participation and growing citizen marginalization and alienation. The region did not suddenly slip into this unhealthy condition over the past decade, but rather it is its history of erratic governance over the past century that can help explain many of today’s problems.

The birth of the modern Arab world as we know it occurred mostly at the hands of colonial powers in Europe, and partly at the hands of local warlords, who forcibly occupied lands and created countries. In both cases, the new Arab countries were created almost totally without the consent of their future citizens. Despite occasional, brief spurts of free elections, democratic and pluralistic consultations and civil society activism, nowhere in the Arab world has there been a sovereign state, shaped, managed, validated and held accountable by its own citizens. The troubles and dangers that define much of the Arab region today are largely due to the continuation of that reality, with the sole exception of Tunisia’s transition to a constitutional democracy, following the 2011 uprising that overthrew the former autocratic regime.

Most of the Arab states have retained their territorial configurations and have proved durable over time, despite the trials of war and economic stress. This is largely because for six decades after the birth of their new states, the citizens enjoyed the benefits of state-building legacies – even if they were not formally consulted. Roughly between 1920 and 1980, every generation across all Arab countries enjoyed better living standards and the promise of new opportunities for their children. That remarkable state-building and developmental thrust stagnated in the 1980s and has since run into serious constraints. The post-1980 strains have been due to a combination of reasons, such as erratic oil and gas revenues, population growth rates that were higher than economic expansion rates,

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the non-stop proliferation of family-based military control of governments, widespread corruption, the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict and its impacts, and constant foreign military interventions inside the Arab states.

**Rising Inequalities**

Behind the very varied conditions in Arab lands eight years after the 2010-11 uprisings, we can now identify an underlying layer of poor, vulnerable and marginalized citizens who make up the majority of the Arab region. This is not a very recent development, but rather has occurred over four decades or so. The new insights we have into this situation reflect better technical measures of poverty and vulnerability – especially the Multidimensional Poverty Index – along with sustained annual surveys of family conditions and attitudes across most Arab countries (through the Arab Barometer and the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies). Only a handful of wealthy energy-producing countries like Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait escape the broad trend towards Arab pauperization, vulnerability and rising inequalities.

Roughly between 1920 and 1980, every generation across all Arab countries enjoyed better living standards and the promise of new opportunities for their children. The dangerous pattern of new and deep structural threats comprises a cycle of poverty, inequality and vulnerability that seems likely to keep the region mired in turbulence and conflict for decades to come. As several hundred million Arabs become increasingly desperate to ensure their families’ basic needs, such conditions will exacerbate existing antagonisms and armed clashes across the region, heighten social tensions and ultimately lead to the fragmentation of both individual countries and the wider Arab region, after it having enjoyed minimal commonalities and integrity in the past century.

These threats include, most notably, chronic and growing poverty, a very high rate of informal employment, increased vulnerability among middle-income families, continual high population growth rates, which outstrip economic growth and expanding disparities and inequalities in almost every sector of life and society. As these combine with other political and material grievances that are common among most citizens (a lack of water, affordable food and decent housing, low political participation and accountability, among others) they erode citizens’ respect for and trust in government institutions, and lead to greater alienation among millions of families. There are three major grievances: 1) people’s quality of life deteriorates daily due to poverty and unmet needs; 2) they feel they are not treated equitably by their own state and society; 3) and they feel powerless to do anything about their condition. For many, the net result is the conclusion that their government and state are not only ineffective, but perhaps also illegitimate, in their eyes. The 2010-11 uprisings across the region were the most dramatic expression of how tens of millions of citizens responded to the consequences of these issues. The latest citizen uprisings in Algeria and Sudan, with their demands for better governance under civilian authorities, instead of military rule, are a continuation of the 2010-11 protests. They are also a sign of how citizens rebelling against sustained autocracy have learned the lessons from their previous attempts to install civilian democratic governance under the rule of law.

**Governments’ Superficial Responses**

Most Arab governments continue to introduce superficial reforms in pivotal sectors such as education, employment and anti-corruption, but their efforts mostly remain unsuccessful or limited in their impact. Simultaneously, the broader Arab trend in most countries since the end of the Cold War, around 1990, sees steadily increasing pauperization, vulnerability, perceived injustice and helplessness and disparities. The extent, causes and consequences of this troubling trend seem to elicit only superficial and limited responses from Arab governments or their foreign donors and patrons. Arab states seem to be making the big mistake they have repeatedly made since the 1970s, which is to ignore or downplay the current trend of pauperization/inequalities, whose elements started to appear.
The structural distortions and deficiencies in the political economy of the Arab region, therefore, persisted and worsened, bringing it to its current state.

It will be more difficult today for states, private sectors and foreign backers to ignore the signs of continuing and expanding citizen distress, because the inaccurate prevailing poverty measures in recent decades, which have masked signs of declining family wellbeing, have been replaced by more accurate and comprehensive ones. The old poverty measures based on a family’s daily expenditures did not accurately capture the very wealthy and the very poor in society, and thus they missed three critical trends: 1) high levels of poverty, 2) rising levels of vulnerability among families that used to be considered middle class or in the middle-income category and 3) a shrinking middle class.

**Multidimensional Poverty**

Recent analyses by economists at UNDP, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the World Bank and other institutions have used the Multidimensional Poverty (MDP) measure to gauge poverty and vulnerability more accurately than the previous reliance on money metric measures such as $1.25 or $1.90 per-day living expenditures. The Multidimensional Poverty Index, published by UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, offers excellent insights into this issue.

The MDP approach more accurately measures real life family conditions because it examines a range of key indicators in health, education and living standards (including nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, sanitation, electricity, drinking water, assets and others). Analysts assessing conditions in Arab countries over the past 20 years highlight several stark trends.

The actual levels of poverty and vulnerability in the Arab region are higher than previously thought, with some two-thirds of citizens falling into the categories of poor or vulnerable. The MDP figures indicate poverty rates as much as four times higher than previously assumed. In ten Arab states surveyed by ESCWA, 116 million people were classified as poor (41 percent of the total population), and 25 percent were vulnerable to poverty. In Egypt, poverty increased from 19.5 percent in 2005 to 28 percent in 2015. If this level of 66 percent poor/vulnerable holds for the entire Arab world, which the economists studying these issues believe is the case, it means that some 250 million people may be poor or vulnerable, out of a total Arab population of 400 million.

Even when the World Bank’s poverty threshold of $1.90 in daily expenditure per capita is used, in the period 2011-2015, extreme poverty in the Middle East increased from 2.7% to 5% – and the Middle East was the only region in the world where this indicator increased in that period. Consequently, the middle class in non-oil-producing Arab states has shrunk from 45 percent to 33 percent of the population, according to ESCWA economists. They see many middle-income families sliding into vulnerability and vulnerable families, in turn, falling into poverty.

**Negative Trends**

This negative trend is almost certain to continue year after year, because all the drivers of this increase in poverty and vulnerability have persisted or worsened since the 2010-11 Arab uprisings. They are likely to drive further families into poverty and vulnerability for years to come, given the current regional realities – wars, erratic tourism receipts and real estate and direct foreign investment levels, low real wage levels, stagnant economic growth and labour remittances,
disrupted regional trade, inadequate new job creation and unreliable foreign aid levels, to mention but the most significant.

This trend seems to be directly associated with the recent steady decline in the quality of state-managed basic social services, mainly outside the Gulf region, including healthcare, education, water, electricity, transport and social safety nets, i.e., the most basic living needs, which may now be beyond the reach of at least half of Arab citizens. The number of Arabs requiring humanitarian assistance to stay alive and minimally healthy, according to ESCWA calculations, is 60 million people in seven crisis states. They include many of the 30 million people who have been displaced in the Arab region in recent years. A new troubling reality is that once families fall into poverty, they are likely to remain there for generations to come. The steady, large-scale growth in new jobs in the industrial, tourism, agricultural and service sectors, which absorbed new job market entrants in the half-century after the 1950s, has disappeared. The IMF and other organizations predict that the Arab region must create 60-100 million jobs by 2030, and 27 million jobs in the next five years, to significantly reduce unemployment. This is clearly an impossible task well beyond the capabilities of the current Arab state system and its private sectors.

This suggests that informal employment will remain dominant for years to come in most Arab lands (averaging 55-60 percent, according to credible recent estimates), which means we should expect continued and growing poverty and vulnerability, due to the erratic and low wages and lack of protection mechanisms suffered by informal workers. Available data shows that only around 30 percent of Arab workers have pension funds, and informal workers usually lack legal protection, such as minimum wages, maximum working hours, workplace safety rules, retirement and health insurance funds, training and promotion opportunities and other critical elements pertaining to decent employment.

Informal employment-linked poverty is also a consequence of poor education outcomes

In Lebanon, some 75 percent of school children are enrolled in private schools, due to a lack of confidence in the public education system – a dynamic that is repeated across the entire region. Another common regional reality is that children often have to drop out of school to work and assist their families; recent studies in Iraq show that 20 percent of primary school dropouts were due to poverty in the family and the children’s need to work. Poor educational environments also contribute negatively to young Arab lives. Recent regional surveys show that most students in Arab primary and secondary public schools do not feel safe physically, emotionally or socially, which is another reason for the low academic performance of young Arabs.

Long-term Poverty and Marginalization

These are bad omens for the near future because low household education levels and poor early childhood development indicators – including increasingly common stunting – are now recognized as among the clearest signs that families will be relegated to long-term poverty and marginalization. If you are poor, or become poor, in the Arab region today, you and your family are likely to suffer poverty for a few generations at least. This is because most Arab states today are unable to generate the new jobs or provide the social services required to pull poor and vulnerable families out of their miserable condition.
Inequalities are documented in virtually every sector of life and society, including rural/urban, gender, income, ethnicity and others, suggesting that this has become a deeply ingrained structural problem rather than a fleeting phenomenon due to short-term economic stress. Recent studies indicate that the Middle East is the most unequal region in the world, with the top 10 percent of its people accounting for 61 percent of wealth (compared to 47 percent in the US and 36 percent in western Europe). The Arab region also displays a peculiar disconnect between education and income rates, according to World Bank studies that show that higher education does not translate into higher income for the most part, and in many countries the highest unemployment rates are among young university graduates.

The heightened poverty and growing inequalities mean that there is no longer a single, homogenous "Arab World" such as the one we spoke of for most of the past century. The Arab region today seems to have fractured into four distinct Arab worlds – five percent wealthy people, 30 percent in the middle class, 60 percent in the poor and vulnerable category and five percent who have essentially exited from the social, economic and political state structures of the Arab region and looked elsewhere for their identity, security, social services, income, opportunity and other dynamics that Arab states had mostly provided in previous decades.

If you are poor, or become poor, in the Arab region today, you and your family are likely to suffer poverty for a few generations at least.

Jordan offers a timely and likely typical example of how social, economic and political stresses on families lead to wider tensions in society, ultimately generating new gaps between citizens and their state. From the late 1990s to 2018, for example, Jordanians have significantly increased their perceptions of injustice and inequality in their lives, especially their treatment by the State and its institutions. Data from polls by the respected local consultancy NAMA and the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan show those who say that justice does not exist in their lives increased from 8 to 24 percent in that period, while the perception of inequality increased from 10 to 30 percent. Citizen confidence in the government has declined steadily in those years, as has the perception that the country was heading in the right direction.

About 72 percent of households say they cannot meet their basic expenses (compared to 42 percent in mid-2011). The inability to meet basic household needs, or to do so but without being able to save any money, is also mirrored in regional polls by the Arab Barometer and the Doha-based Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, both of whose pan-Arab surveys indicate around 70-75 percent of families cannot afford to pay for their most basic needs.

**Worrying Trends**

Events across the Arab region have exacerbated most of these problems, whether in conflict-riddled states like Syria, Iraq, Libya, Palestine and Yemen, or in countries without major conflicts but which feel the impact of government inabilities to address the trend towards more marginalized citizens who ultimately often seek their identity, security, voice and allegiance in phenomena beyond the State. These include militias, religious and ethnic groups, sectarian factions, tribal solidarity, migration when possible, and even the extreme case of many who joined the “Islamic State” during its short-lived existence.

The most troubling three trends in the region are now deeply interlinked: 1) the proliferation of political violence across many countries, practiced both by states and non-state armed groups, 2) the reassertion of military and autocratic rule in both Arab and non-Arab countries, and, 3) open warfare in places like Syria, Libya, Iraq and Yemen, which involves local actors, regional Arab states like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, non-Arab countries like Iran, Israel and Turkey, and foreign powers that engage in direct military actions, including Russia, the US, UK, France and occasional others.

It is no surprise, therefore, to witness some countries imploding internally due to mass poverty, hopelessness and conflict. Some experience prolonged civil and sectarian tensions, alongside overt political chal-
Challenges to regimes, which other countries often stoke with military and financial aid. The consequences include the slow corrosion of a few Arab states from within as citizen-state ties weaken, and the fragmentation and partial collapse of a few states where the central government has essentially lost control of its territory and been replaced by different local sovereignties and authorities, whether religious, tribal, military or other foreign powers (like Turkey in northern Syria, the UAE and Saudi Arabia in parts of Yemen). Drought and environmental stress, especially water quality and availability, are exacerbating some of the socioeconomic pressures, leading to political tensions and greater flows of refugees and internally displaced persons. These will become much worse with the anticipated impact of climate change and continued fast-growing urbanism.

The major developments of 2010-11, when millions of Arabs protested for their rights and dignity, have now been followed by the 2019 uprisings in Algeria and Sudan, which promise changes in how those countries are governed. Hundreds of millions of Arabs, on the street or in their hearts, continue to express their desires and demand to exercise their rights as citizens of a state based on constitutionally-guaranteed rule of law. The varied, but mostly negative, underlying conditions across the Arab region, as this article has pointed out in summary form, reveal both the weaknesses and unsustainability of the older Arab order, along with signs of how Arab citizens seek to replace it with more democratic, participatory, pluralistic and accountable governance systems.

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The Middle East in the Geopolitics of Digital

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The analysis of the political and strategic implications of digital technology has traditionally focused on the transatlantic relationship and the policies of certain authoritarian powers (China, Russia). Beijing’s proactive policy in this field is as much about challenging the West’s perceived technological hegemony as it is about shaping its own global digital vision and, in so doing, shifting the planet’s digital centre of gravity to Asia. The United States is seeking to maintain its technological pre-eminence – particularly through its tech giants’ capacity to attract and innovate – and that of its military by controlling the infrastructure and the data circulating through it. Russia and Europe seem to be more secondary players, with the former essentially showing an ability to be a cyberspace nuisance, whilst the latter remains caught between the strategies of the American and Chinese powers.

Within this swiftly changing global landscape, the Mediterranean and, more generally, the Middle East continue to play a relatively secondary role. However, the region is not immune to the turmoil caused by the digital revolution. The events of the “Arab Springs” in 2011 demonstrated to the world the power that social media and social networks afford oppressed populations to coordinate and mobilize. Faced with the new political potential of digital tools, those in power have proven able to adapt and are leading influence campaigns to discredit their opponents and “the street.” Finally, regional power struggles have likewise not been spared from an increasingly sophisticated cyber component, as witnessed by the actions in this regard of Israel, Iran and even Saudi Arabia.

The Rise of a Protean Digital Activism

Over the last twenty years, Arab country’s populations’ lack of or very limited access to the digital sphere and the Internet has given way to its omnipotence, to the point where it has helped to destabilize political regimes. Since the advent of a more participatory and interactive Web towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the Arab-speaking digital sphere has emerged as a major forum for engagement, demands, protest and social, political, ethnic, cultural and religious struggles.

These virtual spaces go beyond the framework of states and their borders to the image of young bloggers from the Arab-speaking diaspora, who relay information and the various forms of mobilization. Whether for democratic or nationalist aspirations or religious radicalization, people’s participation in the Arab-speaking digital sphere has become as important as their participation in physical spaces, which are sometimes prohibited, insufficient or blocked. However, cyberactivism, which can lead to cybercrime, in many cases remains linked to real and physical forces with great potential to destabilize public order. This would include the digital strategies of social movements, such as the Tunisian UGTT trade union’s mobilization in 2011, the Hirak protest movement in the Moroccan Rif region, or even the propagandistic activities of the Islamic State, Hezbollah or al-Qaeda, which spread their messages in part through militant groups. Since 2011, the “Arab Springs” have underscored the power of social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, which put the image of young Syrians who mobilized to report beyond their country’s borders at the start of the civil war at the forefront of cyberactivists and netizens.

Tunisian bloggers have leveraged their connections to foreign networks to share information about events
in real time. For the latest news, journalists and bloggers around the world have turned to the blogs, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts of citizen-activists following events as closely as possible. A few days after the Tunisian uprisings, similar dynamics were on display in Egypt. And even though the Egyptian government blocked access to the Internet for more than five days, Twitter and Facebook could still be used to get around the censorship, especially with mobile phones. The Internet itself has become a *casus belli*.

**Cyberactivism, which can lead to cybercrime, remains linked to real and physical forces with great potential to destabilize public order**

Egypt and Tunisia offer two different examples of how social media can come into play. In the case of Egypt, long-term activism developed on the Internet. In Tunisia, such activism has failed to flourish due to state censorship and repression; however, social media have played an important role in bringing the regime to the brink. Social media can both give impetus to political and social reform and function full-time, in times of crisis, as a mobilization tool and information bank. In the cases of both Egypt and Tunisia, the outcome of this mobilization was hardly predictable.

**New Influence Brokers**

Social media have a horizontal operating logic that is often completely at odds with the prevailing vertical logic. They reconfigure traditional forms of allegiance, thereby transforming both real and virtual public spaces. We are witnessing the emergence of new ways of shaping opinion and new opinion brokers that elude and compete with the power of states. These new intermediaries transcend borders and the information they convey is disseminated in Arabic-speaking diasporic communities. It is necessary to speak of communities and diasporas in the plural (or sub-communities) insofar as they are home to heterogeneous feelings of belonging, values, and symbols. So it is with the Arab-speaking community in France, which brings together immigrants and children of immigrants, but also converts to Islam and students with no connection to the Arab world in either case. Although they share a language as a formative feature of a community, their norms and symbols of belonging are very different and are the source of contradictory expressions and mobilizations on social networks. The latter can even include propaganda, indoctrination and involvement in criminal activities that give rise to situations of tension leading to major destabilization.¹

These forms of cyberactivism are also the preserve of state or parastate organizations, which use fake accounts and profiles to launch cyber influence, propaganda and counter-information campaigns. Since 2017, disinformation campaigns in Qatar, but also in Israel or the United States, have made headlines, reminding states of the importance of monitoring social networks and the Internet.

**The Predominance of States**

In the conflict-ridden context of the Middle East, states use every means at their disposal to defend and protect their interests. The cyber arena has emerged as a particularly useful strategic tool, given the wide range of actions it enables in terms of intelligence, sabotage and military operations, but also communication, information and attacks. These actions are not only difficult to identify and detect, but also, in some cases, quite inexpensive. However, not all players in the region have the same capabilities or perception of the strategic importance of the cyber arena. Whilst for some, cyberspace is a national priority, for others, interest in this subject can be limited to the issue of control of the Internet, when it is not directly approached solely from the point of view of crime.

States are the main players in cyberspace in the Middle East for the simple reason that mastery of this field requires not only technological know-how, suitable infrastructure and people with the necessary skills. The development of certain defensive and offensive

capabilities also requires considerable funding, beyond the abilities of non-state groups. It is thus possible to establish a typology of the region’s states, based on these criteria. This typology, in turn, will make it possible to address each one’s national strategies.

**Israel: The Regional Engine**

Since 2009, the Netanyahu government has considered cyberspace a national and strategic priority. The Israeli Prime Minister wants to make his country a global leader in the field by allocating substantial financial and human resources to it.

However, not all players in the region have the same capabilities or perception of the strategic importance of the cyber arena. For some it is a national priority, for others it is limited to control of the Internet.

The Israeli government has implemented a strategy that can be broken down into four largely complementary areas: raising public awareness of cyber issues and “computer hygiene,” youth education, scientific and academic research, and the creation of a solid industrial foundation for information system security (ISS). Perhaps nowhere else is the “merging” of the civilian and military so clear: the two dimensions are perceived as heavily intertwined. More specifically, this characteristic is on display in the close civilian-military cooperation and the IDF’s strong presence in the cyber ecosystem and national industry.

Conscription plays a key role in this regard, as young Israelis are placed in specialized units faced with specific cyber challenges on a daily basis, allowing them to swiftly acquire cutting-edge skills. The most well-known and famous is Unit 8200. Its area of expertise is electromagnetic intelligence and code decryption. Unit 8200 is particularly adept at cryptography and also has an elite unit that is regularly deployed in the field. It should be recalled that the IDF has both defensive and offensive technical know-how, human skills, and a structured infrastructure that afford it a real advantage over the armies of other states in the region.

Although the Israeli authorities publicly acknowledge their offensive activities in cyberspace, they have not admitted to being the source of viruses such as Flame or Stuxnet. This ambiguity seems to be part of a “cyber deterrence” strategy not unlike the Israeli nuclear doctrine. Israel thus seems to have moved on to a new stage in its approach to the cyber issue. But why now, when, to date, it had largely kept silent? Because in so doing Israel keeps up the pressure on Iran and the countries negotiating with Tehran. It is an indirect way of asserting that Israel has a wide range of means, including cyber resources, to conduct a potential military operation against Iran’s nuclear facilities. This choice is thus not trivial. Iran, which has been the target of several computer viruses, has since become aware of the strategic importance of cyberspace and has moved to tackle the problem head-on.

**Iran: A Narrowing Gap?**

Needless to say, Tehran was sensitive to the issue of cyberspace well before it was targeted by sophisticated attacks. Nevertheless, those attacks have clearly led the Iranian authorities to question and readjust their cyber strategy, especially since the sudden emergence of the “Green Movement” in June 2009 and, especially, the Stuxnet computer virus in 2010. With these developments in mind, the Iranian leadership undertook the construction of a “national Internet,” parallel to the global Internet, to which the population has been fully connected since 2015. The Internet therefore occupies a special place in the Iranian strategy, even if the defensive measures that Iran has taken are not limited to this aspect alone. In fact, since 2010, the Iranian government has undertaken a renationalization of its cyberspace infrastructure, creating the Cyber Defence Command in 2010 and, in 2012, the Supreme Council of Cyberspace. With regard to the offensive aspect, Iran has opted for indirect confrontation with the countries it deems hostile. Rather than frontal opposition, the Iranian authorities prefer to operate through intermediate adversaries. Iran thus supports movements that, although not officially attached to it, act in its interest. In this regard, the Iranian leadership has maintained the same
strategy in cyberspace that it has followed in other areas for several years. Such a choice makes it possible to avoid direct involvement and, thus, allows Iran to deny any responsibility for potential incidents quite easily. For instance, when the Saudi authorities accused Iran of being behind the cyberattacks on the Aramco facilities, the Iranian leaders said they had nothing to do with the operation, for which a group called the Cutting Sword of Justice had claimed responsibility. Technical experts believe that the computer virus used for that operation could not have been designed by a mere group of hackers, but nor could they prove that Iran was responsible for the attack.

To coordinate its strategy of asymmetrical confrontation in cyberspace, in 2010, Iran created the Basij Cyber Council, a cyber unit in the Basij Resistance Force, a branch of the Revolutionary Guard. This council works closely with several hacker groups and mobilizes cyber specialists from the Revolutionary Guard to train new hackers and help them acquire high-level skills.

With regard to all these initiatives, several countries regularly accuse Iran of being the source of attacks against them. These include Saudi Arabia and Qatar, for example, but also Israel, which claims that its information systems are targeted daily by Iranian infiltration attempts, and the United States, which blamé Tehran for the cyberattacks affecting several US banks between September 2012 and January 2013. The US authorities believe that these incidents were a response to the economic sanctions that the Obama Administration imposed on Iran for the military dimension of its nuclear programme.

**Cyberspace: A Strategic Communication Weapon**

Mastering the “communication” dimension of cyberspace is, for some movements, as important as having efficient military means. This is not, of course, a novelty due to the emergence of new technologies; the notion of propaganda and counter-propaganda has always been part of international relations. However, the rise of these technologies has enabled broader dissemination of and greater exposure to each player’s official discourses.

For example, the Islamic State or Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) have made several films featuring portraits of and interviews with militants. Indeed, these groups have their own websites and video production centres. These videos are then uploaded to the Internet, through platforms such as YouTube and Facebook or on jihadist forums. Al-Qaeda has its own websites whose content is not limited to video. The movement also uses them to publish texts laying out its ideology, stating its demands and describing its means of action. The target audience is broad. It includes both groups that would like to join the movement and individuals who would like to act on its behalf. Its online magazine, *Inspire*, offers DIY instructions for building explosive devices. IS does the same with its magazine *Dabiq*.

**Digital as an Intelligence Tool**

Middle Eastern states and Islamist movements from the region use Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) to gather information. The most widely reported example is that of Hezbollah, which has created fake Facebook profiles to obtain sensitive information about Israel. Hamas has followed suit, posing as “friends” of IDF soldiers on Facebook to trick them into sharing sensitive information about their assignments and missions or downloading spyware onto their phones.\(^2\)

\(^2\) “Hamas uses fake Facebook friends to dupe 100 soldiers into downloading spyware,” *The Times of Israel*, 3 July 2018.
For armies, as for non-state groups, social networks are a risk that they must learn to manage. But that is not all they are. They also offer considerable benefits in terms of gathering information. The example of Hezbollah’s fake profiles illustrates how some organizations, by freely chatting with Facebook members, obtain intelligence and sometimes even recruit agents.

**Middle Eastern states and Islamist movements from the region use Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) to gather information**

Social media are thus an efficient tool for monitoring populations. Israel also conducted extensive monitoring of the leaders of the social protests that took place in the country in 2011 and 2012. The Arab countries are doing the same with opposition leaders, and these methods have become widespread in states where the people have risen up against their leaders, such as Iran, Syria, Egypt or Bahrain. Nor have the opponents of these regimes been left behind. In Syria, they benefit from the help of hacker groups, both Syrian and foreign, who work to provide them with documentation. Additionally, the information posted online by some platforms, mainly to report on events on the ground, makes it possible to understand how the situation is evolving in a more complete, less fragmented way. This information is used by both foreign intelligence services and the people fighting the Syrian regular army, offering them a global view of all the fronts.

All of these techniques involve OSINT, which is, by definition, public and accessible to all. In contrast, the creation and spread of computer viruses is a more technical means of collecting information. There are numerous examples of the use of such malware by authorities from the region. In the United Arab Emirates, as well as in Syria, authorities have deployed viruses targeting different factions of the opposition.

However, there are more sophisticated and powerful computer viruses than those used in those two countries. Flame is a perfect example of this type of cyber tool. Discovered by chance in May 2012 by the company Kaspersky, Flame is one of the most sophisticated examples of malware known to date. In light of the proliferation of these kinds of cyber tools, the Middle East as a whole remains vulnerable, relying on mostly Western technological expertise and facing a Chinese economic breakthrough.

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The Digital Economy in Mediterranean Countries: Socioeconomic Challenges and Convergence Potential

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After a stage of quick development that had the Mediterranean countries go from the low-income to the middle-income bracket, they entered a long period of growth insufficient for moving towards a significant rise in average per capita income. For several years now, they have been “stuck” in the “middle-income trap”: on the one hand, their salary levels have become too high, rendering them less competitive than low-income countries, and on the other, they have difficulty competing with the more advanced countries, which produce goods and services with higher technological content and greater added value. Whereas the Barcelona Process was supposed to contribute to closing the gap between the standards of living on the Mediterranean’s two shores, the per capita income differences between the South and the North have tended to increase (2019 FEMISE Report). Can the digital offer Mediterranean countries the opportunity of a trampoline towards faster growth, allowing this long-awaited process of closing the gap to finally get underway? The answer is that the digital economy can not only contribute to accelerating growth, but can also help reduce situations of exclusion and regional inequalities. On the other hand, the digital economy cannot play its role without ambitious, appropriate national policies (infrastructures, regulations, etc.) and above all, without regional co-operation. Clearly, it will have to be accompanied by a series of important reforms concerning other domains, especially that of the business environment (access to business financing, less bureaucracy, complicity between the business community and the political milieu, access to real estate, logistics, etc.), for countries to be able to take full advantage of the development of this digital economy.

Digital Opportunities

The digital economy opens up prospects for more rapid, inclusive and sustainable growth because it offers countries capable of taking advantage of its full potential the possibility of skipping certain stages of development while contributing to opening up the most disadvantaged regions and integrating a larger part of the population into economic life.

An Incontestable Factor for Inclusive Growth

In economic literature, a great number of papers have shown that increased access by companies, administrations and individuals to telephony and broadband services has positive effects on economic activity. These include, for instance, the 2009 World Bank study concerning 120 countries, showing that a rise in 10 percentage points in the penetration rate by technology type (landline, mobile telephony, internet and broadband) could generate up to 1.38 growth points in the GDP, with broadband services having the greatest economic impact. Even if the direct contribution to growth of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) sector continues to increase, positive impact on GDP growth can be ascribed above all to the following indirect effects:
— First of all, it facilitates company participation in the global economy. Thanks to the Internet, more products can be exported to a greater number of markets, generally by younger and smaller-scale businesses. According to the World Bank’s 2016 World Development Report, a 10% rise in Internet use in two countries increases the average value of their bilateral trade per product by 0.64%. By making a greater amount of available information accessible at a relatively low cost, ICTs effectively open up new trade and transaction opportunities, regardless of a company’s situation or location. In Morocco, for example, rural artisans are selling their handmade products throughout the world, through the platform Anou. These new trade possibilities, however, make it essential to develop secure online payment systems.

— Secondly, it improves the efficiency of production systems. Access to ICTs allows companies to enhance their general organization and better use their resources, particularly their labour force, which leads to productivity gains.

— In the third place, it contributes to building a more innovative country. Use of and access to high-performance ICTs, in fact, condition progress in the sphere of innovation to a large extent.

— In the fourth place, it is a pull factor for foreign direct investment (FDI). Access to broadband services is indispensable for companies that are becoming established and are in contact with customers, suppliers or even a parent company located abroad. In addition, a great number of sectors, some of which have become strategic for Mediterranean countries, such as the automobile or aerospace industries, cannot do without ICTs in their manufacturing processes. The choice of location of these foreign enterprises depends to a great extent on the quality of broadband access. It is essential to take this factor into consideration, not only in defining the content of strategies for attracting FDI to countries of this region, but also in preventing development gaps from widening on the domestic level, between developed urban areas and regions with only fledgling economic activity.

Given the situation of the region’s countries (over the past 20 years, they have registered the worst performance in overall productivity progress among the ensemble of developing and emerging countries, and they are significantly lagging in the sphere of innovation), seizing the opportunity that the digital economy can provide is a particularly important challenge.

**A Tool for Improving the Quality of Public Services**

In Mediterranean countries, public services have considerably deteriorated. One of the main manifestations of this deterioration is the sharp fall in the quality of healthcare and education. According to the latest surveys carried out by the Arab Barometer, over 49% of the region’s population stated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the educational system. This proportion rises to 56% regarding healthcare. The situation in the region is reflected in an Egyptian woman’s testimony as reported in a World Bank paper (2015): “You can go to the private clinic and lose your money, or go to the public clinic and lose your life.” In the face of a lack of infrastructures (hospitals, clinics) and healthcare personnel, particularly in rural areas, digital access can allow (i) consultations and prescriptions at a distance for simple diagnoses, as well as prevention and detection of serious illness, (ii) the dissemination of basic care and practices to be followed, for instance with regard to monitoring pregnancies, and (iii) the expansion and improvement of healthcare despite economic and geographic barriers through the connection of clinics with large hospitals as well as hospitals with one another. In general, computerization of healthcare services and interconnection of medical infrastructures are indispensable for improving the overall management of the healthcare system and data transfer.

In the sphere of education, the use of ICTs is an opportunity for improving the qualifications of the labour
supply and better meeting the needs of companies. Digital development would also, more specifically:

(i) allow improved management of schools;
(ii) contribute support so that a greater number of people can have access to continued education, which it is very important for develop in Mediterranean countries;
(iii) offer teachers access to training programmes in improved teaching practices;
(iv) provide the opportunity for an elevated number of youth (including young refugees or youth not attending school) to have access to online courses.

The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education, in collaboration with MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), for instance, has established the Al Ghurair Open Learning Scholars Program, in order to render some of the best training in the world accessible to Arab youth through university programmes in the spheres of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Online education can facilitate the adoption of innovative teaching and learning methods that countries could need. Rote learning, for instance (much practiced in Mediterranean countries), could be reduced and more space given to personalized teaching adapted to each individual’s pace.

A great deal of experiences from developing or emerging countries can be found in literature, which show that the use of ICTs has had positive effects on learning among children and youth. In India, the use of smartphone game applications designed to improve English skills has allowed an improvement of approximately 60% in student test results. In Niger, a surveillance system via mobile telephony has proven highly effective in combating teacher absenteeism.

In any case, the factors behind the deterioration of education and healthcare quality are both multiple and complex. Moreover, recourse to digital tools, although it may be very promising, should be conceived as a complement or support for other, fundamental reforms that need to be implemented to achieve significant improvement.

A Means for Reducing Red Tape and Struggling against Corruption

Bureaucracy and corruption are often cited by companies in the region, in particular SMEs, as a substantial obstacle to their everyday operations and their development. Even in countries that have implemented numerous initiatives to improve the business environment and that, according to the Doing Business criteria (an indicator established by the World Bank), have progressed the most among Mediterranean countries, such as Morocco, entrepreneurs’ accounts indicate that there is still an extreme amount of red tape in the process of founding a business, for instance (an elevated number of procedures required, and a significant number of people intervening throughout the process who generate arbitrariness, increasing the risk of corruption). The development of ICTs is a means to modernize government administration by establishing digital services (e-government or e-administration). The use of ICTs allows the complexity of procedures to be reduced, together with the possibility of corruption.

Generally, access to government services often requires a significant effort by the population at large. Administration opening hours are sometimes limited and, for certain services, administrative offices are far away, in particular for people living in rural areas, making people lose many hours of work and involving transport expenses in order to obtain certificates, pay for public services, etc. ICTs can help facilitate access to these services and thus simplify people’s lives. Initiatives such as online university registration (implemented in Tunisia, for instance) or online registration of candidates for school examinations illustrate the advantages such systems can have for citizens living in remote areas. It would be very useful if, as certain emerging countries have done, citizens and enterprises could obtain all, or at least a large part, of public certificates on line (birth certificates, company registration certificates, etc.) with the same level of security and authenticity as traditional paper documents, and with an online payment system. In countries where this has been implemented, as for instance Cape Verde, such systems have had very positive results on citizens’ evaluation of their satisfaction level with the authorities and government administration services.

The advantages of using digital technology are evident, for governments (cost reduction through online public services, citizen satisfaction, improved transparency), companies (improved access to information, productivity gains), citizens (greater access to information and government services, improved cus-
customer service, more commodities), and society alike, as well as for the country as a whole (increased foreign investment, more efficient public service, greater economic growth). Nonetheless, the ensemble of initiatives in e-administration have not been successful everywhere and their implementation is a complex, costly process requiring planning and rigorous organization. Note that in nearly all countries in the region, online administration projects are underway.

The advantages of using digital technology are evident, for governments, companies, citizens and society alike, as well as for the country as a whole

_A Tool for Sustainable Development_

Building digital capabilities can be useful in supporting the development of technologically innovative solutions for green growth and sustainable development. Namely, it can allow:

- Development of incentive programmes or systems encouraging populations to modify their behaviour and raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity and the risk of pollution caused by certain activities. In Morocco, for example, the Clean City application encourages sorting at the source and seeks to change attitudes towards waste management.

- Provision of observation and measuring tools for improved decision-making for the authorities. These tools also allow data collection for enhanced management of biodiversity, overfishing or ecosystem pollution. The INDESO project in Indonesia, for instance, financed by the Agence française de développement (AFD), ensures sustainable fishing practices based on sound coastal environmental management and the struggle against illegal fishing.

- Improved prediction of natural disasters and extreme weather episodes (drought, flooding, tornadoes, etc.), development of warning systems in areas of risk.

_A Tool for Combatting Violence against Women_

Violence against women continues to be carried out in both the private and the public space. A recent phenomenon in the region is the upsurge of acts of harassment in the public space in certain countries. The rise in these situations of insecurity is not only intolerable, but also and above all very detrimental to women because it slows their integration into economic life. This phenomenon is experienced even more intensely by women from underprivileged environments and working in low-paying jobs, insofar as they are more dependent than others on public transport. Although to our knowledge, there is no census of practices and procedures, different types of ICTs are used, and include online platforms, downloadable applications for mobile phones and portable technologies. In Tunisia, for example, a mobile phone application has been launched (SafeNes) that raises awareness of the problem among citizens and connects victims with specialized NGOs. There are also “panic button” systems and GPS traceability systems. An analysis of the different solutions based on development of digital technology was carried out by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA, 2019). It would be highly useful in Mediterranean countries if the most effective and appropriate technological procedures and systems were applied on a large scale.

_Challenges to Overcome_

In the region, the different opportunities provided by the digital economy are still largely under-exploited and countries must overcome a certain number of challenges in order to benefit from the positive effects.

_Lack of Broadband Infrastructure_

With a regional average of 100 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants (Chart 4), the Mediterranean countries are well-positioned in cellular mobile telephony. In all countries in the region, the number of mobile phone subscriptions has progressed very quickly (Chart 5). Algeria and Morocco have even caught up with Israel, attaining a rate of subscription of 120 per
100 inhabitants, which is nearly the level of developed countries. This very positive fact is the result of significant reforms that were implemented for the most part in the early 2000s. In addition, in Morocco, for instance, the population at large enjoys the advantages of mobile telephony, even in isolated regions. On the other hand, access to broadband is still very insufficient on the whole in Mediterranean countries. Chart 6 indicates that the number of fixed broadband subscriptions is on average 7 per 100 inhabitants, compared to 27 for developing and emerging countries in Europe and Central Asia and 22 for East Asian countries. Among Mediterranean countries, only Lebanon, with a broadband subscription rate of 20%, approaches the level of Israel (nearly 30) (Chart 7). Broadband, however, is one of the decisive factors for the competitiveness of these countries and its deployment is of strategic importance for taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital economy.

One of the consequences of the lack of broadband infrastructure is the lag in internet access. On average, only 50% of the MENA population has access, in contrast to 75% in developing and emerging countries in Europe and Central Asia (Chart 8). Again, Lebanon has nearly reached the level of Israel, where nearly 80% of the population uses internet. As with mobile telephony, Chart 9 shows that the proportion of internet users has quickly progressed over the course of a dozen years throughout the region. Note also that Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia and Morocco have internet user rates above 60%.

In the region, the different opportunities provided by the digital economy are still largely under-exploited.

For the number of internet users to continue to grow, the price of access must decrease (it is estimated, for instance, that the price is too high for at least 60% of the population in the case of Morocco) and training campaigns for these technologies should be implemented everywhere in these countries. Such training could target certain sectors of the population or certain locations where there is low ICT dissemination. It is likewise essential for countries to establish regulatory frameworks allowing the ensemble of ICT markets to open up to the competition. In the Maghreb, for instance, no country has yet opened up its market to private internet providers, in contrast to Mashreq countries. Experience in other countries has effectively demonstrated that everywhere, the rise in competition has resulted in lower prices and
increased access to these technologies. To ensure complete geographic coverage within countries and access for the entire population, use of public funding or public-private partnership is generally necessary. In Mediterranean countries, it is likewise important to simplify administrative procedures for obtaining licenses for new operators and to limit insofar as possible discretionary decisions depending on the authorities. Mediterranean countries would thus benefit from setting up simple, transparent, appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks and encouraging private investment in digital infrastructures. Finally, it could be useful to draw up digital infrastructure cartography for the region.
Lack of Skilled Human Capital

The generalization of digital technology can lead to the destruction of low-skilled jobs and the creation of new employment opportunities for skilled and highly-skilled individuals. This is what in economic jargon is called “skill-biased” technologies, meaning they require better-trained human resources. In Mediterranean countries, however, even if a significant proportion of young people have university degrees, the active population has a relatively low skill level. Moreover, in the computer sector, a great num-
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CHART 9  Evolution of Internet User Numbers in Mediterranean Countries (in % of population)

Source: International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

A great number of engineers from Mediterranean countries are recruited by European companies to remedy the shortage of IT specialists. Such brain drain deprives countries of these well-trained engineers. Companies in the region are increasingly expressing their difficulty in recruiting IT specialists. In any case, in the middle to long term, the return of this IT engineer diaspora could contribute to developing a strong technology sector in Mediterranean countries, as occurred in India and Taiwan. Indian and Taiwanese engineers, often having studied at Californian universities and who had thereafter worked in Silicon Valley, returned to their countries, bringing with them their skills, their managerial practices and also their professional networks, which explains to a large extent the rapid growth of technology clusters in Southeast Asia. Cities in India, such as Bangalore, then massively invested in research and development (R&D) and in higher education, which has allowed significant up-market positioning and sustainability of high technology activities in different territories.

The lack of skill can also be felt in education. The experience of developing and emerging countries that have introduced ICTs in school has shown that it is just as important to equip schools with infrastructure and technological materials as it is to train teaching personnel in using these tools. In the sphere of health, the lack of trained administrative and medical personnel is likewise an obstacle to ICT use.

In the computer sector, a great number of engineers from Mediterranean countries are recruited by European companies to remedy the shortage of IT specialists

Considering the situation of public accounts, countries do not have the financial resources to deal with the majority of these constraints. Foreign aid will be decisive here if we wish the countries in the region to take full advantage of digital technologies.

Other Factors Slowing Digital Use

Numerous obstacles have been identified in empirical studies. These are language (there is little content in Arabic on Internet sites), the existence of local content, bandwidth capacity (as indicated above), and
personal data security. The latter factor is important to keep in mind because the latest survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit shows that the Mediterranean region is the area where the population’s confidence in personal data protection is the lowest in the world. It is therefore very important for countries to have suitable regulations regarding personal data confidentiality, data governance and digital security. Another factor that will be decisive for Mediterranean countries is cooperation on a regional scale: cross-border broadband connectivity is crucial and should be stepped up. Moreover, similarity of institutional and regulatory frameworks, the definition of common norms, harmonization and interoperability among countries would create ideal conditions for boosting digital technology in the region. Such conditions would also provide a strong incentive for private investors in the ICT sector, who would perceive the market of the Mediterranean countries as an integrated regional market. Beyond the region, it is probably on the continental level where it would be even more sensible to cooperate. Signing the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement could provide a framework for such cooperation.

The urgency of creating jobs should lead countries and the whole of the international community to bridge the gap in this sphere and prevent a digital divide from becoming yet another of the region’s problems.

In any case, despite all of its potential, digital technology can only be a tool contributing to accelerating growth in Mediterranean countries if deeper reforms are implemented, in particular in the domain of the business environment.

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Social Movements in the Digital Age: Change and Stasis in the Middle East

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The Arab uprisings were a unique event not only because they toppled a number of dictators and brought hope for ending decades of authoritarian rule in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, but also because they constituted socio-political movements that were associated with digital technologies. Although the Arab uprisings cannot be reduced to a digital phenomenon — as they were rooted in social discontent, economic grievances, marginalization, unemployment, and unfulfilled youth aspirations, among other factors — digital technologies were important in the uprisings.

At least during the initial uprisings of 2011, technological adoption enabled activism and provided the structure for collective action. Whether it was capturing evidence of police brutality, recording defiant protesters, diffusing information, coordinating protests, rallying support on Facebook, trilling tweets, or posting scrawled anti-establishment graffiti on social media, new forms of digital communication emerged as central to the contestatory dynamics that animated the Arab uprisings. Digitally-enabled activism and networked forms of organization proved to be so important for contesting power that the typically vertical state power structures found themselves at odds with the horizontal forms of communication embraced by networked publics.

Significantly, state efforts to reclaim the public sphere have often proved to be a challenge in the face of the popular social media platforms adopted by many actors and players to effect social change. From the Iranian Green Movement of 2009 and Arab uprisings of 2011, to the Gezi Park protests in 2013 and beyond, digital media have been tightly connected to protest movements that have shaken a region long known for its authoritarian resilience. During the uprisings that swept through many Arab countries, social media platforms extended activism, facilitated collective action and mobilized social networks. Online networking sites became powerful tools for citizen activism, playing a significant role in stoking protests, mobilizing protesters, coordinating street action and precipitating turmoil.

On Change and Stasis

Before exploring evolving dynamics that lie at the intersection of emerging social movements and widespread digital transformations in the Middle East, it is worth dwelling on the concept of change itself. This is all the more important as information and communication technologies were inherent to the narrative about the region’s changeability. Such conceptualization is tied to a number of dominant frames, including Middle East exceptionalism and the region’s incompatibility with democracy, teleological assumptions about modernization that often see the region for what it ought to be rather than what it is, and technological determinism, which views the adoption of information technologies as a way of overcoming the Arab predicament.

It is a truism to say that change entails a movement from one particular state or condition to another. In the case of the Middle East, what is particularly noteworthy is the peculiarity of the prevalent discourse of change. As often conceived, the fault line between change and stasis is conspicuously thin. While conditions, systems and practices may change, the region has been engulfed in a state that approximates “static change.” Prior to the Arab uprisings, the dominant understanding of what is often called the democratic exception is
not that the Middle East does not change or that the political systems in the Arab world are static, but that change—whether it takes the form of partial political openings, managed political reforms or liberalizing initiatives—works to strengthen the authoritarian grip of Arab states. The basic theoretical premise that underpins the resilience of Arab authoritarianism, as theorized by many political scientists, privileges “stasis” over “change.” Whatever changes the region’s authoritarian systems have undertaken, it is to ensure regime survival and perpetuate the status quo.

Beyond Technologies of Change

The unexpected events that unleashed the Arab uprisings did more than alter the reality of a number of countries in the MENA region; they unsettled many of the givens about the region, from the nature of Arab authoritarianism to the resilience of autocratic political systems, from assumptions about the region’s democratic exception to the irrelevance of Arab public opinion.

Curiously, though, the narratives about the winds of change that gained currency during the uprisings were largely construed in relation to the region’s perceived aversion to change. The dominant narrative that emerged with the outbreak of the revolutions was as much about the transformative nature of technology as it was about the prospects for change in the region. A key force and instigator for change that was widely invoked during the waves of protest the Arab world witnessed in 2011 were information technologies. The changeability of the region has been portrayed as being contingent on the transformative power of technology. What this narrative extols is not the disposition of the region to change, but the extraordinary ability of digital technologies to induce change, even against the disposition of the region. To eschew such technological determinism, it is important to place the Arab uprisings in context, as social movements have been an integral part of the region’s history. The genealogies of the Arab uprisings of 2011 are important to note with respect to earlier waves of anti-colonial nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century, and, more relevantly still, other forms of popular protests and anti-regime movements in the second half of the twentieth century. Previous cases of contentious politics in the region abound, whether it is the bread riots and crowd actions of the 1970s and 1980s or the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Chalcraft, 2017).

Political Communication in a Hybrid Media Environment

Just as social movements in the MENA region existed long before the Arab uprisings, the use of communication technologies to mobilize people and challenge regimes predates the digital era. The internet is only the latest phase of communication developments that have been intertwined with social movements. In the 1970s, mid-tech communication technologies acquired importance by virtue of their integration into society. The use of cassette tapes in the 1980s by exiled Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini to mobilize the public against the pro-Western regime of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and galvanize support for the Islamic revolution was not without effect. The appropriation of accessible and affordable small media inspired many opposition figures and movements in the Arab world to incite political change. Likewise, the ubiquity of video cassette recorders in subsequent years facilitated the circulation of sensitive, controversial or censored programmes. The use of the fax machine in the late 1980s and early 1990s further facilitated the flow of information, giving exiled Arab political dissidents in European countries the ability to disseminate critical information and anti-establishment messages to audiences in their native countries.

The advent of the digital era did not make these older forms of media obsolete. Legacy media remain important and, in the case of television, even more universally accessible than the internet and digital media. Digital forms of communication are not supplanting traditional forms of communication; instead, they are favouring the rise of an even more complex communication sphere, marked by an overlap between the two. The process of convergence that ensues from on-going digital transformation does not amount to legacy media simply being absorbed by emerging technologies; rather the two intersect in complex ways, giving old concepts and practices new meanings. Increasingly, we operate in a hybrid media environment where the digital and pre-digital co-exist. Prior to the Arab uprisings, emphasis had always been on whether information and communication technol-
Social Movements, Digital Transformations and Changes in the Mediterranean Region

The eagerness to draw out the political implications of evolving communication technologies and digital tools has often obscured significant trends associated with the complex ways in which these technologies are being adopted and appropriated within the Arab world. In particular, how digital technologies have affected agency, subjectivity, identity negotiation and political engagement over the years remains largely understudied. Understanding how social movements evolved in the Middle East requires a brief overview of how digital transformations have changed the communication sphere in the region.

Information Technologies and the Paradoxes of Modernization

The growth of communication – which predates the widespread adoption of the internet, with the phenomenal development of satellite broadcasting and the ubiquity of mobile phones throughout the region – became more explosive with increased internet penetration. Although the internet was introduced in the 1990s, its presence was segmented and took the entire decade to materialize. At the beginning, the technological information revolution was largely elitist, as it favoured the well-educated and well-to-do. Public access was in large part through the numerous internet cafés that sprung up throughout the region. The affordable cost of these internet service centres and increased competition lowered the barrier for internet adoption, expanded home access to the internet and increased user numbers. With more users and new forms of usage, the internet took on another dimension.

The eagerness to draw out the political implications of evolving communication technologies – be it satellite television, new media or digital technologies – could be politically consequential, particularly when it comes to the outlook of democratization in the region. The received wisdom has been that the phenomenal transformation of the Arab media scene created a new and unprecedented momentum, but seemed to have little impact on the region’s political systems. At best, the new Arab media scene opened the debate, enabling people to talk more freely and publicly. In doing so, it favoured the rise of a vibrant Arab public sphere, which was tolerated by Middle East regimes, as long as it did not alter power relations.

The use of communication technologies to mobilize people and challenge regimes predates the digital era. The internet is only the latest phase of communication developments that have been intertwined with social movements.
Social Movements, Digital Transformations and Changes in the Mediterranean Region

States were attempting to marry two irreconcilable pursuits: democratizing the means of communication while constraining the free flow of information.

For the region’s political establishments, the dilemma had always been how to join the information revolution and promote internet use without eroding regime legitimacy. In essence, states were attempting to marry two irreconcilable pursuits: democratizing the means of communication while constraining the free flow of information. Thus, while continuing to expand access to the internet and advocate the benefits of the information society, Middle Eastern states introduced regulations on internet service providers, subjected internet use to tight controls and intensified the electronic and human surveillance of users. They applied various methods to control the internet. The security instinct of these regimes impelled them to monitor online correspondence, close down undesired blogs and interfere with email accounts.

Digital Spaces and Online Communities

However, internet control did not go unchallenged. Over the years, tensions developed between regimes that sought to restrict access to the internet and aspiring users enchanted with what the internet had to offer. In the early days, many users were attracted to Usenet groups and email listservs, which offered information but also enabled discussion. This dynamically-shifting communication sphere took on another dimension with blogging, which became a space for the emergence of a new consciousness of citizenship. Although the internet undermined Middle Eastern governments' hegemonic control over information, it remained politically inconsequential in the face of the region's entrenched authoritarianism. Initially, these online spaces constituted lively discursive arenas, which lay at the intersection of the personal and the public, and straddled the cultural and the political. Blogs stood out as a form of expression in a suffocating environment, enabling users to put forth arguments, engage others and share views. They helped voice views, overcome the culture of conformity and draw attention to controversial issues. In some ways, they helped create a new culture of citizen journalism. But in an environment that was inimical to free speech under regimes that brooked no dissent, blogging was a risky activity, and many outspoken bloggers faced grave consequences, from monitoring of blogs, to censorship, intimidation and crackdown. As a consequence, ordinary bloggers generally steered clear of politics.

Although the blogosphere was marginal to political life and a great many bloggers remained politically unengaged or avoided political commentary, blogging did have a political flavour, which became more pronounced among successive waves of bloggers and during subsequent phases of blogging. Though organized activism was not prevalent on the blogosphere, bloggers used blogging to advocate change and mount various online campaigns. Blogs helped inspire and facilitate new forms of activism and new ways of mounting campaigns and organizing. Though blogging was not manifestly a political activity, it evolved into a form of digital contention, which was a precursor to the social movements that animated the Arab uprisings. While, generally, blogs were a vibrant space of engagement, the blogosphere had, from its early days, an anti-establishment character. In Tunisia, disenchanted youth used blogging to contest censorship; in Kuwait, bloggers spoke out on nepotism or to fight political corruption and voting irregularities during the 2005 succession crisis; and in Bahrain, it was used to mount human rights campaigns. The Lebanese blogosphere initially developed around crises like the anti-Syrian movement, but then grew as a result of other issues, including sectarianism, business corruption, foreign workers and gender discrimination. In Egypt, the internet enabled activists and anti-regime critics to mobilize and develop online strategies that drew attention to their causes.

Online Activism and Political Contestation

The Egyptian blogosphere is particularly interesting because it was initially connected to the contentious
politics of Kefaya (literally “Enough”), an unconventional popular political movement that came into being in 2004. Energized by the mass protests that accompanied the 2003 Iraq War and the relative openings in terms of freedom of expression reluctantly ceded by the regime as a result of post 9/11 pressure to promote democratization efforts in the Middle East, this unconventional opposition movement was initially constituted by a loose coalition of political players and groups from various ideological backgrounds, united by their deep resentment of Mubarak’s long rule and their adamant opposition to his son’s presumed ambition for succession. Lacking physical headquarters but also denuded of the rigidity of established political parties, Kefaya relied heavily on mobile phone and internet-based communication in its activism, using its website to communicate news, air grievances, host forums, publicize protests, mobilize support and coordinate activities (Lim, 2012).

While, generally, blogs were a vibrant space of engagement, the blogosphere had, from its early days, an anti-establishment character.

This strategic use of communication, which enabled the movement to circumvent government controls and provide counter narratives to what state-sponsored media promulgated, nurtured blogging and energized the then nascent blogosphere. The unconventional oppositional nature of Kefaya and its drive to connect to ordinary people attracted many Egyptians desperate for change and young activists, some of whom used their blogs to support the movement, while others began blogging during this period. More than an outlet for activism, the blogosphere grew to be “a site of protest” in itself (Radsch, 2008). As more users migrated from the hitherto popular online forums to the blogosphere, blogs multiplied to form a vibrant online space.

Increased state repression and crackdown on street protests largely confined political activism to cyberspace but also brought in another wave of bloggers. By the time Kefaya started to lose momentum, the blogosphere had taken on a life of its own, away from the anti-regime discourses, adopting issues that touched individuals more directly. The blogosphere, henceforth, emerged as a close-knit community of bloggers, with the most committed blogger activists posting stories about police torture, power abuse, corruption, citizen grievances and sexual harassment.

One prominent blogger, Wael Abbas, who runs the blog Misr Digital, epitomizes this trend. As a citizen journalist, he based his stories on videos, photos and leaked documents, which helped publicize sexual assaults against women and denounce police abuse. By exposing injustices, documenting abuses and circulating pictures taken on cell phones, defiant bloggers often act as de facto investigative journalists. Their blogs get often noticed and picked up by the independent press, whose reports make their way to the international press. This compels the state media to cover these abuses of power and has even led the State itself to acknowledge them.

Such online activism took on another dimension when it intersected with offline labour mobilization, as epitomized in the April 6 Movement. Not only did independent political action associated with decentralized online networks start to co-exist with offline, ideologically-based movements tied with political parties or labour unions, but the ensuing dynamics also started to push the limits of dissent. Facilitating this kind of activism is the convergence of mobile phone and internet technology and the emergence of social media platforms. When in 2008 the textile workers at Al Mahalla Al Kubra, an industrial town in the Nile Delta, planned a strike, a group of bloggers created a Facebook group in support of their cause. The group, which called for a general strike, then transformed into a pro-democracy movement. Though the protest was met with a firm police response, the group continued its activism and managed to attract a large number of followers on its Facebook page. The arrest of one of the figures of the movement would popularize the movement even further, though with little effect on the ground.

As more activists started to use blogs as political tools, governments pushed back by implementing various measures aimed at stifling the blogosphere. These included closing down blogs, mounting defamation campaigns in the pro-government press against bloggers, devising strategies to divide them and altering data packages to limit uploading capability (Isherwood, 2009).
Social Media Networks and the Arab Uprisings

The rise of social media induced greater public engagement with issues. The strategic use of social media for social mobilization was particularly evident in the case of Iran. In 2009, social media networks were an important tool in energizing a massive protest movement. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s declared victory in the presidential election led the supporters of the opposition candidate, Mir Hussein Mousavi, to mobilize and contest the election results and call for real change in what came to be known as the Green Movement. Mousavi’s supporters used digital communication tools to reach out to the general public, disseminate information about what was taking place, maintain contact both inside and outside Iran, rally support for their cause and organize protests. Social media platforms, like the micro-blogging site Twitter, enabled the protesters to circumvent government censors and bypass restrictions on text messaging. Digital technologies were instrumental in mobilizing protesters and sustaining the momentum of the protests, transforming a political battle into an information one. While these protests failed to alter the outcome of the disputed elections, such activism highlighted the unsettling political potential of the social web.

The widely publicized death of Neda Agha-Soltan, which was captured on the mobile phones of witnesses and circulated extensively on the internet, became a powerful symbol rallying international support for the Green Movement. It is in this context that the events of the Arab uprisings broke out. With the rise of social media, online communities and social networks started to form around social networking sites like Facebook. Increased internet penetration, ubiquitous mobile phone use, the popularity of blogging, and the massive use of Facebook would play a prominent role during the Arab uprising – even though that role remains a matter of contention between the technology enthusiasts who champion social media and the technology sceptics who question such celebratory accounts.

In Tunisia, where it all started, digital media was an important factor in social mobilization. The circulation of news about Bouazizi’s self-immolation led to a spontaneous outburst of popular rage, which was captured on mobile phones. Soon images of protests found their way to the internet, quickly making it a matter of interest to the broader public. As the town of Sidi Bouzid came under siege, activists turned to social media to tell their stories. Local activists recorded scenes of the confrontations with their mobile phones and uploaded them on social media networks, capturing the attention of sympathetic audiences. Much of the momentum that animated the internet was fuelled by mobile footage from disenchanted youth and cyberactivists. The mediatization of the unrest helped connect the local setting to the broader national context. As more material became available, people started to relate more closely with the protesters and identify with their cause (Zayani, 2015).

Widely circulated images of state violence and police brutality were a stark reminder of the ruthlessness of the regime. As the protests spread, digital activism intensified. A number of activists aggregated, curated and promoted protest videos that were posted on Facebook, helping to amplify the information. Several Tunisians in the diaspora and foreign activists used Twitter to provide updates about the situation on the ground. Writing in multiple languages, they shared news they gained from activists and information they extracted from Facebook, thus increasing their reach and prompting an information cascade. The prominent use of social media should not obfuscate the role of traditional broadcast media. The fact that amateurish footage published on Facebook was picked up by the media and broadcasted on popular transnational satellite television channels fuelled further interest in social media and increased its relevance (Alterman, 2011).

The events in Tunisia had a spill-over effect. In a matter of weeks, Egyptians rose up against the Mubarak regime, where social media was also an important component of social mobilization. The launch of the Arabic version of Facebook had increased the number of users on this social media platform, which some exploited to speak up on issues and mobilize support for various causes. One of the popular groups that emerged in 2010 was “We are All Khalid Said.” The aim of the group was to protest police corruption and to expose the brutal death of a young Alexandrian, who was apprehended at a cyber café and savagely beaten to death by security forces for exposing police corruption and disseminating images of police officers involved in drug dealing. Pictures of his bruised
face circulated on social networking sites causing a public outrage. What started as a collective form of digital commiseration with a young blogger who was the victim of police corruption and state repression, developed into a protest movement calling for change and demanding the departure of Mubarak. The campaign to memorialize the murder of Khaled Said would energize a leaderless anti-Mubarak movement. An awareness of shared grievances energized the masses, while the strategic use of digital tools to share information and organize support helped keep the momentum as the world watched the massive protests in Tahrir Square and elsewhere (Faris, 2012).

**Post-Arab Uprisings Dynamics**

Images of jubilant protesters celebrating the undignified escape of Ben Ali and the fall of Mubarak inspired various Arab states across the region to protest, including Bahrain, Algeria, Yemen and Syria. Digital activism empowered various actors and groups and bolstered their ability to resist and contest government control and demand change. But this wave of protests did not last long. As states managed to repress, co-opt or pre-empt change, an Arab winter set in. In the aftermath of the uprisings, many social movements withered and lost their momentum. Counter revolutionary forces, setbacks and disillusionment, prolonged armed conflicts, and reversion to authoritarianism undermined the ability of peaceful social movements to effect change in the Middle East region. Yet, this prognosis needs to be qualified, as the viability of these social movements differs from country to country.

In countries that are mired in prolonged armed conflict like Syria and Libya, civil war and factionalism replaced social movements. In countries like Egypt, where a popular revolution toppled one of the iconic figures of Arab authoritarianism, before the country once again fell into the hands of military rule, the ability of social movements has been throttled through both legislation and repression. Conversely, in countries associated with the second wave of the Arab uprisings like Sudan and Algeria, social movements are taking the form of street demonstrations against entrenched ruling elites facing defiant popular pressure for real change.

In countries that are transitioning from authoritarianism to democratic rule like Tunisia, social movements have evolved into civil society organizations that are becoming more visibly active. What the strengthening of civil society and the participation of various groups did is create a tighter link between the civil and political sphere. How these social movements are likely to evolve and what they are likely to achieve is hard to tell; what is certain though is that the Middle East region is in the throes of tumultuous change.

**References**


Dossier: Social Movements, Digital Transformations and Changes in the Mediterranean Region

“Apolitical” Translocal Activism in the Mediterranean: An Exploration of New Dynamics of Contestation and Participation

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As the dust has settled on the 2011 uprisings that transformed the Arab world at the beginning of the decade, what remains in many places today are increasingly closed spaces for activism, contestation, and political participation. The momentary period of open opportunity – when diverse sectors of the population were able to organize themselves politically for the purpose of demanding their rights and attempting to re-shape the contours of state-society relations – has given way to renewed political elitism and popular fatigue in the best cases (such as Tunisia) and reinforced authoritarianism and violent conflict in the worst (such as Egypt and Syria). For the region’s youth, who either participated as the vanguard of the 2011 political moment or who still seek means of social and political integration, the perspectives are stark. While some have chosen to stay in their home countries, even in the face of bodily harm or imprisonment, others have chosen – or been forced – to leave, seeking safety and peace of mind in places such as Istanbul, Berlin and Paris. And in most cases, the direct forms of political contestation that so marked the early years of the decade, such as the protest movement or the sit-in or the campaign, have either faded or have been curtailed altogether.

Yet, the activist tide from 2011 has not disappeared entirely. And though there are in fact diverse new venues of mobilization and participation that have emerged in recent years, one interesting phenomenon that has emerged is translocal activism in seemingly apolitical domains. Looking at the trajectories of over 100 youth activists from Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria in the post-2011 period shows for some a re-assembly in new sectors, including participation in social and health service delivery, social entrepreneurship ventures, the arts and cultural sectors, and other less overtly political fields. It also shows in certain cases new translocal dynamics: while the action itself is highly local in terms of the place of intervention, the distribution of the activists themselves goes beyond territorial confines, overcoming the spatial distribution caused by migration, diaspora and exile.

Exploring this particular subset of post-2011 Arab youth activists reveals new forms of political contestation and participation that circumvent, at least in part, the political and geographic challenges they face. First, in assessing the locations and sectors of this activism, what emerges is that interventions are taking place in areas of limited statehood, where the imposed political order has failed or is absent. In this way, this new activism is making claims on the State by filling gaps and proposing a different political order. Second, the translocal nature of this activism includes not only the mobility of agents but also of practices of citizenship, allowing for new identities and agencies to emerge that defy territorial configurations and the primacy of the State. Third, the predominant tool that allows this translocal activism to exist – new digital technologies and, in particular, Information and Com-

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1 The research for this paper was conducted under the project “Arab Youth as Political Actors,” which involved research into new forms of youth engagement in Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Syria. This included over 100 semi-structured interviews, focus groups and policy dialogues in the four target countries, as well as France, Germany and Turkey. The project was funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.

2 Here, the term “youth” does not represent a specific age cohort but rather a broad community within the fields of activism and contestation who see themselves as a distinct generation. They hold shared implicit and explicit understandings and interpretations of the political and of politics, leading to shared practices in terms of their participation and manner of “doing” activism.
communications Technologies (ICT) – not only serves as a resource but actually influences decision-making processes and opens possibilities for new organizational forms and processes. Exploring these different dimensions of this apolitical translocal activism reveals their potential to impact political practices and social integration across the Mediterranean.

“Apolitical” Engagement as a Form of Contestation

The post-revolutionary backlash in the Arab countries that has replaced the fervour of the 2011 uprisings, whether in the form of state repression and violence or more general popular political apathy, has been accompanied by a waning of social movements and mass demonstrations of contestation. This is not to say that displays of opposition have stopped entirely; on the contrary, new organizational and strategic forms of claim-making – such as cause lawyering in Egypt, or single-issue campaigns in Tunisia – have found alternative means of resisting the political status quo and carving new spaces for contestation. Nonetheless, there has been a visible decline of many social movement organizations and activist groups who had previously engaged in political protests, marked by a prolonged phase of demobilization and high drop-out rates. This cycle of abeyance thus begs the question: where has everyone gone?

Looking at the trajectories of Arab youth activists, and in particular those from the 2011 uprisings or who took part in similar protest movements, reveals a variety of different paths that are, at least in part, related to the broader political context in which the activists find themselves. The difference in political opportunity structure for activist efforts between Tunisia and Syria, for example, is vast and naturally contributes to different patterns and forms of engagement. Nonetheless, in taking a comparative perspective, one similar trend that does emerge is a refocusing on development-oriented and community-based actions in highly local contexts. This includes a variety of different organizational formats and specific areas of intervention: participation in Syrian local administrative councils for the purpose of coordinating humanitarian relief and basic services at the municipal level; volunteer-based neighbourhood beautification projects in underprivileged zones in Lebanese cities; the establishment of Slow Food initiatives in rural and semi-urban Egypt; social entrepreneurship platforms promoting sustainable tourism in localities in Algeria… Common among these diverse initiatives is the focus on poorer populations or those falling outside the regime’s planning radar, the effort to stimulate collaborative work with members of the community, and the attempt to produce meaningful and tangible change in daily life without recourse to authorities or changes in the political system. These activist efforts also share a common ideal to apply democratic and participatory decision-making processes, and to promote inclusiveness in the implementation of their work.

New digital technologies, not only serves as a resource but actually influences decision-making processes and opens possibilities for new organizational forms and processes

The extent to which these new activist efforts are truly “apolitical” in nature is of course open to debate: organizational structures such as the Syrian local councils, for example, can be easily categorized as a form of decentralized political structure, albeit unofficial. The use of the term “apolitical” in fact reflects less an objective assessment than the activists’ own perception and qualification of their actions, which, in themselves, reflect their own understandings of politics. In interviewing activists across the southern Mediterranean who have gravitated to these new forms of engagement, two trends regarding their relationship to the political become visible. First is their dichotomizing of their own work vs. political work. The youth activists interviewed here hold a denigrated notion of the term “politics.” In Algeria, for example, the concept of politics remains associated with the negative experiences of the civil war and the décennie noire. This coincides with a tendency to consider political action as occurring only in institutionalized domains – parties, the state bureaucracy, elections, etc. –, and to view political work as detached from the real needs of the population. This dichotomizing of activism and political action has in fact been reinforced in
the latter years of the decade, as disappointment with post-revolutionary political processes has further isolated activists from the formal political sphere. In Syria, for example, there is a distinct impression of lost agency among the 2011 generation of youth activists, which directly impacts the way they view their current work in the local councils: as they perceive the political process to be taking place outside of the country, in elite negotiation events, they view their own action as something other than political. Yet, at the same time, the qualification of activist work as "apolitical" also reveals itself to be a rhetorical device. By qualifying their new forms of engagement as acts for the benefit of local communities outside the domain of politics, they are afforded more room for manoeuvre, especially in highly repressive contexts such as Egypt. Likewise, in avoiding the use of the term "political," they are able to gain more popular support among the community members with whom they seek to collaborate.

By qualifying their new forms of engagement outside the domain of politics, the activists are afforded more room for manoeuvre

While these new forms of engagement do represent a break from the mass protests and outright political contestation that occurred in 2011, interviews reveal an important degree of continuity in the underlying objectives that activists seek to achieve. Though not outwardly demanding regime ouster or radical change to the system, the activists still strive for the values of social justice and equality that made up an essential part of the demands of the Arab Spring. In this sense, although the move to different sectors is both a reaction to observed needs and the result of the closing space for collective action, this activism, nonetheless, is still pursuing the same goals as those of the 2011 uprisings. Moreover, this new "apolitical" engagement is serving as an alternative form of contestation by filling governance gaps in areas of limited statehood, where the State’s ability to govern and enforce rules is either faltering or absent (Börzel, Risse and Draude, 2018). In providing services such as garbage collection and sewage in zones where the State has collapsed, or by undertaking urban planning and zoning enforcement in areas that are ignored by the central authority, these new efforts are not just exerting autonomy, but are in fact contributing to a process of "governance from below" (El-Meehy, 2017). These non-state actors are exercising a degree of political authority, including the promulgation of new policies and rules, and are promoting different decision-making processes to those of the formal political system. Just as importantly, these sectors of engagement constitute a symbolic recognition of population groups and areas that are marginalized, excluded or ignored by the central authorities. In so doing, the activists are enacting new challenges to the State’s authority by investing power to formulate policies and provide services in non-state actors, and are defying the State’s politics of recognition – both of which contribute to implementing social justice and equality and contesting the State’s normal order.

Translocality as Shaping Identities and Practices

Beyond this sectoral shift is also the physical relocation of many of the activists themselves. While the effects of the spatial diffusion of groups and the alienating, isolating nature of exile, diaspora and forced migration have certainly contributed to a decline in activism through the depletion of human resources on the ground and – importantly – morale, the participation of youth activists abroad has not disappeared entirely. On the contrary, many displaced youth are contributing to these new forms of engagement, in spite of their distance from the local. Syrian activists who have had to make new homes in Gaziantep or Istanbul, for example, are still contributing to the work of local councils inside their home country through online coordination meetings and resource-sharing. Likewise, Algerian activists based in France are contributing to sustainable urban planning in poor neighbourhoods in Algiers using participatory methodologies and direct communication with the residents themselves. These modes of work reveal dimensions of translocality that allow for new political identities and organizational practices to be expressed. As opposed to "transnational," the concept of "translocal" adds certain nuances to understanding the empirical reality unfolding in these new activism initiatives, as it provides a different approach to assessing
The effects of the spatial fracturing of activists. Whereas the concept of transnational upholds the territorial configuration of the nation-state and the corresponding imposed power arrangements and political identities, translocal implies a degree of spatial connection and circulation in terms of political identities and lived practices, ideas and resources, which defies the top-down frameworks of the nation-state (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013). The translocal is composed of the local-to-local interactions that arise through the phenomenon of transnational migration and mobility, enriched by the multidirectional flows between homeland and host space, and between those that stayed behind and those that left. Translocality does not just imply transgression of the boundaries imposed by the State, but instead refers to dynamic spaces where new practices and political identities are produced and reproduced in a processual manner, as a result of these socio-spatial networks. In this sense, translocal space is marked by dichotomies such as continuity/discontinuity and anchoring/unmooring, but also provides the possibility for creative expressions of agency and power that go beyond existing orders. And, importantly, translocality also provides the possibility for transforming places, and in particular local conditions, through the production of political identities and new practices.

These dynamics of translocality are rooted in activist networks of the post-2011 Arab youth and their social- and economic-oriented interventions in local communities. For many of those who have been forced to leave their homes for safety reasons, or for those who have left as a result of a lack of opportunities or despair, their future trajectories depend greatly on how the political context of their home countries evolves. Many do not know whether they are temporary guests abroad or permanent residents, and their legal status in both their native country as well as their new location is unsettled. As such, the feelings they harbour towards both their homeland and their host society can be quite ambivalent, and they navigate a simultaneity of being in both places and neither. Some of these displaced activists recount their feeling of guilt about leaving others behind; others speak of the lost legitimacy to represent places they have left. Yet, participation in this translocal activism can be a source of inspiration and a vector of continued integration in their home community, despite the barriers of displacement. Even if largely demobilized, participation in local activist efforts, even if only virtually, provides a degree of continuity in their action and pursuit of goals. At the same time, for those who have not left, access to material and immaterial resources located abroad through these networks can be of key importance. For example, activists speak of the knowledge of institutions and sources of funding that can be leveraged through diasporic networks and the utility these can have for their new forms of engagement. And indeed, activists who have migrated abroad do attest to the positive impact of new lived experience on their perception of self and their societies. For example, Algerian activists based in France confirm that their experience outside their homeland has created a new self-awareness of themselves as social and political actors, and has provided new models for civic action. Likewise, Egyptian activists in various locations of exile speak of the broader understanding of the political processes taking place in their home country, which stems from their regional vantage point. This potential flow of resources, ideas and new forms of experiential knowledge from living abroad are recognized and valued within these activist networks.

The translocal space allows for new political agency to emerge through acts of citizenship beyond the parameters imposed by territorial boundaries and the contractual relationships imposed by the State.

This translocality, observed among Arab youth activists in the post-2011 period, has an important effect with regard to identities. The translocal space created in these activist networks contributes to building a new collective identity that transcends the vastly different experiences of daily life. Participation in such networks also allows activists to develop common interpretations and shared understandings of their work and its meaning, reinforcing their sense of joint enterprise despite the spatial fracturing. In addition, the translocal space allows for new political agency to emerge through acts of citizenship beyond the parameters imposed by territorial boundaries and the contractual relationships imposed by the State. While
citizenship is traditionally understood as a relationship of legal rights and obligations that are granted by the State, the translocal space allows individuals to construct their own citizenship via social and political action. This “active citizenship” can be understood as “processes of social interaction with other members of a specific civic and political community that bring about – through the reference to specific values, rights and responsibilities – the need to assume participatory behaviours that have the finality to reach the common good” (Bee and Kaya, 2017). The new forms of engagement of Arab youth, infused with the objectives of social justice and equality, which constituted the main political claims of 2011, and undertaken specifically for the purpose of meeting the needs of those forgotten by the State, can be understood as expressions of this active citizenship. As such, they defy both the legal limitations and territorial boundaries of traditional citizenship regimes, imposed by both homelands and host states, but also the associated loss of political agency.

While these new forms of engagement among Arab youth activists demonstrate their ability to act as alternative methods for contestation and participation, the longer-term impact and ability to stimulate broader changes to political practices remains to be seen.

In addition, one of the critical tools that allows this translocal activism to exist – digital technologies that collapse differences in time and space – also reinforces certain practices and organizational formats that can potentially prove more durable in the long run than mass protest movements. The utilization among these translocal activist networks of digital technologies and, in particular, new ICTs, such as mobile phones, and free applications, such as WhatsApp and Skype, serves as a basic and essential resource for coordination. Digital technologies and ICTs allow for spatially-fractured activists to participate in a very meaningful and operational way in local community efforts through their ability to produce virtual presence. In addition, new ICTs are utilized by certain activist networks to establish a secure space for exchange, with many using free services such as Signal or Telegram for their ability to ensure encrypted messaging. Yet, beyond their role as a resource for activists’ coordination and communication, digital technologies also play a role in shaping practices within these new forms of engagement themselves. The act of meeting, discussing and taking decisions in virtual spaces has an impact on decision-making processes and structures within these activist networks. ICTs have been shown to influence organizational practices within social movements by promoting horizontal decision-making and informal or even un-institutionalized modes (Garrett, 2006), and indeed the Arab youth activists partaking in these new initiatives repeatedly cite a practice of “horizontality” in their collaborative work. This includes consensus-based decision-making, collaborative leadership and the encouragement of participation from all members of a group – including not only the activists themselves but also the beneficiaries of their efforts. Such organizational practices are not unique to this particular trend of apolitical translocal activism – on the contrary, youth groups and social movements across the region since the heyday of the 2011 uprisings have attempted to manifest non-hierarchical structures and democratic practices within their organizations and networks. Nonetheless, digital technologies are helping to achieve these ideals by permitting the existence of un-institutionalized structures that are able to assemble, disassemble and reassemble in a manner that allows activists to launch projects and then enter a resting phase without jeopardizing the overall initiative. Indeed, the activists feel that these rather loose formations, in many cases composed of a small core group of connected yet informally affiliated activists, in conjunction with a periphery of beneficiary-participants, will enable these initiatives to be sustainable in the longer term.

Future Perspectives for Political Participation and Research

While these new forms of engagement among Arab youth activists demonstrate their ability to act as alternative methods for contestation and participation, the
longer-term impact and ability to stimulate broader changes to political practices remains to be seen. Within the localities where this new activism is being carried out, there is at least the potential to shape local governance practices. In providing models of community-based development and service provision, these new activist efforts can change expectations and awareness. In the case of the Syrian local councils, for example, though they have acted less like political structures than service-providers, they have obtained a degree of popular political legitimacy that could translate into future roles in local decision-making processes. Yet this may not necessarily lead to increased youth participation, nor increased democratic practice. The sense of exclusion from political processes felt by youth active in the local councils is compounded by their own reluctance to engage in political action in the post-conflict period, while the ability to achieve democratic ideals within the modus operandi of the local councils has not been entirely satisfactory.

Likewise, in many of the cases explored here, the highly local nature of the new forms of engagement, along with the activists’ stance on their “apolitical” nature, has translated into a certain degree of isolation. Local actions are seen as responding to specific local needs only, and in this way can be disconnected from one another as well as from a broader vision of change. The potential political impact of these activist efforts is thus somewhat obfuscated. Digital technologies could provide the possibility of creating virtual forums that can coordinate action and promote knowledge-sharing – even without establishing formal coalitions or specialized coordinating bodies. For example, the Al Chabaka virtual platform, which consists of a collaborative directory, interactive map and live agenda of Algerian civil society groups, is cited as a useful tool for increasing the awareness and visibility of local initiatives and stimulating broader citizen engagement. That said, a proliferation of virtual forums and tools is not necessarily the solution to the broader issue of aggregation and alliance-building, as they must be integrated into everyday lived practices to be truly useful and durable. In addition, while the transformative quality of translocal dynamics on local contexts has the potential to be quite far-reaching, the impact on practices and patterns of participation throughout the Mediterranean remains to be seen. In the neighbourhoods and communities where activism is occurring, a knowledge of practices in other contexts, for example, along with new resources, can enhance local development processes, and these effects should be documented to understand the impact of translocality in home communities. But, critically, there is also potential for a transformative impact in the other direction, meaning on local contexts in host societies. Indeed, displaced activists are in a privileged position to elevate and diffuse the knowledge, strategies and tactics that come from the local contexts where their activism is occurring. As the local-to-local interactions in these activist networks treat as equal the knowledge, know-how and resources that emanate from different locations along the network, there is a real possibility for effecting practices in host communities as well. As many of the displaced Arab youth are likely to remain in their host societies for the foreseeable future, it is a worthwhile research agenda to study how this translocal activism is impacting their practices and participation in their new locations. Indeed, taking a holistic approach to the impact of these local-to-local exchanges within these translocal activist networks could reveal new forms of engagement and models of participation across the Mediterranean.

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A Mediterranean Brave New World: The Tools that Lead to Social Movement, and Protecting the Online Civic Spaces They Inhabit

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The use of digital tools has played an integral role in social movements in the Mediterranean region, from the pro-democracy uprisings of the Arab Spring to the anti-austerity actions of the Gilets Jaunes. Even in cases where the movements have not achieved the goals their members were aiming for, the ongoing use of technology to create online civic spaces has culminated in a tectonic shift. Today, more than ever, policymakers need to defend online civic spaces against their closure. It is crucial to protect internet freedoms for free expression, association, assembly and privacy online, and essential to ensure that people have the same freedoms online as those they are guaranteed offline.

Young people in the Mediterranean region have been leading calls for social and political change, which culminated during the Arab Spring. Digital media changed the mobilization tactics of democratization movements, and new communication and information technologies played a central role in the popular uprisings. Dubbed the “Arab Digital Generation,” (Booz & Co., 2012) youth in the Arab world have been harnessing digital tools to organize, educate and campaign. Among their top priorities are: transparency in government, digital education, employment opportunities and better healthcare technology (Pecquet, 2014). As countless studies now show, Facebook and Twitter were two of the main communication tools that assisted in the overthrow of four major dictators: Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen, and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. One of the main reasons why new digital tools played a major role in the revolutions is that, at the time, internet content was significantly less controlled by the State than other traditional media outlets, such as television or radio.

Here, it is important to mention that the reason these social movements agitated the geopolitical order in the region is that they did not solely reflect what was happening “on the internet.” Protesters’ demands centered around very real, grounded issues. For that reason, and to fully understand how technology shapes social movements globally, we should draw the distinction between tools to launch social movements offline and fully online campaigns (Hussain & Howard, 2012). There are three stages of digital activism: the first is preparation, where activists use digital media in creative ways to find each other, build solidarity around shared grievances and identify collective political goals. Second is the ignition phase, involving an incident that state-run media typically ignore, but which is brought to people’s attention online and enrages the public. The third phase involves the period of street protests that are made possible, in part, by online networking and coordination (Hussain & Howard, 2012).

Youth throughout North Africa and southern Europe – or the Mediterranean Basin more generally – provide a unique vantage point for digital transformations and popular mobilizations, because they have grown up in what is seen as a geopolitical hotspot in the digital age. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, up to 70% of the population is under 35. The internet penetration rate is an enormous 40% in the Middle East, and social media use in the region is increasing at a rapid pace. In 2012 alone, Facebook subscriptions from the Middle Eastern region increased by 29% to a total of 44 million users, 77% of whom are in the 16 to 34 age group, with women accounting for 35% of them. Users of social
media develop a “Web 2.0 sensibility”: they learn that they have the choice to question the information and messages they receive. Through social media navigation and practice, they develop ways of becoming producers, aggregators and scrutineers of content (Herrera, 2014).

One of the main reasons why new digital tools played a major role in the revolutions is that, at the time, internet content was significantly less controlled by the State than other traditional media.

People under the age of 25 in Mediterranean countries accounted for almost half of the region’s population in 2010. The United Nations predicts that the overall population of Mediterranean countries will grow by a quarter by 2030, when there will be an estimated 70 million under 25-year-olds – compared to 55 million when the research was first conducted in 2012 (Kocoglu & Flayols, 2012). Young people in the region are able to stay connected despite shortcomings in wired internet through the use of smartphones and data services (Radcliffe, 2018). They use digital spaces to challenge the system, learn, socialize, work, play, network, do politics and exercise citizenship (Herrera, 2014). Indeed, the main source of information for the younger generation is social media, making the digital revolution one of the most important in the last 10 years. But not everything is positive: while there are high rates of connectivity, the unemployment, underemployment and youth poverty rates continue to climb. World Bank data indicates that youth unemployment is a critical issue in many countries across the Mediterranean region, where 25.4 million people are unemployed, of whom 7-8 million are aged 15-24. Reflecting the economic crisis, unemployment rates in the Mediterranean have risen more sharply for EU Member States than for non-EU Mediterranean countries over the past 10 years (World Bank, 2014; UN Population Division, 2015). In December 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi, a young fruit and vegetable street vendor in Tunisia, set himself on fire in protest after being harassed by officials. He became a catalyst for pro-democracy change, and his actions inspired youth in the MENA region to raise their voices and take to the streets in the long months that followed, in what we now call the Arab Spring. Youth unemployment, underemployment and youth poverty is widespread, and Bouazizi’s situation and protest resonated with the masses and helped inspire social movements (Muldering, 2013). The fact that young people in Mediterranean countries today are well educated and connected has created high levels of frustration among youth in the region struggling with social and economic exclusion.

Use of Digital Tools to Challenge Power

Recent social movements in Tunisia, Morocco and France present compelling case studies for the use of digital tools to challenge power.

Tunisia

With the rise of the Arab Spring came a proliferation of social media and networks used to mobilize people online and on the streets. Many people took to social media because other forms of political communication were regulated by the State and were inaccessible (Hussain, & Howard, 2012). According to technologist Ramy Raoof, members of social movements acquire skills as a response to the pressures they face. It is for this reason, Raoof explains, that the average internet user in Egypt, Iran and China has slightly more advanced skills than those living in countries with less internet restrictions – the more closed the internet ecosystem becomes, the more people have to adapt. For instance, before 2011, Tunisian internet services underwent widespread state censorship and surveillance, and internet communication technologies were tightly controlled. Despite the crackdown by the regime on YouTube, Facebook and other applications, bloggers and activists resisted and created alternative online newscasts and virtual spaces for anonymous political discussions outside of state control (Shirazi, 2013). Protests in Tunisia were facilitated by the use of fast, scalable and real-time internet-based information and communication tools and social media networks. “Looking at the web, exploding with Tunisia’s
news and sights, reading the endless posts of Tunisian bloggers and Egyptian Facebooks,” Dr. Svetlova highlights, “it’s plain that Mark Zuckerberg’s creation and others like it are playing a high-profile role in the unfolding unprecedented people’s revolution in Tunisia” (Svetlova, 2011). Other tools to challenge state power during the protests included text-messaging systems, used both within and outside of the country to share information about the location of actions, the location of the abuses and organizing next steps. Access to technologies allowed people to build extensive networks, create social capital and quickly organize themselves on a scale never seen before (Hussain, & Howard, 2012). This type of organizing continues to this day, especially given that the lack of communication between the government and civil society has become a major driver of discouragement among the population (Ben Ameur & Neale, 2018). Social media uses, and the employment of communication technologies more generally, breaks that norm by ensuring the direct and instant expression of grievances and demands.

While there are high rates of connectivity, the unemployment, underemployment and youth poverty rates continue to climb

Al-Hirak Movement

Similarly, in Morocco, new technologies have allowed for quick and easy distribution of data that highlight abuses of power and build networks of both national and international solidarity. The “Al-Hirak” movement began on the northern edge of the Rif Mountains in Morocco, a region in the country that is largely neglected and marginalized. The demands of Rif residents include better access to schools, universities, libraries and hospitals. The residents of the northern city of Al-Hoceima, organized a rare series of protests after a fish vendor was killed in 2016, crushed to death by a trash compactor while trying to retrieve a catch that had been confiscated by police. The outrage spread and thousands of people protested against the incident. Mobilization on social media helped build support and the unrest grew into Al-Hirak al-Shaabi (The Popular Movement). Police responded to the protests with brutal force and arrests (Lamin, 2017).

For the Al-Hirak movement, Facebook Live, a service that allows users to broadcast video live directly through the platform, was a crucial tool for raising awareness and garnering support. On an almost daily basis, the protesters of Al-Hoceima broadcasted their marches and public meetings live on the social network. Facebook Live was also used as an essential instrument to document and share incidents of police repression – some video views numbering in the thousands. But according to information provided by the activists to Access Now, an organization that fights to protect human rights in the digital world, when Moroccan authorities realized protests were being broadcast live on the Internet, they issued orders to telecommunication companies to block both internet and phone network connections while the protests were in progress. The efforts by authorities to restrict access to internet platforms significantly undermined protesters’ ability to share their movement with the rest of the world. Previously, shutdowns and network disruptions lasted four to five hours during protests, after which authorities restored connectivity. However, during the Al-Hirak protests, shutdowns continued for two to three days, leaving the residents of Al-Hoceima in complete isolation. Shutdowns increase isolation in times of unrest by preventing people from communicating with loved ones, accessing emergency services and holding authorities accountable for human rights violations (Tackett & Sayadi, 2017). Morocco is not alone here: the trend of using shutdowns as a tool to repress social movement is, unfortunately, increasing globally.

Gilets Jaunes

Moving to the northern shore of the Mediterranean, the Gilets Jaunes, or Yellow Vests movement, is an example of social organizing that began online and continued to spread massively to eventually facilitate organizing offline. The Yellow Vests in France is described as “a grassroots, social media-based citizens’ movement with no formal structure, recognized leader or party, or union backing, named after the high-visibility jackets that French drivers are required by
law to carry in their vehicles” (Quinn & Henley, 2019). The movement began online as a protest over French President Macron’s government imposing tax hikes on fuel. The taxes highlighted a rift between the city “elite” and France’s rural poor. Fuel taxes especially affect those who are living outside of major cities and are more reliant on cars, disproportionately impacting lower-income, working-class people in areas of the country that are struggling economically. The tax increases were followed by austerity measures to benefit the wealthy and undercut worker protections. The protestors called for greater corporate regulation, education reform and expanded social safety-net programmes to provide new protection mechanisms for children, the elderly and workers (Williamson, 2018).

When Moroccan authorities realized protests were being broadcast live on the Internet, they issued orders to telecommunication companies to block both internet and phone network connections while the protests were in progress.

Protests have included blocking highways, creating barricades and deploying convoys of slow-moving trucks. French journalist Frederic Filloux described some of the groups organizing tactics, saying that, following a call to action and an online petition launched against tax increases, Yellow Vests-related Facebook events mushroomed, leading to locally organized marches and protests sometimes garnering a quarter of a city’s population. Protestors share their perspectives via selfies, videos and live blogging. Self-appointed thinkers have become national figures due to the popularity of their Facebook pages and streaming events through Facebook Live. “Right now in France, traditional TV is trailing a social sphere seen as uncorrupted by the elites, unfiltered and more authentic” (Filloux, 2018). Filloux writes that Facebook substitutes the traditional media in a context where journalists have been attacked and the subject of public hatred. Facebook groups have emerged as a trusted voice representing the masses. The network’s semblance of transparency and the unparalleled immediate live platform it provides have supported the movement’s growth. Eventually, and as a response to the Yellow Vests’ widespread and ongoing protests, President Macron moved to suspend the tax increase and raise the minimum wage (Williamson, 2018).

Use of Digital Tools to Build Societies

E-Government, E-Citizenship & E-Democracy

After Tunisia’s uprising in 2011, the new government attempted to tap into the sensibilities of its young wired citizens by developing “e-government” and “e-citizenship” programmes, opening up an online portal where citizens could report incidents of government corruption, and setting up Facebook pages to allow citizens to convey their ideas for administrative reforms. Similar programmes had already been initiated in Morocco, Turkey and Egypt, largely funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These programmes take a view of digital citizens as “those who use technology frequently, who use technology for political information to fulfil their civic duty, and who use technology at work for economic gain” (Mossberger & McNeil, 2008). However, the programmes are not very popular, as people in the MENA region have organically developed their own model of e-democracy, going online to express their voices as citizens in criticizing the government, occupying virtual spaces, performing e-strikes and e-demonstrations (Herrara & Sakr, 2014).

Civil Society Work

Digital tools have also been used by civic organizations to monitor and hold the government accountable. Al Bawsala, a non-profit NGO in Tunisia that is independent from political influence, serves as a resource for citizens who seek political information, Members of Parliament (MPs) looking to embrace democratic and consultative practices, and associations that seek to ensure the rights of citizens through monitoring, advocating and empowering.
Through its project Marsad ("Monitor" in Arabic) it observes legislative and executive proceedings and promotes transparency. Al Bawsala uses technology to track government data in order to make the collected information freely accessible to citizens. In Tunisia, many other organizations do the same on a local scale.

While digital tools and technology have undoubtedly increased access to information and social movement mobilization in the Mediterranean region, challenges do remain.

Start-up Ecosystem

Digital tools in the Mediterranean region and across the Middle East are not only being used to mobilize, educate and organize action, they are also being used to support youth through online entrepreneurial projects. Across the Middle East, entrepreneurs and their start-ups are striving to offer an economic future to the region’s overwhelmingly youthful population, while helping to foster social and political change (Pecquet, 2014). Even in typically closed spaces like Algeria, people are using digital tools in innovative ways in the start-up ecosystem. The Algerian Center of Social Entrepreneurs (ACSE) is one such start-up. Co-founder Yanis Bouda describes the organization’s goals as “to inform, educate and train people about social entrepreneurship, in order to encourage them to get involved and to challenge the status quo through a viable economic activity that has a high social impact.” The organization uses digital tools to promote its campaigns. A lot of movements are launched using Twitter hashtags, such as #TRASHTAG, #CivicTech, etc., to encourage the participation and inclusion of all citizens (Casbah Tribune, 2019). The Algerian Social Entrepreneurship Space is another start-up organization in Algeria. Every year, they organize the event “Impact@work,” where young Algerians present projects that benefit the country both socially and economically. During the final competition, innovative projects on topics ranging from environmental issues to supporting youth education in the sciences, were presented (Agli, S., 2017).

Conclusion

While digital tools and technology have undoubtedly increased access to information and social movement mobilization in the Mediterranean region, challenges do remain. In a region where youth unemployment is widespread, members of civil society have harnessed these tools to create economic opportunities through the start-up economy. Internet and communication technologies have broken through connection and communication barriers in isolated regions allowing for the immediate sharing of abuses, critical information and opinions in online civic spaces. Still, governments now resort to information control tactics such as internet shutdowns, network disruptions and repressive legislation to stop the flow of critical opinions. The shift in the use of digital tools in the popular uprisings in 2011 has reverberated around the Mediterranean region through online civic spaces. These instruments, now more than ever, need to be protected.

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Global and Arab Media in the Post-truth Era: Globalization, Authoritarianism and Fake News

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The coronation of “post-truth” as the international word of the year in 2016 signified the convergence of social media influence as a news source and, according to Oxford Dictionaries, “a growing distrust of facts offered by the establishment.” The post-truth era refers to “circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” Some have described post-truth as a murky concept with hybrid qualities, and not simply the opposite of “truth.”

Australian political scientist John Keane described it as a form of “gaslighting,” an “organized effort by public figures to mess with citizens’ identities, to deploy lies, bullshit, buffering and silence for the purpose of sowing seeds of doubt and confusion among subjects.” Some examples of this phenomenon are Donald Trump’s bluster and wholesale criminalization of Mexican immigrants, Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte’s coarse and aggressive bombast or Brazilian far-right President Jair Bolsonaro’s homophobic rhetoric. In addition, politicians and members of the media have raised public alarm regarding the phenomenon of “fake news” and its sway over both the 2016 US presidential election and Brexit.

The ongoing digital information revolution has disrupted the existing media/information ecosystem at local, national and global levels. In addition to subverting traditional hierarchical models of information/knowledge dissemination and consumption, it fuelled anxieties about the quality of the information in the post-truth era. In the West, there is an increase on discourses about the epistemic “crisis of democracy” and the “misinformation society,” increasingly hiding under the guise of anti-globalization, anti-immigrant and populist politics. Furthermore, foreign influence and propaganda have also been blamed for exacerbating fake news, post-truth politics and epistemic or democratic crisis discourses. Outside North America and Europe, however, misinformation and lack of trust in the media and the establishment do not constitute a wholly new phenomenon. Authoritarian regimes around the world have long been involved in the dissemination of misinformation and propaganda. For this reason, the post-truth politics debate in global and Arab media should shift attention to authoritarianism and political upheavals which primarily drive much of the disinformation encountered in the Arab media ecosystem. In this article, I discuss post-truth politics and the rise of fake news and examine their implications on global and Arab media.

Post-Truth Politics and Fake News

The “post-truth era” describes a unique moment in political history where politicians and populist leaders, as well as polarized audiences, challenge the notion of “truth” and the institutions society has crowned as “arbiters of truth.” The political climate of 2016

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4 Ibid.
witnessed the triumph of the Brexit campaign to pull the United Kingdom out of the European Union and the election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States. Trump wielded social media as a political tool to decimate his political opponents – e.g. coming up with demeaning labels for republican contenders, such as “Liyin’ Ted” or “Low Energy Jeb” (Bush) – and used Facebook Live and Twitter platforms to circumvent mainstream media. He popularized the term “fake news” to refer to mainstream media reports that contradict his administration’s narratives or could be perceived as critical of his policies. Only a few days after taking his presidency, Trump and his press secretary Sean Spicer falsely claimed the crowd attending his inauguration ceremony to be the “largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, both in person and around the globe.” Trump acolytes defended these disproven claims and suggested their “alternative facts” weighed more than published evidence of aerial photographs and crowd-size experts contradicting initial and highly exaggerated estimates. In both science and common parlance, facts indicate verifiable observations, an “objective” reality we construe as “truth”; as opposite, “alternative facts” veer off from that “truth” or, at a minimum, present us with an alternative reality. In this sense, the deployment of fake news refers to ideologically motivated denigration of unsympathetic mainstream news media coverage and to the contestation of the notion of “truth” itself.

In contrast to the above understanding, the scientific conceptualization this article adopts defines fake news as false or “fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent. Fake news outlets, in turn, lack the news media’s editorial norms and processes for ensuring the accuracy and credibility of information. Fake news overlaps with other information disorders, such as misinformation (false or misleading information) and disinformation (false information that is purposely spread to deceive people).” As such, fake news does not entirely constitute a new social phenomenon because it implies the wielding of information as a means of psychological influence, similar to propaganda, or as a way to generate economic benefits through “click-baits.”

Fears about the rise of fake news, however, were rekindled after social media amplified blatantly false news stories attacking Hillary Clinton and supporting Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential elections. More ominously, fake news threatened to generate violence in society among those likely to fall for it. For example, the “pizzagate” conspiracy story influenced an armed man to storm a Washington D.C. pizza parlour for allegedly being the site of a child sex ring led by Hillary Clinton and her minions. At the centre of both public and academic concerns arose the fear that fake news stories could further erode democratic governance through increasing distrust of political elites and public institutions, including news media.

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Fake news upends the traditional role of news media organizations as “ arbiters of truth,” in accordance with the values of mainstream journalism, and corroborates the advent of what Victor Pickard termed the “misinformation society.” In a discussion of the professional ideology of journalism, Mark Deuze explains how the principles of “objectivity,” “autonomy,” and “public service,” among other norms and prac-

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Journalists, have long informed the ethos of the profession.\textsuperscript{10} Generally speaking, journalists like to perceive their role in society as advocating the public’s interest in acting as “watchdogs,” collecting and disseminating information in an impartial and ethical manner. Their credibility and legitimacy, therefore, rest on society’s belief in the autonomy and objectivity in the verification of facts informing journalism’s truth-seeking and truth-telling ethos. These venerated professional norms, however, have been the subject of much tension and pressure from increasing monopolization and commercialization of the media in the United States and globally. The post-truth era and fake news environment exposes deep structural flaws in our existing information ecosystem as media institutions buckle under pressures of “a lack of financial support for accountability journalism, the dominance of infrastructures of misinformation (i.e., the “Facebook problem”), and regulatory capture – whereby agencies harmonize their actions to serve the commercial interests of the very businesses they purportedly regulate.”\textsuperscript{11} Casting doubt on the values of public service journalism exacerbates the problem of fake news and drowns out the voices of high quality journalism.

The digital information ecosystem disrupts the old hierarchical model of knowledge/information transmission despite offering unprecedented opportunities for the acquisition and dissemination of news and information. On the one hand, the Internet and social media platforms empower regular citizens and individuals to create, gather, access and share information without the mediation/control of legacy media corporations. In this sense, the Internet undermines the power of traditional gatekeepers and information brokers, and society ends up with what Manuel Castells describes as diffused “self-mass communication”\textsuperscript{12} systems, instead of traditional mass communication systems in which knowledge/information workers ascertain the veracity of facts and judge what is newsworthy. New technology companies, such as Google and Facebook, are the new gatekeepers and algorithms now rule the information landscape.\textsuperscript{13} Social media platforms have inverted the old paradigm of “All the News That’s Fit to Print” to “The Daily Me” of all news and information that primarily fit with users’ personal worldviews and confirm their social and political dispositions. Complicating matters further is the incredible rapidity at which false information and fake news are diffused online. A team of MIT researchers compared the dissemination of thousands of true and false stories and concluded that “falsity travels with greater velocity than the truth” on Twitter and other social media platforms.\textsuperscript{14} The researchers concluded that false rumours spread farther, deeper and faster than the truth due to the unique and novel nature of social media content that attracts attention and encourages information-sharing behaviours. The post-truth era thus heralds the convergence of the widespread distrust of institutions with digital media environments in which bots and human behaviour are equally responsible for the spread of false information online. In addition, the ubiquitous nature of advertising, sponsored and clickbait content further stokes global fears about the vulnerabilities in our information digital ecosystem, as well as renewed scrutiny over the global and local media’s role in providing high quality, credible, verifiable facts and information to counter such threats.

The post-truth era, marked by the erosion of trust in democratic institutions and the defiance of mainstream media’s credibility, has plagued the global media environment, as globalization and new communication technologies intensify the scramble to influence the international news agenda and reach wider/new audiences. Some critics have argued that globalization privileges powerful corporate media conglomerates from advanced economies (“North" over “South”), perpetuating the “hegemony” of Western media/news agencies on the flow of information and news around the world, and fostering “cultural imperialism” or “dependency” among nations of the Global South. English as the lingua franca of globalization, moreover, unfairly promotes US-based and other anglophone media corporations. Other scholars have suggested that globalization and new communication technologies have facilitated a new global marketplace for news and information and created a diverse “global public sphere.” For example, satellite television fostered “multi-directional flows” of information and news – instead of traditional one-way flows of news from the West to the rest. By “global media," I broadly refer to transnational media outlets and voices that attract a wider cross-section of international audiences. This category includes both private/corporate-owned international media outlets (e.g., CNN, Fox News…) and public/government-owned media (e.g., BBC, Al-Jazeera, Russia Today, CCTV, France 24…). It should be noted that, in addition to newsgathering agencies (e.g., Reuters), social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) and internet-enabled news also influence global news flows, international politics and global governance. The ongoing communication revolution began with the dawn of the new millennium that transformed global media and journalism practices around the world. The 24-hour satellite television news cycle creates an insatiable demand for news and information around the world. The “breaking news” ethos of satellite/cable television blends coverage of significant events, such as political upheavals and natural disasters, with a high dosage of infotainment. At the level of international news, the endless news cycle pressured government officials to act and (at least appear to) respond to “breaking news” immediately and decisively, a phenomenon labelled as the “CNN Effect.” Instead of cool, impartial journalistic analysis, US news media personalities, like former Fox News host Bill O’Reilly, ushered in brazen personal opinion, journalistic involvement and questionable “truth-claims.” The questionable substance of breaking news and unceasing public relations gimmicks corrode public trust in the media. According to 2016 Gallup polling data, US audiences’ trust in the news media sank to new lows with only “32% saying they have ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’ of trust” in the media.

New technology companies, are the new gatekeepers and algorithms now rule the information landscape. Social media platforms have inverted the old paradigm of “All the News That’s Fit to Print" to “The Daily Me" of all news and information that primarily fit with users’ personal worldviews and confirm their social and political dispositions.

ally, the expanding 24-hour, 7-day media cycle has led to a rising tide of “soft news” and “global infor-
tainment.” Amongst other detrimental effects, Daya Thussu argues that Western-based media corpora-
tions’ global dominance promotes the “Murdochiza-
tion of news” – i.e. infotainment over public service journalism – in India and other parts of the develop-
ing world.22

The 24-hour satellite television news cycle creates an insatiable demand for news and information around the world. The “breaking news” ethos of satellite/cable television blends coverage of significant events, such as political upheavals and natural disasters, with a high dosage of infotainment

Populist leaders have exploited global news’ political and economic imperatives to spread false rumours and unsubstantiated claims that befuddle citizens and sow doubts about objective reality. During the Brexit campaign, for instance, British politician Boris Johnson and the “leave camp” falsely claimed that the UK disbursed £350 million per week to the European Union (EU), a claim The Guardian described as “devious and bogus,”23 but which nevertheless stoked British public doubts about the economic elements of staying within the EU. Donald Trump’s 2016 election campaign and presidency have been riddled with falsehoods, such as his claim about Mexican immigrants being criminals and rapists, and his promise that Mexico will pay for the border wall, which mainstream media was eager to cover. Fact-
checking organizations, such as FactCheck.org and the Poynter Institute’s PolitiFact, have kept a running count of false claims Trump peddled since he took the helm of the US presidency. The amount of those claims reached a whopping 8,718 in 759 days as of 17 February 2019, according to Washington Post’s fact checker Glenn Kessler.24

Internationally, some populist leaders went beyond propagating falsehoods and rumour to wielding the threat of fake news to justify authoritarian measures that muzzle the press.25 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has already sounded the alarm about the cynical use of fake news by “predators of press freedom.”26 In 2017, the Cambodian Prime Minister described journalists as “an anarchic group” and accused for-
eign media of endangering “peace and stability.”27 The Burmese army used the excuse of fake news to justify censorship laws and reject claims of ethnic genocide against Rohingya Muslims.28 Rodrigo Dut-
tete, the President of the Philippines, denied ac-
cusations of extra-judicial killings of opponents and civilians and denounced news website Rappler’s reporting on these incidents for being “a fake news outlet.”29 From the Philippines and Turkey to Hungary and the Czech Republic, the 2018 RSF report indi-
cated, a general climate of media hostility became prevalent. “The unleashing of hatred towards jour-
nalists is one of the worst threats to democracies,”

27 PHNOM, P. “Cambodia’s Hun Sen says he and Trump object to ‘anarchic’ media.” Reuters. 28 February 2017 www.reuters.com/article/us-
usa-trump-cambodia/cambodias-hun-sen-says-he-and-trump-object-to-anarchic-media-idUSKBN1670OQ.
28 PARRY, R. L. “Rohingya ethnic cleansing is fake news, says Burma army.” The Sunday Times. 15 November 2017 www.thetimes.co.uk/ article/rohingya-ethnic-cleansing-is-fake-news-says-burma-army-580hbxw6r. See also: HUTCHINSON, S. “Gendered insecurity in the Roh-
RSF Secretary-General Christophe Deloire asserted. “Political leaders who fuel loathing for reporters bear heavy responsibility because they undermine the concept of public debate based on facts instead of propaganda. To dispute the legitimacy of journalism today is to play with extremely dangerous political fire,” he warned.30

Populist leaders have exploited global news’ political and economic imperatives to spread false rumours and unsubstantiated claims that befuddle citizens and sow doubts about objective reality

The post-truth politics global media environment spurred a new push for government-funded global propaganda as an instrument of foreign policy to influence international politics and advance geopolitical interests. Russia Today (RT), a Russian government-sponsored international television outlet, has been operating since 2005 as “a global, round-the-clock news network.” According to its official website, RT “creates news with an edge for viewers who want to Question More. RT covers stories overlooked by the mainstream media, provides alternative perspectives on current affairs, and acquaints international audiences with a Russian viewpoint on major global events.”31 In reality, however, coverage of international news in the Kremlin-backed RT seems to be primarily driven by conspiracy theories and anti-mainstream voices that together “legitimize Russian domestic and foreign policies and, in turn, delegitimize policies of the American government.”32 RT’s coverage of the war in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Syrian civil war, Brexit or the 2016 US presidential elections, for instance, displayed unabashed “willingness to disseminate partial truths or outright fictions” in support of the Kremlin with little regard to traditional norms of objective, factual reporting.33 A RAND Corporation report described the contemporary Russian model for propaganda as “the firehose of falsehood” because of two of its distinctive features: high numbers of channels and messages and a shameless willingness to disseminate partial truths or outright fictions.34 RT has been accused of fostering EU scepticism and giving unfettered platforms to Brexit leader Nigel Farage, France’s Marine Le Pen and other far-right forces.35 Similarly, state-owned China Central Television (CCTV) and other news outlets benefit from the post-truth global news environment to influence Chinese and non-Chinese overseas – e.g. rebuffing international complaints about state repression of Turkic-speaking Uighur Muslims36 and other human rights abuses in Tibet – and to generally project a benign image of China’s rise as a global power.

The information revolution has had an impact on news-gathering and dissemination techniques, with the increasing use of big data and artificial intelligence to manufacture and customize/personalize daily news online. Furthermore, the Internet provides fertile grounds for breeding and amplifying state-sponsored fake news and propaganda campaigns, with websites like the US-based Info Wars and Russia’s Sputnik International becoming a global source for conspiracy theories. Social media and Internet firms, like Cambridge Analytica, stoked fears about the harvesting of users’ private data to wage psychological warfare and influence campaigns all over the world.37 However,
headlines like Vox’s “Social media is rotting democracy from within: How social platforms enable far-right politicians’ campaigns to undermine democracy,” could risk tipping societies and democracies into the brink of a moral panic about social media-based news.

Arab News Media and the Pursuit of Truth

The 17th Century English poet John Donne wrote that “no man is an island,” a statement that best describes the current interdependence among local, national, regional and global media systems in which Arab media interact. Unsurprisingly, the Arab media landscape reflects ongoing global trends in which mainstream, traditional journalism values and democratic institutions are being given a hard time. I use the term “Arab media” to describe a wide range of media structures and news cultures in the Arabic speaking world. Arab media are increasingly diverse and hybrid as they encompass private and state-owned outlets, partisan press, pan-Arab and transnational media (e.g., Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya television channels) and both traditional and new communication platforms. Despite apparent rich diversity, the Arab media landscape remains dominated by authoritarian governments hostile to press freedom. The 2018 Freedom House report indicates persistent press repression in a region where only one country (Tunisia) ranked as “Free.” Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Morocco were classified as “Partly Free” while the rest of the Arab countries remained “Not Free.” The historical evolution of Arab media has created a scene largely dominated by information on political and foreign affairs, especially in print media, which might be attributed to the region’s status as a hotspot of endemic conflicts. To claim that fake news, disinformation, misinformation and propaganda in Arab media are the outcome of the post-truth era is to ignore decades of low credibility and distrust from Arab citizens vis-à-vis their local media. Some epic examples of misinformation in Arab media include coverage of the defeat of Arab armies in the 1967 war against Israel and the First Gulf War, two major upheavals that exposed Arab media lies and highlighted the credibility of foreign media outlets like the BBC and CNN. Arab citizens had very little, if any, trust in government-controlled media until satellite television channels with modern, professional outlooks took root in the region. Still, Arab satellite television has arguably been complicit in states’ disinformation enterprises. When Al-Jazeera and other Arab satellite television channels did not contradict blatant propaganda of Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf at the outset of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, they facilitated the circulation of misinformation and fake news in the Arab information ecosystem and public debate.

The post-truth politics global media environment spurred a new push for government-funded global propaganda as an instrument of foreign policy to influence international politics and advance geopolitical interests

Conspiracy theories about the machinations of Israel, the Jewish Lobby, and the US and Western quest against Arabs routinely find air and credence in Arab audiences and media outlets. For example, a 2011 Pew Research Centre (PRC) opinion poll found 9/11 conspiracy theories to be very strong in the region, with less than 30% of respondents believing...
the attacks to have been perpetrated by Muslims/Arabs.43 The rise of the Islamic State (IS) has been the subject of many Arab conspiracy theories with prominent media personalities accusing the US or Al-Jazeera television channel of creating the terror organization,44 doubting the veracity of the gruesome videos IS posted online, or otherwise blaming Shia sects for manufacturing it.45

The Internet provides fertile grounds for breeding and amplifying state-sponsored fake news and propaganda campaigns, with websites like the US-based Info Wars and Russia’s Sputnik International becoming a global source for conspiracy theories

The post-Arab Spring media landscape, infused by social media platforms, has exposed severe political fractures and intense media/information wars among rival Arab powers. Governments can no longer conceal domestic turmoil and discord with other Arab regimes since the “self-mass communication” and networking affordances of digital and social media platforms challenge traditional controls on the flow of information. Misinformation and rumour on social media further aggravate internecine Arab conflict in contrast to “the appearance of domestic social concord and the illusion of solidarity among Arab states’ points of view,”46 which traditional Arab media promulgated in past decades. When Qatar’s official News Agency (QNA) was hacked and a fake news story planted about an alleged speech given by the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, a major diplomatic crisis was sparked in the Gulf between Qatar, on the one hand, and the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt, on the other. According to the BBC, the unverified story, which alleged that the emir praised Iran and Islamist groups such as Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, “unleashed a media free-for-all. Within minutes, Saudi and UAE-owned TV networks – Al-Arabiya and Sky News Arabia – picked up on the comments attributed to al-Thani. Both networks accused Qatar of funding extremist groups and of destabilizing the region.”47 The diplomatic rift further mobilized fake news, and prompted the weaponization of social media as a tool of information warfare and cyberwar, as revealed by the hacking/leaking of UAE ambassador’s confidential emails, and the use of social networks to silence dissenting voices. In addition, Arab states have used the threat of fake news to justify a number of laws that curtail freedom of press and speech and further facilitate the crackdown on political dissent. Social media and the information revolution have supported activism but they have also become tools of political suppression and dissemination of fake news. Canadian-based Citizen Lab and Amnesty International have documented Saudi and other Arab governments’ cyberwarfare arsenal, including the use of Israeli firm NSO Group spyware and other cyber-surveillance technologies to infiltrate and capture human rights activists and political dissidents and disseminate false information.48 David Ignatius, from The Washington Post, observed that Saudi Arabia’s “cybergarrison” and “obsession with social media” came as a response to the Arab Spring uprisings, eventually ensnaring and leading to the murder of reporter Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, on 2 October 2018. Al-Arabiya’s and Sky News Ara-

45 YOUSSEF, N. “These are the Arab media conspiracy theories about ISIL.” Quartz.com. 7 April 2015 https://qz.com/372809/these-are-the-arab-media-conspiracy-theories-about-isil/.
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bía’s coverage of the Khashoggi murder appeared to closely align and evolve alongside the Saudi government’s official narrative, going from initial denials to subsequent retractions and admission of responsibility.49 In the words of Robert Mahoney, Deputy Executive Director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, “Saudi control of Arab media, lamented by Khashoggi, shapes coverage of his death” with, of course, the exception of Al-Jazeera and a few independent media voices.50 The Khashoggi case demonstrates that fake news and misinformation in Arab media still remain within the purview of governments, with social media platforms acting as viral amplifiers of state-sponsored propaganda and disinformation.

Conclusion

The adage that “the first casualty of war is the truth” applies with equal strength to the disruptive nature of digital/social media on politics and the media in what has been dubbed the post-truth era. Concerns about fake news and misinformation emanate from the convergence of old and new fears about the new media and the ubiquitous nature of information. In the West, the post-truth era has been characterized by a loss over who determines what is the truth and growing distrust of the establishment and mainstream media instigated by hostile powers and populist leaders, which can only forebode an ill future for democracy. While fears about post-truth and fake news may be overblown, they raise legitimate questions and reveal underlying concerns about globalization.

Governments can no longer conceal domestic turmoil and discord with other Arab regimes since the “self-mass communication” and networking affordances of digital and social media platforms challenge traditional controls on the flow of information.

Globally, valid concerns about post-truth and fake news have been exploited by authoritarian governments. Some authoritarian leaders have used fake news as a foil to attack the credibility of independent media. Others have used it as an external threat to justify undemocratic, oppressive laws. When it comes to Arab media, the debate about fake news and post-truth politics should be understood in the context of an authoritarian comeback rather than malign foreign influence. Unlike the epistemic or democratic crisis discourse informing the debate in the West, the post-truth climate in global and Arab media focuses on state-sponsored propaganda, resurging authoritarianism and political upheavals, which constitute the primary drivers of global and Arab mis/disinformation.


Today, in 2019, we need to revisit the debate on media and political transformation in North Africa and embed it into current political and media frameworks. In contrast to the 2011-2012 euphoria, the Arab public has now returned to despair and fragmentation due to the consequences of the failed Arab uprisings. The uprisings in Sudan and Algeria have recently renewed the debates on how social media connect to political transformation in multiple and unexpected ways. The internet shutdown imposed by the Sudanese government felt like a déjà vu of Mubarak's crumbling regime’s response to the Egyptian uprisings in 2011.

How can we understand the role of social media in triggering transformation processes in North Africa? Today, internet usage and dissatisfaction rates are even higher than before 2011, but this has not led to renewed protests. Eight years ago, stagnant authoritarian regimes underestimated the online public spheres and mostly resorted to simple blocking techniques. Mubarak’s iconic phrase “let the youth have fun,” when asked about youth activism on Facebook in Parliament in 2010, clearly underestimated the potential of online threats. Since then, regimes have learned how this strategy can backfire, and now take online public spheres much more seriously.

A look at the dynamics between media systems and political transformation just before the collapse of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes in 2011 reveals how these autocratic systems were forced to respond to the people and their mediated pressure. In order to understand media’s role in triggering transformation processes in North Africa, we need to revisit that moment in 2011 and analyse these hybrid media systems from a comparative perspective. This will allow us to connect these dynamics to today’s trajectories and help us counter the fallacy of the “Facebook Revolution.”

The Current Debate on Social Media and Political Transformation

Connections between social media and transformation processes in North Africa sparked intense debates across two fields: political science and area studies, on the one hand; and media studies, on the other. Within political science and area studies, scholarship on media and political transformation is inspired by democratization processes in southern Europe, Latin America and eastern Europe. Here, transformation is viewed as a process, through which regimes evolve from autocracy into democracy across three stages: (1) collapse of the old regime, (2) negotiation of the new regime’s foundations during the transition phase and (3) consolidation of democracy. A relapse into the authoritarian framework is also possible. After the Arab uprisings, there was intense debate among scholars as to whether or not the 2011 upheavals were “democracy’s fourth wave,” as Howard and Hussain put it (2013). As we know from today’s position, this was not the case. Most countries where regimes collapsed – except for Tunisia – fell into scenarios of polarization, political chaos and civil war, or into renewed autocracies.

The concept of “transformation” is also rooted in media studies themselves, yet with different connotations. It refers to the dramatic changes caused by digitiza-
tion processes in media spheres. Today, the omnipresent Internet renegotiates our identity practices, power struggles and self-expression. The introduction and fast evolution of the Internet has represented the most complex and disruptive technology advance in media’s history after the invention of the printing press. It has contributed to an ongoing and dramatic change in media and how they operate within their cultural, political and societal contexts. The present debate on transformation and media in North Africa captures both perspectives: in terms of both regime change and the impact of digitization on political processes.

In order to understand the role of media in political transformation, this paper consists of three parts. Building on the aforementioned debates, the first part elaborates on a vivid controversy: laying out arguments for the initial social media euphoria and then counterarguments that highlight the authoritarian learning processes. The second part explains how counter-issues’ media visibility brought socioeconomic and political grievances to the forefront in hybrid media systems, such as Tunisia and Egypt. Finally, the third part offers some concluding remarks that aim to guide our understanding and actions in the current scenario.

**Controversy in Scientific and Public Discourses: Media or Politics First?**

The vivid controversy over the role of media in triggering political transformation after 2011 brought about two main approaches: the perspectives of media first vs. politics first.

**Media First: Three Arguments for the Initial Euphoria**

The media first approach obviously focuses on the role of media in promoting political transformation. After 2011, empirical evidence from Arab countries seemed to attribute changes in the political arena to strong social media activity. There are three main arguments behind the initial euphoria:

1. The first and most elaborated argument is that the Internet changed and expanded the notion of the public sphere. The “liberation technology hypothesis” (Diamond, 2010) is based on the premise that increasing connectivity leads to empowerment and inclusion of marginalized actors. New media opened up spaces to challenge authorities, whether in politics or religion. Dubbed in public and media discourses as a “Facebook revolution,” bloggers were hailed as heroes. This euphoric linear narrative was also enhanced by social media corporations themselves, namely Facebook and Twitter.

   **Eight years ago, stagnant authoritarian regimes underestimated the online public spheres and mostly resorted to simple blocking techniques. Since then, regimes have learned how this strategy can backfire, and now take online public spheres much more seriously.**

   The argument is that decentralized communication through social media enables wider segments of the population to participate openly in the public debate. The Internet gave marginalized actors a chance to challenge the mainstream public sphere. These political and social actors had the opportunity to use social networking sites to promote their views and uncover events overlooked by the established media system. Online discourses seemed to fulfil utopian ideals by providing access and equality for all users, and caught the stagnant regimes off guard. Social media were increasingly used by civil society actors, such as advocacy groups, civic initiatives, social movements and non-governmental organizations, which otherwise would have had limited access to the semi-controlled media system, whether due to political exclusion or scarce resources.

2. The second euphoric argument describes online communication as a practice of citizenship. In this regard, communication itself serves as a form of civic participation and self-expression that turns individuals from passive consumers into active producers of information. Therefore, the Internet could potentially enable citizens to reclaim the politically colonized pub-
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3. Finally, the third euphoric aspect of social media influence in political communication is the intermedia agenda-setting function. This refers to the increasing ability of social media to shape traditional news media agendas, as manifested by topic selection and highlighting mechanisms, and also in the coverage intensity regarding certain issues. This is a sign of how journalists have lost their monopoly over gatekeeping processes, through which media decide what gets published. New thematic inputs from online debates now shape the agenda of mainstream media. Online discourses become more visible and accessible to wider segments of the public, even to those who do not have internet access.

Critique and Need for Regional Contextualization

The 2011 uprisings shifted our perceptions of North African countries from stagnation to dynamism. This perception temporarily replaced the tradition of enduring authoritarianism, before events turned our eyes again to autocratization processes. This shift to dynamism had a fundamental flaw, which was that the region was viewed from the perspective of “exceptionalism”: either it was an exception from the democratization paradigm seen throughout the whole world, or the uprisings were an exception from the enduring authoritarianism in the region. The lens of exceptionalism when looking at media and transformation in North Africa is part of a lingering colonial legacy and a persistent Western gaze when studying the unpredictable Arabs. Perceiving non-Western contexts from the perspective of exceptionalism reflects a central epistemological dilemma in knowledge production. These arguments primarily pushed a Western-centric narrative that reproduced linear Orientalist perceptions in framing Western technologies as liberators. This research wave overemphasized the importance of new media over old media. It neglected the interlinkages between digital and non-digital formats and overlooked the complexities on the ground. Critiques of the “liberation technology” narrative go beyond this particular paper and reflect structural flaws in our knowledge production on media and transformation.

As soon as the transformation processes in North Africa failed to establish new democratic systems, the “liberation technology” claim, as well as the generous research funding lines supporting it, subdued. Only a handful of researchers went on to theorize on the limitations of the Internet and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Arab contexts and their role in surveillance and authoritarian learning. This prevented scholars from further studying the role of hybrid media systems in the prelude and aftermath of the Arab uprisings and the role of media during the transitions themselves.

At the same time, the media-first narrative overlooked the fluidity and hybridity of non-structural elements in transformation processes and media environments. Coined by Andrew Chadwick, the “hybrid media system” concept (2017) refers to the need to look at the interlinkages within media systems holistically, without dividing them into either old or new media, in order to analyse them together.

Politics First: Three Limitations of Social Media in Transformation Processes

The second strand of research on media and transformation argues that politics, not media, come first (Wolfsfeld, Segev & Sheafer, 2013). While new media may strengthen marginalized voices under certain conditions, they are not context-free, absolute empowerment tools. In fact, without real-life grievances pushing for mobilization, access to new technological tools alone would not cause a revolution. They amplify concerns. Mattelart criticized “technological determinism” and called for the demystification of the new digital world’s empowerment virtues. Not only are social media practices cause for concern due to increasing online incivility and polarization, data manipulation and privacy leaks, but also authoritarian regimes quickly learn how to adapt to the new challenge. In Egypt, the authoritarian learning included three strategies:

1. Censorship 2.0. Power holders learned to upgrade the classic media censorship strategies beyond confiscation of printed materials and closing newspapers. Even the infamous firewall nicknamed “Ammar 404” under Ben Ali’s Tunisia sounds benign when compared to today’s blatant censorship through advanced blocking methods.

In Egypt, blocking and filtering technologies banned the public from reading more than 500 websites, including Arab and non-Arab sources and even gen-
eral publishing platforms like Medium. New legislations target online dissident activities under the new Anti-Cybercrime Law, passed in 2018, according to which website and social media managers may face imprisonment.

2. Emulating social movements’ techniques and strategies. New media are platforms of expression, which serve both protestors and regime-loyalists alike. In Egypt, Mubarak supporters engaged in the “battleground Facebook” (Badr, 2013) by emulating the activists’ techniques to counter-mobilize and counter-frame the uprisings in terms of chaos and foreign conspiracy. Already during the 18-day-long Tahrir protests, in 2011, loyalists launched a Facebook page called “We are sorry, President Mubarak!”, discrediting the demonstrations as misbehaviour against the father of the nation. The emulation strategy developed further into sophisticated and more professional campaigns. The distortion of news, by spreading rumours and fake news, led to an increasing de-politicization of online discourses and the digital public sphere. Active campaigning includes the spread of paid electronic committees to securitize all societal and political discourses (the translation of the Arab term equivalent to click farms).

3. State-of-the-art surveillance technologies. By using the arguments of stability and national security, Arab regimes learned to justify cyber-security surveillance to a fatigued public. Beyond monitoring, systematic hacking activities target human rights NGOs and civil society organizations. Irresponsible sales of surveillance technologies by private Western companies – despite calls by the EU Parliament to stop exports of monitoring equipment – do not only contradict the declared European human rights agenda, but also help foster the authoritarian and nationalistic argumentation that renders security a priority. They threaten civil society initiatives and undermine partnerships with media and civil society in the region. Under these constrained circumstances, the rise of social media usage among youth does not automatically generate protests, particularly when civil society actors perceive circumstances as hopeless and too risky/costly.

Counter-issues’ Visibility in the Media

To overcome this binary construction of the media first vs. politics first approaches, the concept of counter-issues’ visibility helps us understand media and transformation. Counter-issues are massive socio-economic and political grievances that regimes want to prevent from reaching the public. They are raised by counter-elites like opposition and civil society organizations. Counter-issues delegitimize regimes and are not welcome to receive media attention. They address the regimes’ breaches in terms of values and norms – like human rights violations, torture or corruption – as well as their socio-economic dysfunctions – like housing problems, low wages, crumbling health care, and a general sense of malaise.

This paper’s central argument is that counter-issues’ visibility in the media triggered the transformation processes of 2011 in North Africa. Actors publicly delegitimized the regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, within a framework of hybrid media systems. Regimes’ responses failed to contain the effects of new media practices and activists’ strategies. Thus, asymmetric relations – moral and functional breaches of regimes’ legitimacy –, and not social media activism alone, triggered political transformations. At the same time, the media transformed these relations and did not transmit ideas in a linear fashion. Media technology alone has no relevance if there are no agents of change, whose discourses, actions and access to media overcome the imposed restrictions.

Four Arguments for Contextualizing Media Visibility

1. Interdependencies between media and their political and societal fields. Looking at the interdependencies between media and their contexts (politics, culture, society) explains media’s potential to prompt transformation processes. As media attention is a scarce resource in an oversaturated mediated world, activists used media visibility strategies to create so much attention that it could not be ignored. Social media accelerated information flows and dramatically compressed time and space, transcending spatial and media borders. By highlighting common counter-issues, civil society actors connected with the wider public and inspired them to stand up for their dignity. The media provided them with visibility, and power holders failed to effectively suppress or counter that visibility. Repression gave rise to even more mobilization. The evolution of anti-torture activism in Egypt since the mid-2000s is a perfect example: the media vis-
ibility given to police brutality was epitomized by the case of Khaled Said, the young Alexandrian man who was beaten to death by plainclothes police officers in June 2010. This tragic incident – among other counter-issues – destabilized the moral foundations of Mubarak’s rule in the last months of his regime.

In Tunisia, police shootings against protesters boosted their media visibility and further fuelled the moral agitation over this injustice. Rising awareness about police torture and abuses led to widespread outrage and mobilized the masses. This awareness would not have been possible without opposition actors pushing for more media visibility.

2. An holistic understanding of media interlinkages in hybrid media systems. The interplay between new and old media explains the relation between media and transformation processes in North Africa from a holistic perspective, without overemphasizing or isolating new media only. This holistic approach suggests that digital and non-digital media interact to boost counter-issues’ media visibility within a system of interdependencies. Overlooking the hybridity of the media system neglects wider surroundings, such as agency, culture, society and politics. Locating the media in their entirety within dynamics that aspire to promote change gives contextualized results. Different forms of media were connected and contributed to increase counter-issues’ media visibility during the 2011 uprisings. New media certainly helped, but they were not alone.

Returning to the case of Khaled Said in Egypt, analysis of media visibility shows how privately-owned newspapers and TV stations played a crucial role in pushing for justice, until the regime put the accused police officers on trial and media attention dropped dramatically.

Focusing on social media alone – for example the Facebook page “We are all Khaled Said” – cannot explain the high media visibility of police torture. This particular counter-issue was picked up by countless NGOs and activist networks and had a prehistory in non-digital media. This known case reminds us not to overlook the intermediate spirals of media visibility that played a decisive role in pushing for change. As the tragic incident took place in front of countless witnesses in broad daylight, it caused a stir in Alexandria for a couple of days before it was even published in the media. During the coverage delay, the leaked gruesome picture of the young man’s corpse circulated first among a small circle of bloggers. An opposition presidential candidate picked it up on his Facebook account, inspiring the creation of the Facebook page “We are all Khaled Said.” The calls for regular silent stands in black, an act of non-confrontational defiance, quickly spread to Cairo during the summer of 2010 and attracted numerous supporters who had previously not known each other.

The print media could no longer ignore the event: once the silence was broken the media visibility of the counter-issue generated enough attention to eventually set the agenda for evening talk shows on TV, thereby reaching even wider de-politicized audiences. Khaled Said became a posthumous icon as a martyr and his face became a symbol of the revolution. Mainstream media owners prompted that visibility. Private professional media, and their declared commitment to the media logics of serving audiences and making profits within a liberalized media landscape, pushed the margins of freedom under authoritarian settings. This gives us proof of the importance of supporting classic journalism institutions today, and explains why authoritarian regimes try to control the political economy of the media industry.

3. Uprisings have a process and are not sudden “exceptional” moments. Most of what has been written about the uprisings in North Africa has framed them in an unpredictable moment in history. Describing these mass movements as a mere surprise overlooks a prehistory of resistant micro-practices in media and the unsustainable socio-economic conditions before the Arab uprisings.

When we compare Egypt and Tunisia we see both overarching similarities and differences. Both countries had long been under authoritarian rule, with no clear paths of transition in power and hushed succession plans after Ben Ali and Mubarak. The massively flawed social contract and imported neo-liberal socio-economic reforms failed to uphold the promises of modernity and prosperity for the people. A deep legitimacy crisis caused by socio-economic, political and human rights grievances stirred up public unrest. In addition, the growing youth bulge was neither heard nor included in the decision-making processes.

Despite the seemingly stagnant situation, the transformation underwent a process that harbourd the regimes’ inner dissolution and gradually opened windows of opportunity within hybrid media systems.
A context-sensitive analysis of micro-practices from North African countries provides proof of the long processuality behind these transformations and deconstructs the black-white binary narrative, as follows:

a) When opposition actors face harsh repressive consequences, they adopt subversive media tactics to challenge their regime’s legitimacy. They often work anonymously in clandestine organizations to avoid jail and torture or they operate from exile through secret mailing lists. However, before 2011, activists also used regimes’ margins of toleration. In Egypt, the economic liberalization of the mid-1990s opened up the political and media frameworks to a certain extent; a confluence can be seen between literary genres, cinema and mass media during this period. For example, the counter-issue of police torture received media visibility in the novel *The Yacoubian Building*, later turned into a film. Youssuf Chahine’s critically acclaimed film *The Chaos* depicted the protagonist as a corrupt police officer abusing his power in the neighbourhood. Through cultural discourses, political issues could trickle down into the public spheres. The fictional narratives were inspired by true stories, unveiled by bloggers and documentary filmmakers. However, literature and cinema opened up spaces of media visibility to wider non-politicized audiences, going beyond direct state control.

b) The second example shows how journalists revealed a survival tactic in the newsrooms that enabled them to cover protests and other counter-issues. In the much more restrictive Tunisia, before 2011, journalists at opposition newspapers used to bury critical coverage in small type font, under the news section. However, their readers knew where to look, as the former editor-in-chief of a leftist newspaper has stated.

4. More inner-Arab comparisons for regional differentiation. North Africa, a region that shares similar linguistic, historic and cultural factors, still has nuanced intra-regional differences and diverse media and political dynamics. It is interesting to note how similar dynamics, such as the youth bulge or the emergence of ICTs, interact within their specific contexts to shape “different yet similar” processes. Particularly after the Arab uprisings, the diverse trajectories of the two North African countries covered in this article show how different media landscapes, elite pacts and connections to regional and international players contributed to create divergent outcomes.

After the Arab uprising, the trajectories of Tunisia and Egypt show how different media landscapes, elite pacts and connections to regional and international players contributed to create divergent outcomes.

Massive asymmetries still shape the political and socio-economic lives of millions of people. Inequalities and socio-economic grievances remain, and have become even worse for the average citizen. The root causes for the workers’ strikes in both Egypt and Tunisia in 2008 still exist today, and the post-2011 regimes have been unable to meet their demands. A comparison with the 2008 moment reveals some interesting patterns. In both countries, workers suffered from asymmetrical wealth distribution and precarious labour conditions, and their regimes were challenged: in Egypt, workers complained about savage deregulation, while in Tunisia they protested against unemployment and underdevelopment. However, the geographic location of the demonstrations at that point played a role in creating different media visibility in two similarly centralized countries. The strikes in the Gafsa mining basin, a remote area in the centre of Tunisia, and the ones in the highly populated Nile Delta city of Mahalla, a textile industry hub close to the Egyptian capital, received very different media attention and thus led to distinct regime responses. The restrictive Tunisian system was less responsive, as the strictly censored media landscape kept the protests in the margins and they were only pushed forward by radical media with limited circulation. The Egyptian regime, however, was more responsive, in particular as the connection between workers’ leaders and the urban youth resulted in short-lived cross-class solidarity. Different kinds of media visibility in hybrid media environments dictated different regime responses through
the interplay between old and new media, and traditional and innovative protest techniques.

**Concluding Remarks**

The Arab region still faces multiple challenges in terms of justice and social inclusion. As the current circumstances are not sustainable in the long term, counter-issues' media visibility, even if constrained to the mainstream media, still tends to spark outrage over persistent failures and injustices. Regimes have learned not to underestimate the online public sphere anymore. Against this background, how can the concept of media visibility help us to understand the relation between social media and political transformation in regional contexts?

First, by focusing on interactions between diverse media formats in a dynamic and hybrid context, this concept overcomes the divide between online and offline media. Acknowledging the interconnectedness of hybrid media systems allows us to recognize that authoritarian media systems do not tend to control only old media, and that new media are equally monitored.

Second, this paper calls for prompting intra-regional comparative media research, instead of using case studies alone. Comparative approaches overcome the binaries between North and South – since social media and digital public spheres show convergent dynamics at a global scale, as demonstrated by fake news and manipulative practices – while providing intra-regional differentiation by highlighting similarities and acknowledging diverse prehistories and trajectories.

Third, learning from the Arab uprisings, we need to acknowledge the processuality of subversive tactics. Despite the current patterns of returning to authoritarian regimes and a growing sense of despair, we know how difficult it is to accurately predict regional events. Despite the brain drain, self-exile and shattered biographies of multipliers relevant to the 2011 mobilizations, research still indicates that younger, better-educated males with higher rates of internet usage tend to be more engaged in public events. Under restrictive frameworks in media and publishing industries, educated youth channelled their creative energy through the overlooked, less confrontational cultural and social fields. This is important to deconstruct the dichotomy between the liberation and non-liberation approaches when looking at the role of media in times of transformation.

**References**


Women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have a long history of participation in social transformation projects, including social movements, political protests and revolutions. The early 20th century, for example, saw women involved in constitutional and revolutionary movements in Egypt, Iran and Turkey; the mid-20th century saw even more political activism in the context of independence movements in the Maghreb and then left-wing movements in Yemen and Palestine. MENA women’s legal status and social positions, however, did not necessarily improve afterwards. Perhaps for that reason (although the emergence and spread of Islamist movements in the 1980s was another motivating factor), MENA women began to form independent women’s rights organizations while also taking part in the proliferating associations of civil society. As women’s civic engagement grew, women’s rights organizations began to make political claims (Moghadam, 2013). The era of globalization facilitated communication within and across countries first through the fax, then the Internet, and finally social media. The presence of thousands of women among the Green protesters in Iran in June 2009, the Arab Spring protesters in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011, the Gezi Park protesters in Turkey in 2013, and the Algerian protests of February-April 2019 reflected the transformations in women’s social positions that had already occurred. This massive presence, however, was also made possible by the extensive deployment of the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in those mobilizations. In these, and other cases, bloggers and citizen journalists were able to provide news and appeals via video clips taken from mobile phones and transported into web 2.0 sites. The high rate of mobile penetration in MENA shows the changing milieu of communication and collective action. In 2014, Morocco and Egypt reported mobile penetration rates that exceeded the worldwide average of 40%.

In this article, I examine the broad social and gender transformations that have taken place in the MENA region, and the opportunities but also risks and constraints afforded by the digital era. There is a focus on Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, as these are countries where the most progress has been made in terms of political empowerment through feminist mobilizations and accommodating government action (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) or through women’s rights initiatives in a difficult socio-political environment (Egypt). Libya and Syria, unfortunately, are still mired in conflict and Palestine has seen regression because of Israel’s punitive actions, US disinterest and internal disputes. Jordan elected its first woman to parliament in 1993 (Toujan Faisal), and laws punishing “honour killings” were strengthened in the new century as a result of feminist advocacy. But, Jordanian women’s economic and political participation, and government support for gender transformations, fall behind those of the Maghreb countries; moreover, Jordan has had to contend with large waves of Syrian refugees since at least 2013. Lebanon, too, has struggled with integrating the large influx of Syrian refugees. Although survey research shows that Lebanese attitudes and values are among the least conservative (Moaddel, 2019; El-Feki et al, 2017), women’s political participation remains much lower than in the Maghreb countries; in fact, there has been no change to the multiple legal systems that codify women and family affairs. In the 1980s and 1990s, Turkish women formed a vibrant movement that helped bring about legal and policy reforms, and they made
significant gains in educational and professional attainment, although most Turkish women remained outside of the workforce. However, the country’s ruling party has taken a very conservative turn in recent years. A trend that has also taken place in Israel. It is, therefore, in the Maghreb countries where major social transformations have occurred, in terms of democratizing trends, women’s civic and political engagement, and legal and policy reforms for women’s participation and rights.

Social Changes and Women in MENA

Over the past three decades, most MENA countries have experienced significant improvements in women’s age at first marriage, fertility, maternal health and educational attainment, all from a very low base (Karshenas, Moghadam, and Chamroukhi, 2016), in a part of the world notable for “neopatriarchal” political regimes and gender relations (Moghadam, 2013). With urbanization and a growing involvement in the professional world came the proliferation of independent women’s rights organizations, facilitated by aspects of globalization – ease of international travel, norm diffusion by international organizations such as the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and rapid communication via the new ICTs. Along with the Internet, the introduction of satellite TVs in MENA opened up the possibility for marginalized or dissident groups to be connected to their peers and counterparts in exile elsewhere in the world and outside of state limits. In the new century, women’s rights activists increasingly turned to satellite TV stations such as al-Jazeera, al-Arabiyya, CNN International, and the BBC to help counter the state’s monopoly over the news. Al-Jazeera was the first professional news organization to launch a Creative Commons repository in 2008, and in 2009 the station hosted the first Creative Commons Arab Meeting. Since 2008, Arab Techies Meetings have been held in Cairo, and the first meeting of Arab Women Techies, a women’s subgroup, took place in 2010 in Beirut. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube also became the social networking media of choice for women’s civil and political activism. Today, there are numerous websites, social networking sites, blogs and tweets on the topic of women’s voices, with popular Facebook pages such as “The Uprising of Women in the Arab World,” available at www.facebook.com/intifadat.almar2a. Media, such as al-Monitor, Morocco World News and similar sites, disseminate news about the region, including women’s civic and political activism as well as its repression.1

Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, are countries where the most progress has been made in terms of political empowerment through feminist mobilizations and accommodating government action or through women’s rights initiatives in a difficult socio-political environment.

ICTs are particularly important in authoritarian societies where states control the mass media; the free flow of information and communication enables political contests to take place over people’s aspirations, values and claims. This has allowed MENA activists to plan ahead, communicate with the outside world and circumvent state censorship and control. In Syria, activists engaged with the National Campaign against Honour Crimes collected signatures from thousands of citizens on a petition that was sent to the President, the Parliament, the government and the media in 2009. In Tunisia, in 2010, many bloggers and tech community members supported the organization of “Nhar Zala Zammara,” a rally against online censorship that took place on 22 May 2010. In January 2011, the street demonstrations were captured on cell phone cameras and then uploaded as videos on known opposition sites and blogs, such as atunisiangirl.blogspot.com, created by blogger Lina Ben Mhenni, nawaat.org, or les Ré-

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1 Al-Monitor, a media site launched in February 2012 by an Arab-American entrepreneur and based in Washington, DC, provides reporting and analysis from and about the MENA region through both original and translated content, and has media partners from Arab countries, Iran, Israel, and Turkey. It provides a wealth of information on women’s issues.
ICTs have allowed MENA activists to plan ahead, communicate with the outside world and circumvent state censorship and control.

Debates have taken place both on the significance of the Internet and social media in the Arab Spring uprisings and their outcomes, and on the role of social media in protest activity more generally. There is some consensus that ICTs are no less vulnerable to surveillance and state repression than are more traditional types of movements. Nevertheless, the digital age encompasses all ways of communication and mobilization for women’s rights groups, from the diffusion of information and data to advocacy and lobbying; from recruitment of members and supporters to petitions and alerts. What follows are snapshots of women’s participation in civil and political spheres in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.

Algeria

In Algeria, a “new feminist movement” emerged when the Chadli Bendjedid government introduced a draft family law in 1982 that many educated and employed Algerian women found regressive and an affront to their dignity, given that it allowed polygamy and male guardianship of women and children. Protests were held and the government rescinded the bill, only to adopt it surreptitiously shortly after. Feminists mobilized again in the late 1980s when the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS), which became a powerful political presence, took them to the streets in protest against political Islam/intégrisme. When the FIS won most votes in the 1990 elections and the military intervened to annul the results, the feminist organizations were relieved, but their leaders became the target of a vicious Islamist assassination campaign during the civil conflict that lasted a decade. During that time, feminists in Algeria and the diaspora used transnational links and especially email to communicate, publicize atrocities, and express solidarity. A vehicle in this effort was the transnational feminist network Women Living under Muslim Laws. Afterwards, involvement in the Collectif 95 Maghreb Égalité enabled interaction and mutual learning with members in Morocco and Tunisia, resulting in a joint 2003 book, Dalil pour l’égalité dans la famille au Maghreb, along with mutual learning around feminist initiatives such as equal inheritance laws in Tunisia and the legalization of abortion in Morocco.

With the defeat of the Islamist terror, the government rewarded the Algerian women’s movement with cabinet seats and some reforms to the family law in 2005, and, following the Arab Spring protests, the adoption of a quota that led to a dramatic increase in women’s parliamentary representation, along with the appointment of more women as high-ranking military officers (Moghadam 2017). Women’s online and offline activism has continued. During Ramadan 2018, a young woman in Algiers was verbally assaulted and beaten for jogging along the beach. When she went to the police to complain, they asked why she had been jogging and did nothing. She then took to social media to complain, after which hundreds of women and men as well as NGO activists came out to run with her in protest. In the midst of the February 2019 protests against a fifth term for President Bouteflika, HuffPost Algérie helped disseminate a statement from prominent Algerian women intellectuals calling for democratization, social justice, and gender equality (HuffPost Algérie, 2019).

Tunisia

In Tunisia, the Internet opened up space for dissidents through blogs, discussion forums and music. The Tunisian blog aggregator site www.nawaat.org was created in 2004, highlighting the work of high-profile bloggers and connecting the bloggers’ community. In 2008, l’Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD) founded the Ilhem Marzouki Feminist School (Université Féministe Ilhem Marzouki), a recruiting tool for young women and a project to raise knowledge and skills regarding women’s human rights and the integration of gender in legislation, strategies and policies. That same year,
l’Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement (AFTURD) issued a press release stating that “no development, no democracy can be built without women’s true participation and the respect of fundamental liberties for all, men and women.” Two years later, as Lina Ben Mhenni blogged, tweeted and reported on Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation, protests erupted across Tunisia, resulting in the resignation and exile of President Ben Ali. The democratic transition enabled Islamists, notably Salafists, to emerge and to call for “Islamic” or “traditional” practices that Tunisian feminists deemed misogynistic. In 2012, conservatives within the National Constituent Assembly sought to replace the constitutional language of women’s and men’s equality with complementarity, but Tunisian feminists and cyberactivists launched national protests and a transnational petition that gathered over 30,000 signatures. The conservatives were compelled to back down. When in September 2012 a young woman sitting in a car with her boyfriend was detained on a “morals” charge and raped by police, cyberactivists continued until the police were finally sentenced to prison terms in March 2014 (Arfaoui and Moghadam, 2016).

In 2012, Tunisia’s parliament came to be ranked second in the region (after Algeria) and 40th globally in terms of percentage of female MPs. More progress occurred with an amendment to Article 49, approved by 127 of 134 of Tunisia’s MPs, including a lobbying bloc of 73 women MPs. The change required both horizontal and vertical parity in electoral lists and was applied to Tunisia’s March 2017 parliamentary elections. Seventy women’s groups formed the Tunisian Coalition for Equality in Inheritance and led hundreds of protesters in a demonstration on 10 March 2018 in front of the parliament to call for a law guaranteeing equal inheritance rights. President Essebsi appointed a Committee on Individual Rights and Liberties (French acronym COLIBE) that included four women, two of them well-known feminists, and legal scholars Iqbal Gharbi and Bochra Bel Haj Hmida, who advocate for equal inheritance in the face of much opposition from pious Tunisians, including the Ennahda party.

Egypt

In the new century, Egypt’s virtual public sphere and cyberactivism began expanding. A few weeks after the 2005 sexual harassment of women who were protesting at the Journalists Syndicate in Cairo, prominent blogger Alaa Abdel Fattah posted a blog entry under the title “Towards popular journalism” (Manalaa.net), and later printed it as a pamphlet, distributing it during street demonstrations. In 2008, the young Egyptian “Facebook girl” Israa Abdel Fattah, used the new social medium to organize a campaign of civil disobedience to protest the deteriorating conditions of the average citizen. On the morning of a general strike scheduled for 6 April 2008, she was arrested and detained for 18 days. The violent suppression of the workers’ strike resulted in the formation of the April 6 Youth Movement. On 18 January 2011, the young woman Asmaa Mahfouz uploaded a short video to YouTube and Facebook in which she announced: “Whoever says women shouldn’t go to the protests because they will get beaten, let him have some honour and manhood and come with me on January 25.” The same day, Wael Ghonim created a Facebook page in honour of Khaled Said, a young Egyptian blogger who had been killed by police in Alexandria. The Mahfouz video went viral, countless Egyptians learned about Khaled Said, and the planned one-day demonstration became a mass uprising that deposed the President and ushered in democratic elections.

The experience of online and offline activism was empowering for many Egyptian women who had never before participated in a community with equal access and rights. That feeling, however, was short-lived, as women who came to Tahrir Square to celebrate International Women’s Day on 8 March, and to call for greater participation and rights for women in the new democratic Egypt, were assaulted by men who found their presence and demands objectionable. In De-
In December 2011, women protesters were assaulted by police. The scene of a young woman being dragged away by police, her top clothing stripped to reveal a blue bra and a policeman seemingly about to stomp on her stomach, immediately went viral, causing waves of outrage across the globe. This and subsequent indignations led to the formation of HarassMap, an Egyptian feminist group devoted to documenting violence against women and ensuring gender justice (see http://harassmap.org/en/). Their activism continued during the presidency of Mohamed Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and after his ousting in July 2013 and the onset of a military-run government. National and international pressure resulted in amendments to the electoral law, with a record-breaking 89 women entering Egypt’s parliament in January 2016.

The experience of online and offline activism was empowering for many Egyptian women who had never before participated in a community with equal access and rights. That feeling, however, was short-lived.

Morocco

Moroccan women have mobilized for women's rights, online and offline (Skalli, 2008), and have worked with allies in political society to adopt quotas for enhanced political representation and other initiatives. In 2004, a national network of 17 Moroccan women's organizations and centres for battered women launched the website Anaruz (www.anaruz.org) to promote women's freedom from violence as a right and not a privilege. In May 2011, the Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), in collaboration with a number of international partners, organized a regional seminar in Rabat on Women and Democratic Transitions in the MENA region. The seminar was publicized online and diffused globally by its US-based partner, the Women’s Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP). Moroccan feminists’ involvement in the Collectif and the WLP, their advocacy, and the proliferation of a women’s press helped constitute a certain “feminization of the public sphere” in MENA. After the 2011 protests, and because of a new quota law, the female share of seats in parliament rose to 17 percent, up from 11 percent. Nabila Mounib – a critic of the Islamist agenda and of the power of the makhzen (royal palace), and an activist in M20F – became the first woman leader of a major Moroccan political party, the United Socialist Party.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) reservations were removed as part of measures to harmonize domestic laws with each other and with the international women’s rights agenda. Women’s rights groups in the Springtime of Dignity Coalition continued their advocacy to lift the criminalization of abortion and remove the legal loophole allowing a rapist to escape punishment by marrying his victim. In June 2014 they held a press conference and a rally to protest against the Prime Minister’s comments that “women’s role” should be focused on the family. Morocco’s penal code on abortion is very restrictive, and especially hard on poor women, who are often abandoned after urfi or customary marriages. A public debate called for broadening the definition of “women’s health” to include psychological, physical and social aspects, such as rape, incest, poverty and ageing. In March 2015, Morocco’s King asked religious scholars and justice officials to revise the law in order to reduce the number of illegal abortions. Women’s rights groups in Algeria followed the Moroccan debate with a view of adopting some of its aspects.

Also in 2015, Moroccan women protested online and offline against the arrest of two women in Inezgane, a suburb of the southern city of Agadir, accused of “gross indecency” for wearing “tight and immoral” clothes. Two Facebook pages were created to support the women, and participants in the virtual protest posted pictures of themselves on social media wearing miniskirts to support the two young women hairdressers, with the hashtag “mettre une robe n’est pas un crime.” Three sit-ins also took place in Agadir, Rabat and Casablanca to denounce their trial.2

Conclusion

To conclude, women’s civil and political participation in the digital age has increased throughout the western Mediterranean, and especially in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. Women’s use of new media technologies, cyberactivism, citizen journalism, and their self-organization contribute to and reflect the social and political changes that have occurred in the region. Another conclusion is that women’s rights movements and broader movements aimed at social change are intertwined phenomena. However, some issues need greater advocacy and policy attention, notably low female labour-force participation and high female unemployment. Educated women have good professional positions, but young college graduates have been finding it difficult to secure such jobs. Many women, especially from working-class and lower-middle-class households, avoid the private sector because of its lack of job security, benefits and safety. This could be addressed through support structures for working mothers – paid maternity leave of appropriate duration, quality and affordable nurseries and kindergartens, and the enforcement of the anti-sexual harassment law. In a political context far less amenable to democratization than the Maghreb countries, and with many more restrictions on civil society activities, Egyptian women struggle to make themselves heard. And then there is the Algerian anomaly. According to international datasets and other sources, women make up 20% of judges in Algeria’s constitutional court and about 30% of all judges, 26% of members of parliament, four female generals, and 38% of university teaching staff. Yet, polygamy and male repudiation remain; women cannot marry without a tutelle; and the identity card is given automatically to the male household head while a woman needs to apply for one separately. Given the strength of women’s presence in civil and political domains, can we expect that such discrepancies in Algerian women’s legal status will be overturned soon?

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Social Transformation in a Digital Age: Youth Social Movements in the MENA Region

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Resistance movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have assumed a unique social, political, and cultural character due in large part to the authoritarian and repressive contexts of many regimes and societies in the region. The recent growth and emergence of social movements in the MENA region points to the inconsistent effectiveness of such movements, at best. In Iran, examples of such movements can be traced back to two key developments: (1) the “One Million Signatures Campaign” of 2006 and (2) the Green Movement of 2009. In June 2006, when security forces violently disrupted a peaceful women’s rights demonstration, a small group of Iranian feminists in Tehran embarked on the formation of a grassroots movement known as the “One Million Signatures Campaign.”

Launched on 27 August 2006, by Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani and Parvin Ardalan, this campaign aimed to establish equal rights for women and upend discriminatory laws, including, but not limited to those relating to, citizenship, divorce, defining the age of criminal responsibility, blood money (diyeh), inheritance and witness rights. The campaigners’ goal was to collect one million signatures for a petition that requested the abolition of several laws that discriminated against women. The completed petition was submitted to the Iranian government with the aim of persuading it to take necessary legal actions against these laws, while also raising public awareness, promoting equality between men and women, as well as documenting lived and painful experiences that Iranian women have long endured.

This campaign demonstrated the vibrancy of Iran’s feminist movement, despite the State’s repressive measures to contain it. The judiciary sentenced both Ahmadi Khorasani and Ardalan to three years in prison, and many other campaigners were prosecuted, jailed, and banned from travelling inside and outside the country. While the campaign as a social movement received scant attention in the Western media, many of its supporters sought yet another opportunity to express their demands. The 2009 Green Movement afforded them that opportunity.

Iran’s Green Movement

The 2009 Iranian presidential elections resulted in a second term for President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and led to a series of public protests against alleged election fraud that came to be known as the Green Movement. Promoted by digital interactions via instant messaging and postings on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, the protests posed a serious challenge to the existing political order in Iran. The protesters were predominantly young but also included members of Iran’s reformist segments who have long sought broader democratic rights. The conservative ruling elements within Iran struggled to contain the emerging political narratives and shape public perceptions of these events.

Although the regime’s repressive apparatus ultimately suppressed the Green Movement, it undeniably felt

threatened—if not shaken—by the efficiency and organizational skills that allowed opposition groups to inspire popular protests on a scale unprecedented since Iran’s 1979 revolution. During this brief period of protest in 2009, the movement galvanized a broad spectrum of Iran’s population, but most importantly among the country’s younger generation. The protesters demanded basic freedoms and rights, while using broadly based human rights rhetoric to stake their claims. The regime countered by invoking Iran’s security, sovereignty, and cultural uniqueness.³

The Arab Spring Uprisings

Shortly thereafter, the momentous events of 2011 gave rise to the so-called Arab awakening, a term that identified the uprising’s regional interconnectedness and its broader peaceful slogan: “The people want the fall of the regime.”⁴ Publicly known as the Arab Spring uprisings, this broad unrest was largely spearheaded by youth social movements in Tunisia when a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself on fire in response to the confiscation of his wares by local police officers. Bouazizi’s self-immolation struck a chord among Tunisians, and protests swiftly spread across the country, bringing a number of issues to the fore, most notably unemployment, food insecurity, corruption, debilitating living conditions, lack of freedoms, and lack of government accountability.⁵

The ensuing protests sparked considerable interest in social movements and tactics for mobilizing and developing grassroots action throughout the MENA region. More specifically, social media gained massive traction as a vehicle for dissent during these waves of popular unrest. Increasingly, young people converted their dismay and rage into an enormous outpouring of social and political activism by becoming agents of change both in symbolic and substantive ways. While modern technologies are functionally neutral—that is, they can either sustain the status quo or alter the rules of the game—they have given the youth movement an unprecedented momentum to enter into the political arena, seek new economic opportunities, and redefine new terms of accountability.⁶

While modern technologies are functionally neutral they have given the youth movement an unprecedented momentum to enter into the political arena

The frequent and energetic use of social media by the people in the MENA region demonstrates the new platform for the voiceless and the underprivileged that the Internet offers. The emancipatory potential of the digital age and related communication and information accessibility has made the struggles of ordinary people to remake their worlds feasible, while also debunking the widely held belief about the Arab people’s presumed resignation to their autocratic regimes.⁷ But at the same time, that potential has been regularly manipulated—or even, more accurately, exploited—by authoritarian regimes bent on manipulating social and political events. The effectiveness of social media in transforming these societies has been largely limited in repressive contexts characterized by longstanding and enduring institutions, rigid political structures, a persistent fear of economic uncertainties, and a culture of tolerating authoritarianism in the face of political instability and a climate of fear and threat.

The sites of social and political mobilization and contentious actions—bolstered by both agency and strategic choices—have increasingly encountered structural barriers. The growth of social movements, social media, and political activism has coincided with the increase in more repressive mechanisms of control

⁶ Several arguments of this essay have been taken from my work elsewhere, Democratic Uprisings in the New Middle East: Youth, Technology, Human Rights, and US Foreign Policy, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014.
exercised by governments. It is not easy to strike a proper balance between these conflicting trajectories. The practical and policy implications of balancing these movements vs. government pushbacks remain open to debate.

The Gezi Park Protests

On 28 May 2013, the Gezi Park Protests in Turkey brought hundreds of thousands of people from across the country to the streets of Istanbul to protest against the increasingly authoritarian style of Erdogan’s government and his ruling party (the Justice and Development Party – also known as the AKP). This event, also known as “the Turkish Spring,” propelled several opposition groups, including left-leaning liberals, nationalists, women, and the Kurds, to come out and protest against the government. The protests were triggered by government building plans, including a shopping mall, in Gezi Park, a small green area on the edge of Taksim Square. The government suppression of this spontaneous movement prevented further protests, as the protesters kept a low profile and their resistance eventually faded away.

Cyber-activism and Its Implications

In an interconnected world, with new modes of communications available, ideas transcend borders and are carried over the airwaves or through the universe of the virtual world, where many minds come together and interact. The development of new digital technologies, especially online social networking, has increased the level of youth participation in cyberspace in myriad ways, including access to information and participation in informal and formal groups. The new information and communication technologies (ICTs) have enhanced young people’s capacity to effectively engage and participate in mobilizing civic movements as well as to advocate for social change and reform. For the region’s many young people, especially females, ICTs and social networking technology are enabling tools. By prompting interactivity and participation, where one becomes not only consumer but also creator of online content, and where sharing ideas and exchanging feedback becomes the norm, these new digital technologies enable often disconnected youth to reconfigure patterns of participation, civil involvement, and self-expression.8 Access to new media has transformed communications throughout the MENA region and, together with the emergence of multiple new satellite television channels (e.g., al-Jazeera and al-Arabiyya), is likely to allow its citizens to further engage in public discourse around notions of human rights, social justice and transparency.9 This increased access and participation has led to the emergence of a new political culture informed by modern ideas, ideals, and values, often known as “technological citizenship.” This form of citizenship emphasizes inclusive rights of an individual as a “citizen” of social justice and pursuit of modern global norms, as opposed to those of traditional parochial ones such as those rooted in sectarian and ethnic identities.

The year 2011 began with the social media-driven uprisings and protests in the MENA region, toppling the regimes of Tunisia’s Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak. The triggering event for the 2011 uprisings in Egypt happened some 1,300 miles away in Tunisia, when Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest on 17 December 2010. He died three weeks later and shortly thereafter, on 14 January 2011, Tunisian President Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia under pressure from his people.10 What happened in Tunisia encouraged and enabled Egyptians to follow suit. Wael Ghonim challenged the Egyptians to similarly mobilize by posting on the Kullena Khaled Said Facebook page on 14 January 2011, to come to Tahrir Square on 25 January, 2011, to demonstrate against the Mubarak regime.11

In Egypt, members of both the April 6 Youth Movement and Kefaya were behind the creation of a popu-

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9 Smith, Pamela Ann and Feuilherade, Peter. “Now, the Media Revolution,” The Middle East, Issue 427, 21 November 2011, p. 35-38; see p. 38.
lar Facebook group supporting Mohamed ElBaradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who returned to Egypt in 2010. The roots of such social media-driven uprisings can be traced back to the Kefaya Movement, which gave its support to textile workers who were planning a strike on 6 April 2008. Hence the origin of the name: “April 6 Youth Movement,” which referred to a loose coalition of many groups of activists, opposition parties, lawyers, professors and student protesters.

On 6 April 2008, workers at Al-Mahalla Textiles in the Egyptian city of Mahalla called a strike. Although no major protests ensued, two activist workers were killed, and the city became, however briefly, a site of violent confrontation between workers and security forces.12 Organized mostly online, especially on Facebook, the April 6 Youth Movement was a decentralized network of activists who used the tools of social media to broadcast economic and political grievances against the Mubarak regime, mobilize support, evade the government’s ubiquitous security forces, and, later, help bring down the Mubarak regime. It was Ahmed Maher and Ahmed Salah,13 young members of the Kefaya opposition group, who helped launch a Facebook group to promote the protest planned for 6 April 2008.14 The movement attracted 70,000 members on Facebook, making it the largest youth movement in Egypt at the time.15

In June 2010, activists, led by Wael Ghonim, a Google executive, created a Facebook page called “Kullena Khaled Said” (“We are all Khaled Said”) in memory of a young man whose cell phone contained images of political brutality and drug use and who was beaten to death on 6 June 2010, by two secret police officers in Alexandria. This page attracted more than one million supporters and became the focal point for a number of large protests against state abuses in the summer of 2010. Ghonim, Abdel Rahman Mansour, and many of their colleagues brought the Khaled Said case into the public consciousness by organizing several “Silent Stands” on 18 and 25 June and 9 July 2010, mainly organized at the corniche in Cairo and Alexandria by online activists, while also posting on the Kullena Khaled Said Facebook page.

These online activists, including many bloggers, brought out more than 8,000 people on 25 June 2010. It was evident that the fear barrier had been broken and virtual and cyberactivism had been transferred into real-world action.16 The interaction of organized groups, networks, and social media took shape in non-violent anti-Mubarak protests that led to the removal of the long-reigning autocrat from power on 11 February 2011. These protests, some experts contend, showed that Egyptian society, much like Western societies, has transformed away from traditional organizations and media – such as TV, radio, and newspapers – and toward more loosely structured “networked societies,” where there is less group control and more individual autonomy.17

**Limits to Social Media’s Effectiveness**

There is no denying that social media provides affordable access to social movements by reducing the costs of mobilization and organization, while expediting the dissemination of information. Young men and women in Egypt were able to use social networks, the Internet, and mobile phones “to access large and diversified networks, reach beyond physical and social boundaries, and exploit more resources to potentially bring about social change.”18 Yet it is important to guard against the euphoria over social networking. The fact remains that Twitter alone is unlikely to generate successful uprisings. While new media tools have a catalytic role, as some observers

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12 Ibid., p. 36.
13 Ahmed Maher was arrested by the el-Sisi regime on several occasions and on 4 January 2017, was freed after completing his three-year jail term. Ahmed Salah left Egypt in 2016 and now lives in exile in San Francisco.
15 Shehata, Dina. *The Fall of… op. cit., see especially p. 28.
16 GHONIM, Wael. op. cit., p. 80.
18 Ibid.
have noted, it is the interdependency between offline activity on the ground and online activism that is critical to how protests achieve their goals.\textsuperscript{19}

In the cases of Iran and Egypt, the governments resorted to internet crackdowns, shutting down internet and cell phone communications, before starting a violent crackdown against protesters. A US company–Boeing-owned Narus of Sunnyvale, California– had sold Egypt [Telecom Egypt, the state-run Internet service provider] Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) equipment that could have been used to help Mubarak’s regime track, target and crush political dissent over the Internet and mobile phones. The same company has sold this spying technology to other regimes with poor human rights records.\textsuperscript{20}

Similarly, the French government has authorized French companies to sell Egyptian authorities different surveillance systems for intercepting communications and restraining social movements. Many human rights NGOs have raised concerns about the increasing number of government critics, most notably bloggers and activists, in Egyptian jails.\textsuperscript{21}

It is important to guard against the euphoria over social networking. While new media tools have a catalytic role, it is the interdependency between off-line activity on the ground and online activism that is critical to how protests achieve their goals.

New forms of internet-based activism proved to be a central factor contributing to the ousting of President Morsi. Tamarod – or the “rebellion” movement – used tools of grassroots mobilization, including the Internet, formal media, and street protests, to collect signatures demanding Morsi’s resignation. Created by the members of Kefaya, nearly 22 million signatures were collected in a matter of weeks. This widespread campaign became a catalyst for the 2013 demonstrations that culminated in Morsi’s ousting by a military coup.\textsuperscript{22}

More and more young people in the MENA region have come to express their opposition to the repressive regimes under which they have lived through the larger strategies of non-violence, non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Contrary to the widely held view that Arab youth are often raised in a cultural context of religious radicalism and anti-Americanism and that these values have therefore “become the formative elements of a new and dispossessed generation,” in reality, these protests have illustrated that young people “were a big part of the silent, moderate majority.”\textsuperscript{23} In the case of the occupied territories of Palestine, social media trends have come to inform and fuel the Palestinian resistance. But the question remains: at what costs?

### A Digital Resistance

Ironically, social media has simultaneously unified and fractured the Palestinian people. It has facilitated international condemnation of Israeli occupation but has also fuelled violence and sectarian conflict. Pro-Palestinian activists continue to pursue boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) efforts and work with ICT professionals to further develop an internet-based presence and distribute information using social media and new platforms. If, however, the Palestinian resistance movement is to succeed, it should come to terms with the contradictory effects of social media.\textsuperscript{24}

The persistence of Palestinian resistance is deeply rooted within the State of Israel’s structural and insti-

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\textsuperscript{23} GHOSH, Bobby. “Rage, Rap, and Revolution,” Time, 28 February 2011, p. 32-37; see especially p. 34.

tutional oppression of its neighbour. Passivity on behalf of the Palestinian people could no longer be the norm. It was shortly after the second Intifada that there was a worldwide explosion of social media usage, facilitated by advances in information communication technology. Social media platforms were adopted and effectively utilized by the Palestinian resistance movement, while simultaneously used by the Israeli government to counter the new, digital dimension of activism. Social media provided the Palestinians a valuable tool to effectively organize and disseminate ideas, though several questions remain: To what effect? What role has it played for the Palestinians? What effect has the Arab Spring uprisings, within the context of social media, had on the Palestinian resistance movement? And perhaps most importantly, does it serve to enhance or constrain the movement?

The collapse and failure of the Oslo Accords prompted Palestinian civil society groups to consider a fundamental change to their resistance strategy by taking ownership of their destiny and not simply relying on outside actors, stakeholders, and interest groups. This shift led to a variety of new grassroots initiatives aimed at drastically changing the locus of control for Palestinians, away from externally driven forces to an internally driven engagement with their future.25 One such movement that has taken on great significance in recent years has been the BDS, which is an international campaign – and/or better yet initiative – for establishing justice and peace in Palestine by mobilizing international efforts to break the siege of Gaza, terminate Israeli occupation and expanded settlement construction, promote equality and equity for the Palestinian people, and acknowledge the right of return and recognition of the several million Palestinian refugees worldwide.26

Increasingly, social media has also facilitated a rise in youth activism within jihadi groups, whose activities and documentation have presented the heavy-handed tactics of Israeli Defense Force soldiers and systemic oppression in the Palestinian territories. Their cyber activities have galvanized the Palestinians and built solidarity from a grassroots level, facilitated by platforms like Facebook and YouTube.27 Social media has also attracted artists and activists to voice their concerns over political oppression. Activist, musician and rapper Mohammad Assaf created a music video uploaded to YouTube entitled *Dami Falasteeni*, translated as “My Blood is Palestinian,” which had been viewed over four million times at the height of the 2015 Arab-Israeli violence.28 It is also worth noting that several radical factions, such as the *Quds News Network* and *Shebab News Agency*, within the movement have used these platforms to push their own political agenda.29 The internet-based activities of such extremist movements are likely to dissuade negotiations and diplomacy while prompting more aggressive Israeli security measures. To make matters worse, the genesis of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and their use of a YouTube video entitled “Slaughter the Jews” has been strongly correlated with an increase in violence against Jewish people. This type of media, spread widely among the Palestinian populace thanks to the ready access to user-generated media content, both promoted violence and acted as an instructional video on how to most efficiently kill those of Jewish heritage or ancestry. This threat has adversely affected the security of Palestinians in the occupied territories, while serving as a cover by the Israeli authorities to systemically abuse their rights. The weaponization of social media as such has certainly added new dimensions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, complicating the Palestinian resistance movement and undermining the international condemnation of occupation and settlements.

**Looking Ahead**

Our discussions in this essay have shown that technology has in fact enabled disenfranchised groups to find a voice. While the MENA region has changed, in some cases for better and in others for worse, it is not

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clear in which direction the broader trajectory of social transformation is moving. The political context within which social movements must operate in the MENA region looks dangerously unstable and yet the stakes for the dynamics of sustained participation in contentious and collective action have never been higher. The initial euphoria of the Arab Spring uprisings has given way to disillusionment at the diminishing civil and political rights and deteriorating economic conditions for the vast majority of people. The restrictions on political freedoms – and the resultant dire human rights situation in the region – have been justified mostly under the guise of combating terrorism. The outlook for youth in the MENA region is not entirely bleak, however, as new ruling elites in the post-uprising era have come to recognize their ability and potential to mobilize broader sections of the population against them. Many in the region still remain hopeful that a younger generation of activists can generate the much-needed energy and creativity to effect change and reform in the long term.

While the MENA region has changed, in some cases for better and in others for worse, it is not clear in which direction the broader trajectory of social transformation is moving.

The region as a whole, as one expert argues, measures poorly against the rest of the world when it comes to accountability, democratic values, the rule of law, and concern for human rights. From Iran’s “Green Revolution” (2009) to the Arab Spring uprisings (2011), to the Gezi Park protests (2013), populations, especially the youth, took their frustrations and dismay to the streets. Some such protests succeeded and some failed. On balance, the outcome at the regional level has been political instability, civil wars, a decrease in human security, and an increase in human poverty. Yet, young men and women, who led massive peaceful demonstrations in 2011, are still longing for new politics. With the exception of Tunisia, a reversion to the authoritarian tactics of the past and heavy-handed policies enacted by the military-led Egyptian government, coupled with the continuing political tensions in Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria, have all cast their dark shadows over the optimistic view that only recently engulfed the region. For their parts, the Palestinian resistance movements have increasingly realized that the way in which social media has been utilized by some radical groups could entail potentially harmful consequences for their cause. On balance, unless the Arab world’s leaders implement good governance directed toward addressing the economic ills of their countries, their archaic and authoritarian politics are likely to lead to more instability over the longer term. While newer technological tools have potentially made social transformation more possible throughout the MENA region, positive change is unlikely to occur in the face of stagnant political structures and the absence of new power-sharing processes and mechanisms.

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# ALBANIA

Official Name: Republic of Albania
Form of Government: Parliamentary republic
Head of State: Ilir Meta
Head of Government: Edi Rama

| Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) | Party for Justice, Integration and Unity (PDIU, Albanian nationalism, centre-right) | 3 |
| Democratic Party of Albania (PDS, conservative) | 25 |
| Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI, social democrat) | 18 |
| Socialist Party of Albania (PSSH, social democrat) | 75 |

| Vacant | 18 |

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<tr>
<th>Economy</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP &amp; Debt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (millions $):</td>
<td>13,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita ($, PPP):</td>
<td>12,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth (%):</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Debt (% of GDP):</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Deficit (% of GDP):</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Debt (millions $):</td>
<td>9,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation Rate (%):</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflows (millions $):</td>
<td>1,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outflows (millions $):</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist arrivals (000):</td>
<td>4,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism receipts (million $):</td>
<td>2,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant remittances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts (millions $):</td>
<td>1,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts (% of GDP):</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Trade</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $)</td>
<td>6,118</td>
<td>4,139</td>
<td>-1,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $)</td>
<td>4,103</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>-3,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $)</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>3,240</td>
<td>1,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP)</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>-15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Main Trading Partners | Import: Italy (26%), Turkey (7%), Germany (7%), Greece (7%), China (7%) | |
| Export: Italy (52%), China (6%), Spain (6%), Greece (4%), Germany (4%) | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Society</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate, Men / Women (%):</td>
<td>98.4/96.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net enrolment rate (primary):</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment rate (secondary):</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean years of schooling:</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public expenditure in education (% of GDP):</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D expenditure (% of GDP):</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water resources (km³):</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water withdrawal (m³ per capita):</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water withdrawal by sector (percentage):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture:</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry:</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desalinated water production (millions m³):</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total armed forces (000):</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military expenditure (% of GDP):</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Development | Human Development Index (value): 0.785 |
| Health | Physicians density (per 10,000): 12.9 |
| Hospital beds (per 10,000): 29.0 |
| Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 6.8 |
| Emissions | CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 1.3 |
| Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 138 |
| Protected areas | Terrestrial (% of total land area): 17.7 |
| Marine (% of territorial waters): 2.7 |
| ICT | Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 123.7 |
| Households with computer (per 100): 21.2 |
| Internet users (per 100): 71.8 |
**ALGERIA**

**Official Name:** People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
**Form of Government:** Semi-presidential republic  
**Head of State:** Abdelkader Bensalah (acting)  
**Head of Government:** Nouredinne Bedoui

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (National People's Assembly)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Liberation Front (FLN)</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Rally for Democracy (RND)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement of Society for Peace - Front of Change (MSP-FC, Islamist coalition)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rally for Hope for Algeria</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ennahda-Front for Justice and Development (FJD, Islamist)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Moustakbel Front (FM, “Future”, centrist)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Forces Front (FFS, social democrat)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algerian Popular Movement (MPA, democrat)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Population**

| Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions): | Algiers (2.69) |
| Main urban agglomerations (population in millions): | Oran (0.88); El Djelfa (0.46); Blida (0.45); Constantine (0.43) |

| Area (km²): | 2,381,740 |
| Population (millions): | 41.3 |
| Population density (hab/km²): | 17 |
| Urban population (%): | 72 |
| Average annual population growth rate (%): | 1.7 |

**Economy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP &amp; Debt</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP (millions $):</td>
<td>167,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita ($, PPP):</td>
<td>15,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth (%):</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Debt (% of GDP):</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Deficit (% of GDP):</td>
<td>-6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Debt (millions $):</td>
<td>5,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation Rate (%):</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflows (millions $):</td>
<td>1,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outflows (millions $):</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**International tourism**

| Tourist arrivals (000): | 2,451 |
| Tourism receipts (millions $): | 172 |

**Migrant remittances**

| Receipts (millions $): | 2,093 |
| Receipts (% of GDP): | 1.2 |

**Total Trade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $):</td>
<td>60,384</td>
<td>37,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $):</td>
<td>48,785</td>
<td>34,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $):</td>
<td>11,599</td>
<td>3,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP):</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Society**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):</td>
<td>.. / ..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net enrolment rate (primary):</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment rate (secondary):</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean years of schooling:</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public expenditure in education (% of GDP):</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D expenditure (% of GDP):</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Water**

| Water resources (km³): | 11.7 |
| Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): | 225 |
| Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): | 59 |
| Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): | 5 |
| Desalinated water production (millions m³): | 615 |

**Security**

| Total armed forces (000): | 317 |
| Military expenditure (% of GDP): | 6.0 |

**Economic Sectors**

| Agriculture, value added (% of GDP): | 12.3 |
| Industry, value added (% of GDP): | 37.2 |
| Services, value added (% of GDP): | 45.6 |

**Main Trading Partners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Trading Partners</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Import:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (18%), France (9%), Italy (8%), Germany (7%), Spain (7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy (16%), France (13%), Spain (12%), United States (10%), Brazil (6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Development Index (value):</td>
<td>0.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Development Index (position in ranking):</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Health**

| Physicians density (per 10,000): | .. |
| Hospital beds (per 10,000): | 19.0 |
| Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): | 7.1 |

**Emissions**

| CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): | 3.1 |
| Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): | 93 |

**Protected areas**

| Terrestrial (% of total land area): | 7.5 |
| Marine (% of territorial waters): | 0.1 |

**ICT**

| Mobile subscriptions (per 100): | 111.0 |
| Households with computer (per 100): | 37.0 |
| Internet users (per 100): | 47.7 |
**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**Official Name:** Bosnia and Herzegovina  
**Form of Government:** Federal parliamentary republic  
**Head of State:** Milorad Dodik (Serb); Sefik Dzaferović (Bosniak); Zeljko Komšić (Croat)  
**Head of Government:** Denis Zvizdić

**Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (House of Representatives)**
- Party of Democratic Action (SDA, centre-right): 9  
- Democratic Front (DF, social democratic): 3  
- Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD): 6  
- Union for a Better Future (SBB, centre-right): 2  
- Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ, Croatian nationalist and conservative): 6  
- Our Party (social liberal): 2  
- Social Democratic Party (SDP): 5  
- Others: 5  
- Serbian Democratic Party (SDS, Serbian nationalist): 3

**Population**
- Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions): Sarajevo (0.34)  
- Main urban agglomerations (population in millions): Banja Luka (0.20); Tuzla (0.12)

**Economy**

**GDP & Debt**
- GDP (millions $): 16,568  
- GDP per capita ($, PPP): 11,253  
- GDP growth (%): 3.1  
- Public Debt (% of GDP): 44.0  
- Public Deficit (% of GDP): 1.2  
- External Debt (millions $): 10,958  
- Inflation Rate (%): -1.1

**International tourism**
- Tourist arrivals (000): 777  
- Tourism receipts (million $): 770

**FDI**
- Inflows (millions $): 285  
- Outflows (millions $): 12

**Migrant remittances**
- Receipts (millions $): 1,870  
- Receipts (% of GDP): 11.4

**Total Trade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $): 10,239</td>
<td>7,255</td>
<td>-2,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $): 9,681</td>
<td>5,405</td>
<td>-4,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $): 558</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>1,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP): 56.4</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>-16.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Main Trading Partners**

- **Import:** Croatia (14%), Serbia (14%), Germany (11%), Italy (10%), Slovenia (9%)  
- **Export:** Germany (13%), Croatia (12%), Slovenia (12%), Italy (12%), Serbia (9%)

**Society**

**Education**
- Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%): 99.2/94.8  
- Net enrolment rate (primary): ..  
- Gross enrolment rate (secondary): ..  
- Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): ..  
- Mean years of schooling: 9.7  
- Public expenditure on education (% of GDP): ..  
- R&D expenditure (% of GDP): 0.22

**Water**
- Water resources (km$^3$): 37.5  
- Water withdrawal (km$^3$ per capita): 86  
- Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): 66  
- Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): 15  
- Desalinated water production (millions m$^3$): ..

**Security**
- Total armed forces (000): 11  
- Military expenditure (% of GDP): 0.9

**Development**
- Human Development Index (value): 0.768  
- Human Development Index (position in ranking): 77

**Health**
- Physicians density (per 10,000): 18.9  
- Hospital beds (per 10,000): 35.0  
- Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 9.4

**Emissions**
- CO$_2$ Emissions (mt per capita): 6.2  
- Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 234

**ICT**
- Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 98.1  
- Households with computer (per 100): 63.6  
- Internet users (per 100): 69.5
CROATIA

Official Name: Republic of Croatia
Form of Government: Parliamentary constitutional republic
Head of State: Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic
Head of Government: Andrej Plenkovic

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)
Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ, conservative) 55
Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP) 29
Bridge of Independent Lists (Most) 11
Civic Liberal Alliance (GLAS) 5
 Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) 4
Independent Democrats 11
Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS) 3
Civic Liberal Alliance (GLAS) 5
Other 7
Independents 15

Population
Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions): Zagreb (0.69)
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions): Split (0.16); Rijeka (0.13)
Area km²: 56,590
Population (millions): 4.1
Population age <15 (%): 15
Population age >64 (%): 20
Population density (hab/km²): 74
Total fertility rate (births per woman): 1.40
Urban population (%): 57
Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years): 75/81
Average annual population growth rate (%): -1.2
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive): 4

Economy
GDP & Debt
GDP (millions $): 55,201
GDP per capita ($, PPP): 24,792
GDP growth (%): 2.9
Public Debt (% of GDP): 77.7
Public Deficit (% of GDP): 3.5
External Debt (millions $): -
Inflation Rate (%): 1.1
FDI
Inflows (millions $): 2,104
Outflows (millions $): 644
International tourism
Tourist arrivals (000): 15,593
Tourism receipts (million $): 11,128
Migrant remittances
Receipts (millions $): 2,307
Receipts (% of GDP): 4.2
Net enrolment rate (primary): 88
Gross enrolment rate (secondary): 98
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): 67
Mean years of schooling: 11.3
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP): 4.6
R&D expenditure (% of GDP): 0.85

Water
Water resources (km³): 105.5
Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): 150
Water withdrawal per sector (% agriculture): 1
Water withdrawal per sector (% industry): 20
Desalinated water production (millions m³): -

Security
Total armed forces (000): 18
Military expenditure (% of GDP): 1.4

Development
Human Development Index (value): 0.831
Human Development Index (position in ranking): 46

Health
Physicians density (per 10,000): 31.3
Hospital beds (per 10,000): 56.0
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 7.4

Emissions
CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 3.8
Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 354

ICT
Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 103.0
Households with computer (per 100): 74.1
Internet users (per 100): 67.1
**Country Profiles**

**CYPRUS**

Official Name: Republic of Cyprus  
Form of Government: Presidential constitutional republic  
Head of State: Nicos Anastasiades  
Head of Government: Nicos Anastasiades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (House of Representatives)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Democratic Coalition (DISY, conservative) | 18  
| Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL, socialist) | 16  
| Democratic Party (DIKO, liberal) | 10  
| Movement of Social Democracy (EDEK) | 3  
| Solidarity Movement (KA) | 3  
| Ecological and Environmental Movement (ecologist) | 2  
| National Popular Front (ELAM) | 2  
| Citizens’ Alliance (SYPOL) | 1  
| Independents | 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions): | Nicosia (0.27)  
| Main urban agglomerations (population in millions): | Limassol (0.24); Larnaca (0.14)  
| Area km²: | 9,250  
| Population (millions): | 1.2  
| Population age <15 (%): | 17  
| Population age >64 (%): | 13  
| Population density (hab/km²): | 128  
| Total fertility rate (births per woman): | 1.34  
| Urban population (%): | 67  
| Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years): | 79/83  
| Average annual population growth rate (%): | 0.8  
| Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive): | 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP &amp; Debt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| GDP (millions $): | 22,186  
| GDP per capita ($, PPP): | 38,048  
| GDP growth (%): | 4.2  
| Public Debt (% of GDP): | 95.8  
| Public Deficit (% of GDP): | 4.2  
| External Debt (millions $): | -  
| Inflation Rate (%): | 0.7  
| FDI |  
| Inflows (millions $): | 6,343  
| Outflows (millions $): | 1,322  
| International tourism |  
| Tourist arrivals (000): | 3,652  
| Tourism receipts (million $): | 3,128  
| Migrant remittances |  
| Receipts (millions $): | 335  
| Receipts (% of GDP): | 1.6  
| Total Trade |  
| Imports | 14,881  
| Exports | 13,497  
| Balance | -1,384  
| Total Trade |  
| in goods and services (millions $) | 14,881  
| in goods (millions $) | 8,309  
| in services (millions $) | 6,572  
| in goods and services (% of GDP) | 67.5  
| in goods (% of GDP) | 57.1  
| in services (% of GDP) | 30.4  
| Main Trading Partners |  
| Import: Greece (19%), Italy (7%), China (7%), Germany (7%), Republic of Korea (7%) |  
| Export: Libya (9%), Greece (8%), Norway (7%), United Kingdom (6%), Marshall Islands (4%) |  
| Societies |  
| Education |  
| Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%): | 99.3/98.1  
| Net enrolment rate (primary): | 97  
| Gross enrolment rate (secondary): | 100  
| Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): | 60  
| Mean years of schooling: | 12.1  
| Public expenditure in education (% of GDP): | 6.4  
| R&D expenditure (% of GDP): | 0.5  
| Water |  
| Water resources (km²): | 0.8  
| Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): | 219  
| Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): | 66  
| Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): | 2  
| Desalinated water production (millions m³): | 34  
| Security |  
| Total armed forces (000): | 16  
| Military expenditure (% of GDP): | 1.6  
| Development |  
| Human Development Index (value): | 0.869  
| Human Development Index (position in ranking): | 32  
| Health |  
| Physicians density (per 10,000): | 25.0  
| Hospital beds (per 10,000): | 34.0  
| Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): | 6.8  
| Emissions |  
| CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): | 7.4  
| Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): | 420  
| Protected areas |  
| Terrestrial (% of total land area): | 18.7  
| Marine (% of territorial waters): | 0.1  
| ICT |  
| Mobile subscriptions (per 100): | 138.5  
| Households with computer (per 100): | 75.9  
| Internet users (per 100): | 80.7
EGYPT

Official Name: Arab Republic of Egypt
Form of Government: Unitary semi-presidential constitutional republic
Head of State: Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
Head of Government: Mostafa Madbouly

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (House of Representatives)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free Egyptians Party</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation’s Future Party</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Wafd Party</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guards of the Homeland</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican People’s Party</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Party</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of the Light (Al-Nou)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Party</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions): Cairo (20.08) [including the population of Giza (4.52) and Shubra El-Khema (1.65)]
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions): Alexandria (5.09), Port Said (0.71)

Area km²: 1,001,450
Population (millions): 97.6
Population density (hab/km²): 98
Population age <15 (%): 33
Population age >64 (%): 5
Total fertility rate (births per woman): 3.27
Urban population (%): 43
Average annual population growth rate (%): 1.9
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive): 19

Economy

GDP & Debt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP (millions $)</th>
<th>236,528</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita ($, PPP)</td>
<td>12,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth (%)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Debt (% of GDP)</td>
<td>103.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Deficit (% of GDP)</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Debt (millions $)</td>
<td>82,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation Rate (%)</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FDI

| Inflows (millions $) | 7,392 |
| Outflows (millions $) | 199   |

International tourism

| Tourist arrivals (000) | 8,157 |
| Tourist receipts (million $) | 8,636 |

Migrant remittances

| Receipts (millions $) | 19,983 |
| Receipts (% of GDP) | 10.1    |

Total Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $)</td>
<td>69,803</td>
<td>43,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $)</td>
<td>52,404</td>
<td>23,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $)</td>
<td>17,399</td>
<td>20,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP)</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Society

Education

| Adult literacy rate, Men / Women (%) | 76.5/65.5 |
| Net enrolment rate (primary) | 97 |
| Gross enrolment rate (secondary) | 86 |
| Gross enrolment rate (tertiary) | 34 |
| Mean years of schooling | 7.2 |
| Public expenditure in education (% of GDP) | 3.8 |
| R&D expenditure (% of GDP) | 0.6 |

Water

| Water resources (km³) | 58.3 |
| Water withdrawal (m³ per capita) | 911 |
| Water withdrawal by sector (per agriculture) | 86 |
| Water withdrawal by sector (per industry) | 3 |
| Desalinated water production (millions m³) | 200 |

Security

| Total armed forces (000) | 836 |
| Military expenditure (% of GDP) | 1.4 |

Development

Human Development Index (value): 0.696
Human Development Index (position in ranking): 115

Health

Physicians density (per 10,000): 8.1
Hospital beds (per 10,000): 16.0
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 4.2

Emissions

CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 2.1
Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 47

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area): 13.1
Marine (% of territorial waters): 5.0

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 105.5
Households with computer (per 100): 58.0
Internet users (per 100): 45.0
### FRANCE

**Official Name:** French Republic  
**Form of Government:** Semi-presidential constitutional republic  
**Head of State:** Emmanuel Macron  
**Head of Government:** Édouard Philippe

#### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (National Assembly)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La République En Marche! (liberal)</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Republicans (LR, liberal conservative)</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Movement (centrist)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDI, Agir and Independents</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):</td>
<td>Paris (10.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):</td>
<td>Lyon (1.69); Marseille-Aix-en-Provence (1.60); Lille (1.05); Toulouse (1.00); Bordeaux (0.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area km²:</td>
<td>549,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (millions):</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (hab/km²):</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population (%):</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual population growth rate (%):</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP &amp; Debt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (millions $):</td>
<td>2,587,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita ($, PPP):</td>
<td>44,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth (%):</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Debt (% of GDP):</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Deficit (% of GDP):</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation Rate (%):</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflows (millions $):</td>
<td>49,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outflows (millions $):</td>
<td>58,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist arrivals (000):</td>
<td>86,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism receipts (million $):</td>
<td>69,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant remittances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts (millions $):</td>
<td>25,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts (% of GDP):</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Trade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $)</td>
<td>847,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $)</td>
<td>802,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $)</td>
<td>-45,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP)</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (% of GDP)</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (% of GDP)</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Main Trading Partners

**Import:**  
- Germany (16%), China (9%), Italy (8%), Belgium (7%), United States (6%)  
**Export:**  
- Germany (15%), Spain (8%), Italy (8%), United States (7%), Belgium (7%)

#### Society

**Education**
- Adult literacy rate, Men / Women (%):  
- Net enrolment rate (primary):  
- Gross enrolment rate (secondary): 103  
- Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): 64  
- Mean years of schooling: 11.5  
- Public expenditure in education (% of GDP): 5.5  
- R&D expenditure (% of GDP): 2.3

**Water**
- Water resources (km³): 211.0  
- Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): 476  
- Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): 10  
- Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): 71  
- Desalinated water production (millions m³): 12

**Security**
- Total armed forces (000): 307  
- Military expenditure (% of GDP): 2.3

#### Development
- Human Development Index (value): 0.901  
- Human Development Index (position in ranking): 24

#### Health
- Physicians density (per 10,000): 32.3  
- Hospital beds (per 10,000): 65.0  
- Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 11.1

#### Emissions
- CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 4.4  
- Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 496

#### Protected areas
- Terrestrial (% of total land area): 25.8  
- Marine (% of territorial waters): 45.0

#### ICT
- Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 106.2  
- Households with computer (per 100): 77.5  
- Internet users (per 100): 80.5
## Greece

**Official Name:** Hellenic Republic  
**Form of Government:** Parliamentary constitutional republic  
**Head of State:** Prokopis Pavlopoulos  
**Head of Government:** Kyriakos Mitsotakis

### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

- New Democracy (ND, conservative) 158
- Communist Party of Greece (KKE) 15
- Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) 86
- Greek Solution (right) 10
- Movement for Change 22
- MeRA25 (left) 9

### Population

- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Athens (3.16)
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Thessaloniki (0.81); Patras (0.26); Heraklion (0.22); Larissa (0.17); Volos (0.14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area km²</td>
<td>131,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (hab/km²)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population (%)</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual population growth rate (%)</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Economy

#### GDP & Debt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP (millions $)</td>
<td>203,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita ($, PPP)</td>
<td>27,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth (%)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Debt (% of GDP)</td>
<td>179.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Deficit (% of GDP)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Debt (millions $)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation Rate (%)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### FDI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflows (millions $)</td>
<td>4,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outflows (millions $)</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### International tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourist arrivals (000)</td>
<td>27,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism receipts (million $)</td>
<td>18,820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Migrant remittances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receipts (millions $)</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts (% of GDP)</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $)</td>
<td>64,464</td>
<td>63,696</td>
<td>-768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $)</td>
<td>52,156</td>
<td>31,472</td>
<td>-20,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $)</td>
<td>12,308</td>
<td>32,224</td>
<td>19,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP)</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate, Men / Women (%)</td>
<td>98.3/96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net enrolment rate (primary)</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment rate (secondary)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment rate (tertiary)</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean years of schooling</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public expenditure on education (% of GDP)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D expenditure (% of GDP)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Water

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water resources (km³)</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water withdrawal (m³ per capita)</td>
<td>865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water withdrawal by sector (% industry)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desalinated water production (millions m³):</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total armed forces (000)</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military expenditure (% of GDP)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physicians density (per 10,000)</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital beds (per 10,000)</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP)</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Emissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passenger cars (per 1,000 people)</td>
<td>455.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Protected areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial (% of total land area)</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine (% of territorial waters)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile subscriptions (per 100)</td>
<td>115.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households with computer (per 100)</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet users (per 100)</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main Trading Partners

- **Import:** Germany (10%), Italy (8%), Russian Federation (7%), Republic of Korea (6%), Iraq (6%)
- **Export:** Italy (11%), Germany (7%), Turkey (7%), Cyprus (6%), Bulgaria (8%)
**ISRAEL**

**Official Name:** State of Israel  
**Form of Government:** Parliamentary democracy  
**Head of State:** Reuven Rivlin  
**Head of Government:** Benjamin Netanyahu  

### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Knesset)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likud (neo-conservatives)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue and White (right-wing)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shas (ultra-Orthodox Sephardis)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Torah Judaism (Ashkenazis)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadash-Ta'al (arab parties)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yisrael Beiteinu (far-right ultranationalist)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Right</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulanu (centrist)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Population

- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Jerusalem (0.91)  
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Tel Aviv-Jaffa (4.01); Haifa (1.14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area (km²):</th>
<th>Population (millions):</th>
<th>Population age &lt;15 (%):</th>
<th>Population age &gt;64 (%):</th>
<th>Total fertility rate (births per woman):</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):</th>
<th>Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22,070</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>81/85</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Economy

**GDP & Debt**

| GDP (millions $): | 353,268  
| GDP per capita ($, PPP): | 36,662  
| GDP growth (%): | 3.4  
| Public Debt (% of GDP): | 60.4  
| Public Deficit (% of GDP): | 1.0  
| Inflation Rate (%): | 0.2  
| FDI Inflows (millions $): | 18,954  
| FDI Outflows (millions $): | 6,275  

**International tourism**

- Tourist arrivals (000): 3,613  
- Tourism receipts (million $): 7,572

**Migrant remittances**

- Receipts (millions $): 990  
- Receipts (% of GDP): 0.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Trade</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $)</td>
<td>97,735</td>
<td>102,989</td>
<td>5,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $)</td>
<td>68,612</td>
<td>58,669</td>
<td>19,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $)</td>
<td>29,123</td>
<td>44,320</td>
<td>15,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP)</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Economic Sectors**

- Agriculture, value added (% of GDP): 1.2  
- Industry, value added (% of GDP): 19.8  
- Services, value added (% of GDP): 69.4

**Labour market**

- Labour participation rate, female (%): 22.7  
- Unemployment rate (%): 4.2  
- Youth unemployment rate (%): 7.3

**Employment in:**

- Agriculture (% of total employment): 1.0  
- Industry (% of total employment): 17.5  
- Services (% of total employment): 81.6

**Energy**

- Production (millions mt oil eq): 8.3  
- Consumption per capita (kg oil eq): 2.685  
- Import (% energy used): 65.0

**Development**

- Human Development Index (value): 0.903  
- Human Development Index (position in ranking): 22

**Health**

- Physicians density (per 10,000): 36.2  
- Hospital beds (per 10,000): 31.0  
- Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 7.4

**Emissions**

- CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 7.5  
- Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 323

**Protected areas**

- Terrestrial (% of total land area): 19.9  
- Marine (% of territorial waters): 0.0

**ICT**

- Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 126.7  
- Households with computer (per 100): 78.1  
- Internet users (per 100): 81.6
ITALY

Official Name: Italian Republic
Form of Government: Parliamentary constitutional republic
Head of State: Sergio Mattarella
Head of Government: Giuseppe Conte

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Chamber of Deputies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five Star Movement (M5S, populist movement)</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern League (LN, regionalists, populist right)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party (social democrat)</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forza Italia (FI, conservative)</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers of Italy (FdI)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free and Equal (left)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Civic List–AP–PSI–AC (centre-liberal)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Minorities (SVP–PATT)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associative Movement Italians Abroad (centrist)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Population

| Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions): | Rome (4.21) |
| Main urban agglomerations (population in millions): | Milan (3.13); Naples (2.20); Torino (1.79); Bergamo (0.87); Palermo (0.85) |
| Area km²: | 301,340 |
| Population (millions): | 60.6 |
| Population density (hab/km²): | 206 |
| Urban population (%): | 70 |
| Average annual population growth rate (%): | -0.1 |

Economy

| GDP & Debt | | | |
| GDP (millions $): | 1,946,888 |
| GDP per capita ($, PPP): | 38,358 |
| GDP growth (%): | 1.6 |
| Public Debt (% of GDP): | 131.3 |
| External Debt (millions $): | 1.2 |
| Inflation Rate (%): | 1.3 |
| Total population age <15 (%): | 14 |
| Population age >64 (%): | 23 |
| Total fertility rate (births per woman): | 1.35 |
| Labour participation rate, female (%): | 40.1 |
| Unemployment rate (%): | 11.2 |
| Youth unemployment rate (%): | 34.8 |
| GDP growth (%): | 1.6 |
| GDP per capita ($, PPP): | 38,358 |
| GDP (millions $): | 1,946,888 |
| Agriculture, value added (% of GDP): | 1.9 |
| Industry, value added (% of GDP): | 21.6 |
| Services, value added (% of GDP): | 66.2 |
| Labour participation rate, female (%): | 40.1 |
| Unemployment rate (%): | 11.2 |
| Youth unemployment rate (%): | 34.8 |

FDI

| Inflows (millions $): | 17,077 |
| Outflows (millions $): | 4,417 |

International tourism

| Tourist arrivals (000): | 58,253 |
| Tourism receipts (million $): | 44,548 |

Migrant remittances

| Receipts (millions $): | 9,287 |
| Receipts (% of GDP): | 0.5 |

Total Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $):</td>
<td>547,189</td>
<td>605,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $):</td>
<td>432,248</td>
<td>498,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $):</td>
<td>114,940</td>
<td>107,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP):</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education

| Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%): | 99.1/98.6 |
| Enrollment rate (primary): | 97 |
| Gross enrolment rate (secondary): | 103 |
| Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): | 63 |
| Mean years of schooling: | 10.2 |
| Public expenditure on education (% of GDP): | 4.1 |
| R&D expenditure (% of GDP): | 1.33 |

Water

| Water sources (km³): | 191.3 |
| Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): | 900 |
| Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): | 90 |
| Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): | 99 |
| Desalinated water production (millions m³): | 11 |

Security

| Total armed forces (000): | 347 |
| Military expenditure (% of GDP): | 1.4 |

Development

| Human Development Index (value): | 0.880 |
| Human Development Index (position in ranking): | 28 |

Health

| Physicians density (per 10,000): | 39.5 |
| Hospital beds (per 10,000): | 34.0 |
| Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): | 9.0 |

Emissions

| CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): | 5.4 |
| Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): | 628 |

Protected areas

| Terrestrial (% of total land area): | 21.5 |
| Marine (% of territorial waters): | 8.8 |

ICT

| Mobile subscriptions (per 100): | 141.3 |
| Households with computer (per 100): | 64.3 |
| Internet users (per 100): | 61.3 |
JORDAN

**Official Name:** Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan  
**Form of Government:** Parliamentary constitutional monarchy  
**Head of State:** King Abdullah II  
**Head of Government:** Omar Razzaz

**Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)** (Chamber of Deputies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Action Front (Islamists, Muslim Brotherhood)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zamzam, (Islamists moderate)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Centrist Party (ICP, Islamists)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Current</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice and Reform Party</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Socialist Ba’ath</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Union Party</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Awn</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Population**

- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Amman (2.06)
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Zarqa (0.71); Irbid (0.55); Russeifa (0.52)

**Area km²:** 89,320  
**Population:** 9.7 million  
**Population density (hab/km²):** 109  
**Urban population (%):** 91  
**Average annual population growth rate (%):** 2.6

**Economy**

**GDP & Debt**  
- GDP (millions $): 40,766  
- GDP per capita ($, PPP): 9,232  
- GDP growth (%): 2.0  
- Public Debt (% of GDP): 94.3  
- Public Deficit (% of GDP): -0.8  
- External Debt (millions $): 30,036  
- FDI Inflows (millions $): 1,665  
- External Debt (millions $): 7

**Labour market**  
- Unemployment rate (%): 14.9  
- Youth unemployment rate (%): 34.9

**International tourism**  
- Tourist arrivals (000): 3,844  
- Tourism receipts (million $): 5,549

**Energy**  
- Agricultural energy production (million mt oil eq): 59.2  
- Consumption per capita (kg oil eq): 949  
- Import (% energy used): 96.8

**Society**

**Education**  
- Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%): 98.4/97.4  
- Net enrolment rate (primary): 65  
- Gross enrolment rate (secondary): 32  
- Mean years of schooling: 10.4  
- Public expenditure in education (% of GDP): 3.6  
- R&D expenditure (% of GDP): 0.30

**Water**  
- Water withdrawal (km³): 0.9  
- Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): 145  
- Water withdrawal by sector (industry): 52  
- Desalinated water production (millions m³): 3

**Security**  
- Total armed forces (000): 116  
- Military expenditure (% of GDP): 4.8

**Development**  
- Human Development Index (value): 0.735  
- Human Development Index (position in ranking): 95

**Health**  
- Physicians density (per 10,000): 26.5  
- Hospital beds (per 10,000): 14.0  
- Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 6.3

**Emissions**  
- CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 2.5  
- Passengers cars (per 1,000 people): 109

**ICT**  
- Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 100.0  
- Households with internet (per 100): 47.0  
- Internet users (per 100): 66.8

**Main Trading Partners**

- **Import:** China (14%), Saudi Arabia (13%), United States (10%), United Arab Emirates (5%), Germany (4%)
- **Export:** United States (21%), Saudi Arabia (11%), India (9%), Iraq (7%), United Arab Emirates (5%)
### LEBANON

**Official Name:** Lebanese Republic  
**Form of Government:** Confessionalist parliamentary republic  
**Head of State:** Michel Aoun  
**Head of Government:** Saad Hariri

#### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

- Amal-Hezbollah and allies (Amal Movement [17]; Hezbollah [13]; Syrian Social Nationalist Party [3]; Others [5]; Independents [2]) 40
- Future Movement and allies 20
- Lebanese Forces and allies 15
- Progressive Socialist Party 9
- Free Patriotic Movement and allies (Free Patriotic Movement [24]; Armenian Revolutionary Federation [3]; Others [2]) 29
- Azm Movement 4
- Others 11

#### Population

- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Beirut (2.38)  
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Tripoli (0.7); Sidon (0.27)  
- **Area km²:** 10,450  
- **Population (millions):** 6.1  
- **Population density (hab/km²):** 595  
- **Urban population (%):** 88
- **Population age <15 (%):** 23
- **Population age >64 (%):** 9
- **Total fertility rate (births per woman):** 1.72
- **Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):** 78/82
- **Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):** 7

#### Economy

- **GDP & Debt**
  - GDP (millions $): 53,394
  - GDP per capita ($, PPP): 14,351
  - GDP growth (%): 1.5
  - Public Debt (% of GDP): 149.0
  - Public Deficit (% of GDP): 0.8
  - External Debt (millions $): 73,526
  - Inflation Rate (%): 4.5

- **FDI**
  - Inflows (millions $): 2,628
  - Outflows (millions $): 567

- **Tourism**
  - Tourist arrivals (000): 1,857
  - Tourism receipts (million $): 8,087

- **Migrant remittances**
  - Receipts (millions $): 7,955
  - Remittances (% of GDP): 15.1

#### Total Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $)</td>
<td>30,839</td>
<td>19,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $)</td>
<td>16,986</td>
<td>3,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $)</td>
<td>13,853</td>
<td>16,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP)</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Main Trading Partners

- **Import:** China (10%), Italy (9%), Greece (7%), United States (7%), Germany (6%)  
- **Export:** China (12%), United Arab Emirates (11%), South Africa (8%), Saudi Arabia (7%), Syria (7%)

#### Society

- **Education**
  - Adult literacy rate, Men / Women (%): .. /..
  - Net enrolment rate (primary): 86
  - Gross enrolment rate (secondary): 63
  - Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): 38
  - Mean years of schooling: 8.7
  - Public expenditure in education (% of GDP): 2.5
  - R&D expenditure (% of GDP): ..

- **Water**
  - Water resources (km³): 4.5
  - Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): 321
  - Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): 1
  - Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): 88
  - Desalinated water production (millions m³): ..

- **Security**
  - Total armed forces (000): 80
  - Military expenditure (% of GDP): 4.6

- **Development**
  - Human Development Index (value): 0.757
  - Human Development Index (position in ranking): 80

- **Health**
  - Physicians density (per 10,000): 23.8
  - Hospital beds (per 10,000): 29.0
  - Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 7.4

- **Emissions**
  - CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 3.9
  - Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 97

- **Protected areas**
  - Terrestrial (% of total land area): 2.6
  - Marine (% of territorial waters): 0.2

- **ICT**
  - Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 72.3
  - Households with computer (per 100): ..
  - Internet users (per 100): 78.2
LIBYA

Official Name: State of Libya
Form of Government: Provisional parliamentary republic
Head of State:
Head of Government: Fayez al-Sarraj

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

Uncertain state due to the collapse of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in 2011. During the month of March 2016, UN-backed Prime Minister designated, Fayez al-Sarraj, came back from self-exile with the task of uniting the country after an ongoing civil war between the Council of Deputies in Tobruk and its supporters, the New General National Congress in Tripoli and its supporters, and various jihadist and tribal elements controlling parts of the country. Marshal Haftar’s Libyan National Army (LNA) controls the east and south of the country. In 2019 he has begun a campaign to take over the capital Tripoli.

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions): Tripoli (1.16)
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions): Benghazi (0.80); Misrata (0.80); Zawiya (0.20)

Area km²: 1,759,540 Population age <15 (%): 28
Population (millions): 6.4 Population age >64 (%): 4
Population density (hab/km²): 4 Total fertility rate (births per woman): 2.27
Urban population (%): 80 Life expectancy at birth, Men/Women (years): 69/75
Average annual population growth rate (%): 1.3 Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive): 11

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions $): 30,565 GDP per capita ($) (PPP): 9,610 GDP growth (%): 26.7
Public Debt (% of GDP): -
Public Deficit (% of GDP): -43.0
External Debt (millions $): -
Inflation Rate (%): 28.5

FDI

Inflows (millions $): -
Outflows (millions $): 110
International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000): -
Tourism receipts (million $): -

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions $): -
Receipts (% of GDP): -

Total Trade

Imports Exports Balance
in goods and services (millions $) - - -
in goods (millions $) 8,978 7,878 -1,099
in services (millions $) - - -
in goods and services (% of GDP) - - -

Main Trading Partners

Import: Italy (12%), China (12%), Turkey (11%), Spain (5%), Germany (5%)
Export: Italy (17%), Spain (14%), Germany (12%), France (9%), China (7%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate, Men / Women (%): ...
Net enrolment rate (primary): ...
Gross enrolment rate (secondary): ...
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): ...
Mean years of schooling: 7.3
Public expenditure in education (% of GDP): ...
R&D expenditure (% of GDP): ...

Water

Water resources (km³): 0.7
Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): 926
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): 83
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): ...
Desalinated water production (millions m³): 70

Security

Total armed forces (000): ...
Military expenditure (% of GDP): ...

Development

Human Development Index (value): 0.706
Human Development Index (position in ranking): 108

Health

Physicians density (per 10,000): 20.9
Hospital beds (per 10,000): 37.0
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): ...

Emissions

CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 6.9
Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 348

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area): 0.2
Marine (% of territorial waters): 0.6

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 94.4
Households with computer (per 100): ...
Internet users (per 100): 21.8
# MALTA

**Official Name:** Republic of Malta  
**Form of Government:** Parliamentary republic  
**Head of State:** George Vella  
**Head of Government:** Joseph Muscat

## Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (House of Representatives)
- Malta Labour Party (MLP, social democracy) 37  
- Nationalist Party (NP, centre-right) 28  
- Democratic Party 2

## Population
- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Valletta (0.21)  
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Birkirkara (0.02); Qormi (0.02)  
- **Area km²:** 320  
- **Population (millions):** 0.5  
- **Population density (hab/km²):** 1,462  
- **Population age <15 (%):** 14  
- **Population age >64 (%):** 19  
- **Total fertility rate (births per woman):** 1.45  
- **Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):** 81/84  
- **Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):** 6

## Economy

### GDP & Debt
- **GDP (millions $):** 12,754  
- **GDP per capita ($, PPP):** 42,532  
- **GDP growth (%):** 6.4  
- **Public Debt (% of GDP):** 50.2  
- **Public Deficit (% of GDP):** 5.3  
- **Inflation Rate (%):** 1.3  
- **FDI Inflows (millions $):** 3,185  
- **Outflows (millions $):** -7,115

### International tourism
- **Tourist arrivals (000):** 2,274  
- **Tourism receipts (million $):** 1,748

### Migrant remittances
- **Receipts (millions $):** 215  
- **Receipts (% of GDP):** 1.8

### Total Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $)</td>
<td>14,580</td>
<td>16,944</td>
<td>2,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $)</td>
<td>4,816</td>
<td>3,286</td>
<td>-1,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $)</td>
<td>9,764</td>
<td>13,658</td>
<td>3,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP)</td>
<td>116.1</td>
<td>135.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Migrant Remittances

### Education
- **Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):** 91.8/94.8  
- **Net enrolment rate (primary):** 98  
- **Gross enrolment rate (secondary):** 96  
- **Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):** 49  
- **Mean years of schooling:** 11.3  
- **Public expenditure in education (% of GDP):** 5.3  
- **R&D expenditure (% of GDP):** 0.60

## Water
- **Water resources (km³):** 0.1  
- **Water withdrawal (m³ per capita):** 108  
- **Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):** 64  
- **Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):** 2  
- **Desalinated water production (millions m³):** 19

## Security
- **Total armed forces (000):** 2  
- **Military expenditure (% of GDP):** 0.5

## Development
- **Human Development Index (value):** 0.878  
- **Human Development Index (position in ranking):** 29

## Health
- **Physicians density (per 10,000):** 39.1  
- **Hospital beds (per 10,000):** 47.0  
- **Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):** 9.6

## Emissions
- **CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita):** 3.1  
- **Passenger cars (per 1,000 people):** 644

## Protected areas
- **Terrestrial (% of total land area):** 30.3  
- **Marine (% of territorial waters):** 6.3

## ICT
- **Mobile subscriptions (per 100):** 140.4  
- **Households with computer (per 100):** 73.7  
- **Internet users (per 100):** 80.1

## Main Trading Partners
- **Import:** Italy (25%), Germany (9%), United Kingdom (8%), Spain (5%), Canada (5%)  
- **Export:** Germany (18%), France (11%), Italy (10%), Singapore (6%), Hong Kong SAR, China (6%)
MONTENEGRO

Official Name: Montenegro
Form of Government: Parliamentary republic
Head of State: Milo Đukanović
Head of Government: Dusko Markovic

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)
- Democratic Party of Socialists (centre-left) 35
- Democratic Front (centre-right) 17
- Democratic Montenegro (Democrats, centrist) 8
- For the Benefit of All 6
- Social Democratic Party (social-democracy) 4

Population
- Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions): Podgorica (0.18)
- Main urban agglomerations (population in millions): Niksic (0.07); Pljevlja (0.03); Herceg Novi (0.03)
- Area km²: 13,810
- Population (millions): 0.6
- Population density (hab/km²): 46
- Urban population (%): 66
- Average annual population growth rate (%): 0.0

Economy
- GDP (millions $): 4,854
- GDP per capita ($, PPP): 17,833
- GDP growth (%): 4.7
- Public Debt (% of GDP): 66.3
- External Debt (millions $): 3,138
- Inflation Rate (%): 2.4
- FDI
  - Inflows (millions $): 546
  - Outflows (millions $): 11
- International tourism
  - Tourist arrivals (000): 1,877
  - Tourism receipts (millions $): 1,109
- Migrant remittances
  - Receipts (millions $): 426
  - Receipts (% of GDP): 9.0

Total Trade
- Imports
  - in goods and services (millions $): 3,138
  - in goods (millions $): 2,542
  - in services (millions $): 596
- Exports
  - in goods and services (millions $): 2,006
  - in goods (millions $): 437
  - in services (millions $): 1,569
- Balance
  - in goods and services (millions $): -1,132
  - in goods (millions $): -2,105
  - in services (millions $): 972

Main Trading Partners
- Import: Serbia (22%), China (10%), Germany (9%), Italy (7%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (7%)
- Export: Serbia (18%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (13%), Hungary (9%), Hong Kong SAR, China (9%), Turkey (6%)

Society
- Education
  - Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%): 99.4/87.5
  - Net enrolment rate (primary): 95
  - Gross enrolment rate (secondary): 90
  - Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): 58
  - Mean years of schooling: 11.3
  - Public expenditure in education (% of GDP): 0.38
- Water
  - Water resources (km³): 258
  - Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): 39
  - Desalinated water production (millions m³): 12
- Security
  - Total armed forces (000): 12
  - Military expenditure (% of GDP): 1.5
- Development
  - Human Development Index (value): 0.787
  - Human Development Index (position in ranking): 50
- Health
  - Physicians density (per 10,000): 23.4
  - Hospital beds (per 10,000): 40.0
  - Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 6.0
- Emissions
  - CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 3.4
  - Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): -
- Protected areas
  - Terrestrial (% of total land area): 6.4
  - Marine (% of territorial waters): 0.0
- ICT
  - Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 166.1
  - Households with computer (per 100): 71.7
  - Internet users (per 100): 71.3
### MOROCCO

**Official Name:** Kingdom of Morocco  
**Form of Government:** Parliamentary constitutional monarchy  
**Head of State:** King Mohammed VI  
**Head of Government:** Saadeddine Othmani

#### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (House of Representatives)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice and Development Party (PJD, Islamist)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM, liberal)</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istiqlal Party (PI, centre-right, nationalism)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Rally of Independents (RNI, liberal)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Movement (MP, conservative)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Union of People's Forces (USFP)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional Union (UC, centrist)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS, communist)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic and Social Movement (royalist)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):</th>
<th>Rabat (1.85)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):</td>
<td>Casablanca (3.68); Fes (1.18); Tanger (1.12); Marrakech (0.98); Agadir (0.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area km²:</td>
<td>446,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (millions):</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (hab/km²):</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population (%):</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual population growth rate (%):</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP &amp; Debt</th>
<th>Economic Sectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP (millions $): 109,709</td>
<td>Agriculture, value added (% of GDP): 12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita ($, PPP): 8,566</td>
<td>Industry, value added (% of GDP): 26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth (%): 4.1</td>
<td>Services, value added (% of GDP): 50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Debt (% of GDP): 65.1</td>
<td>Labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Deficit (% of GDP): -0.9</td>
<td>Labour participation rate, female (%): 12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Debt (millions $): 49,752</td>
<td>Unemployment rate (%): 9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation Rate (%): 0.8</td>
<td>Youth unemployment rate (%): 22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI Inflows (millions $): 2,651</td>
<td>Employment in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outflows (millions $): 960</td>
<td>Agriculture (% of total employment): 38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International tourism</td>
<td>Industry (% of total employment): 21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist arrivals (000): 11,349</td>
<td>Services (% of total employment): 40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism receipts (million $): 9,086</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant remittances</td>
<td>Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts (millions $): 7,467</td>
<td>Production (millions mt oil eq): 1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts (% of GDP): 6.8</td>
<td>Consumption (millions mt oil eq): 19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Trade</td>
<td>Import (% energy used): 90.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imports: 49,447</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exports: 38,685</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance: -10,762</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Total Trade (millions $)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in goods and services</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods</td>
<td>49,447</td>
<td>38,685</td>
<td>-10,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services</td>
<td>39,652</td>
<td>21,423</td>
<td>-18,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services</td>
<td>9,794</td>
<td>17,261</td>
<td>7,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>-9.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Main Trading Partners

**Import:**  
Spain (17%), France (12%), China (9%), United States (7%), Germany (6%)  
**Export:**  
Spain (23%), France (13%), Italy (5%), United States (4%), Brazil (4%)  

#### Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%): 80.4/59.1</td>
<td>Human Development Index (value): 0.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net enrolment rate (primary): 97</td>
<td>Human Development Index (position in ranking): 123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment rate (secondary): 80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): 34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean years of schooling: 5.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public expenditure on education (% of GDP): 5.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D expenditure (% of GDP): 0.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Water

| Water resources (km³): 29.0 |
| Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): 316 |
| Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): 88 |
| Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): 2 |
| Desalinated water production (millions m³): 7 |

#### Security

| Total armed forces (000): 246 |
| Military expenditure (% of GDP): 3.2 |

#### Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): 2
### NORTH MACEDONIA

*Official Name:* Republic of North Macedonia  
*Form of Government:* Parliamentary republic  
*Head of State:* Stevo Pendarovski  
*Head of Government:* Zoran Zaev

#### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Assembly of the Republic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Democratic Union Coalition (SDSM)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besa Movement (social conservatism)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance for The Albanians</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) (conservatism)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party of Albanians (PDS/DPA, Albanian)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Union for Integration (BDI/DUI, Albanian minority interests)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):</td>
<td>Skopje (0.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):</td>
<td>Bitola (0.11); Kumanovo (0.11); Tetovo (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area km²:</td>
<td>25,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (millions):</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (hab/km²):</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population:</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual population growth rate (%):</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Economy

**GDP & Debt**

- GDP (millions $): 11,307
- GDP per capita ($) (PPP): 14,976
- GDP growth (%): 0.2
- Public Debt (% of GDP): 39.4
- Public Deficit (% of GDP): -1.4
- External Debt (millions $): 8,566
- Inflation Rate (%): 1.4

**FDI**

- Inflows (millions $): 256
- Outflows (millions $): -2

**International tourism**

- Tourist arrivals (000): 631
- Tourism receipts (million $): 331

**Migrant remittances**

- Receipts (millions $): 314
- Receipts (% of GDP): 2.8

**Total Trade**

- Imports: 7,832
- Exports: 6,205
- Balance: -1,627

**Economic Sectors**

- Agriculture, value added (% of GDP): 7.9
- Industry, value added (% of GDP): 24.1
- Services, value added (% of GDP): 54.6

**Labour market**

- Labour participation rate, female (%): 42.7
- Unemployment rate (%): 22.4
- Youth unemployment rate (%): 46.7

**Employment in:**

- Agriculture (% of total employment): 16.2
- Industry (% of total employment): 30.6
- Services (% of total employment): 53.2

**Energy**

- Production (millions mt oil eq): 1.1
- Consumption (millions mt oil eq): 2.7
- Consumption per capita (kg oil eq): 1,279
- Import (% energy used): 51.8

**Main Trading Partners**

- Import: Germany (12%), United Kingdom (10%), Greece (8%), Serbia (8%), China (6%)
- Export: Germany (47%), Czechia (7%), Bulgaria (5%), Greece (4%), Belgium (4%)

#### Society

**Education**

- Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%): 98.8/96.7
- Net enrolment rate (primary): 92
- Gross enrolment rate (secondary): 82
- Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): 41
- Mean years of schooling: 9.6
- Public expenditure in education (% of GDP): ...
- R&D expenditure (% of GDP): 0.44

**Water**

- Water resources (km³): 6.4
- Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): 269
- Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): 76
- Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): 19
- Desalinated water production (millions m³): 0

**Security**

- Total armed forces (000): 16
- Military expenditure (% of GDP): 1.0

**Development**

- Human Development Index (value): 0.757
- Human Development Index (position in ranking): 80

**Health**

- Physicians density (per 10,000): 28.0
- Hospital beds (per 10,000): 44.0
- Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 6.1

**Emissions**

- CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 3.3
- Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 185

**Protected areas**

- Terrestrial (% of total land area): 9.7
- Marine (% of territorial waters): 0

**ICT**

- Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 96.4
- Households with computer (per 100): 67.3
- Internet users (per 100): 76.3
PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Name (UN use): Occupied Palestinian Territories
Form of Government: De jure parliamentary democracy operating de facto as a semi-presidential system
Head of State: Mahmoud Abbas
Head of Government: Mahammad Shtayyeh

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Palestinian legislative council has been unable to meet and govern since 2007)
- Hamas (Islamists) 74
- Fatah (nationalists, socialists) 45
- Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP, nationalists, Marxists) 3
- Third Way (centre) 2
- Others 2
- Independents 4

Population
- Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions): Al Quds (East Jerusalem) (0.27); Ramallah (0.08) [administrative centre]
- Main urban agglomerations (population in millions): Gaza City (0.67); Hebron (0.22); Nablus (0.21); Jenin (0.15); Khan Yunis (0.18)
- Area km²: 6,020
- Population (millions): 4.7
- Population age <15 (%): 40
- Population density (hab/km²): 778
- Total fertility rate (births per woman): 4.01
- Life expectancy at birth, Men/Women (years): 72/76
- Average annual population growth rate (%): 2.9
- Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive): 18

Economy

GDP & Debt
- GDP (millions $): ...
- GDP per capita ($, PPP): ...
- GDP growth (%): 3.1
- Public Debt (% of GDP): ...
- Public Deficit (% of GDP): ...
- External Debt (millions $): ...
- Inflation Rate (%): ...

FDI
- Inflows (millions $): 203
- Outflows (millions $): -19

International tourism
- Tourist arrivals (000): 503
- Tourism receipts (million $): 225

Migrant remittances
- Receipts (millions $): 2,034
- Receipts (% of GDP): 14.7

Total Trade
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8,144</td>
<td>2,809</td>
<td>-5,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,565</td>
<td>2,123</td>
<td>-4,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,580</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>-994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>-38.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Society

Education
- Adult literacy rate, Men / Women (%): 98.6/95.2
- Net enrolment rate (primary): 92
- Gross enrolment rate (secondary): 85
- Gross enrolment rate (tertiary): 42
- Mean years of schooling: 9.1
- Public expenditure in education (% of GDP): 5.3
- R&D expenditure (% of GDP): 0.50

Water
- Water resources (km³): 0.8
- Water withdrawal (m³ per capita): 111
- Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): ...
- Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): ...
- Desalinated water production (millions m³): ...

Security
- Total armed forces (000): ...
- Military expenditure (% of GDP): ...

Development
- Human Development Index (value): 0.686
- Human Development Index (position in ranking): 119

Health
- Physicians density (per 10,000): ...
- Hospital beds (per 10,000): ...
- Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): ...

Emissions
- CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): ...
- Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 56

Protected areas
- Terrestrial (% of total land area): 8.4
- Marine (% of territorial waters): ...

ICT
- Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 81.2
- Households with computer (per 100): ...
- Internet users (per 100): 65.2

Main Trading Partners
Import: Israel (66%), Turkey (6%), China (4%), Republic of Korea (3%), Jordan (3%)
Export: Israel (66%), Jordan (5%), United Arab Emirates (2%), Saudi Arabia (1%), Qatar (1%)
**PORTUGAL**

**Official Name:** Portuguese Republic  
**Form of Government:** Semi-presidential constitutional republic  
**Head of State:** Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa  
**Head of Government:** Antonio Luis Santos da Costa

**Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Assembly of the Republic)**  
- Social Democratic Party (PSD) 89  
- Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) 15  
- Socialist Party (PS) 85  
- Ecologist Party "The Greens" (PEV) 2  
- Left Bloc (BE, socialism / Trotskyism /communism) 19  
- People-Animals-Nature 1  
- Democratic and Social Centre - People's Party (CDS/PP, Christian democracy) 18  
- Independent 1

**Population**  
- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Lisbon (2.93)  
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Porto (1.31); Braga (0.19); Guimaraes (0.16)  
- **Area km²:** 92,226  
- **Population (millions):** 10.3  
- **Population density (hab/km²):** 112  
- **Urban population (%):** 65  
- **Average annual population growth rate (%):** -0.3

**Economy**

**GDP & Debt**  
- **GDP (millions $):** 219,748  
- **GDP per capita ($, PPP):** 30,622  
- **GDP growth (%):** 2.8  
- **Public Debt (% of GDP):** 124.8  
- **Public Deficit (% of GDP):** 0.7  
- **External Debt (millions $):** 6,946  
- **Inflation Rate (%):** 1.6  
- **FDI Inflows (millions $):**  
- **Outflows (millions $):** -2,409

**International tourism**  
- **Tourist arrivals (000):** 15,432  
- **Tourism receipts (million $):** 21,099  
- **Receipts (millions $):** 4,811  
- **Receipts (% of GDP):** 2.2

**Total Trade**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (millions $)</td>
<td>90,908</td>
<td>95,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods (millions $)</td>
<td>74,547</td>
<td>60,903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in services (millions $)</td>
<td>16,361</td>
<td>34,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in goods and services (% of GDP)</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SERBIA**

- **Official Name:** Republic of Serbia
- **Form of Government:** Parliamentary republic
- **Head of State:** Aleksandar Vučić
- **Head of Government:** Ana Brnabić

**Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)**
- Serbian Progressive Party 105
- Social Democratic Party 10
- Liberal Democratic Party - League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina - SDA 9
- Party of United Pensioners of Serbia 9
- Serbian Radical Party 22
- Democratic Party 15
- Non-affiliated 15
- Dveri (right wing) 6
- Others 37

**Population**
- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Belgrade (1.40)
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Novi Sad (0.34); Nis (0.26); Kragujevac (0.18); Subotica (0.14)
- **Area km²:** 88,360
- **Population (millions):** 7.0
- **Population density (hab/km²):** 80
- **Urban population (%):** 56
- **Average annual population growth rate (%):** -0.5
- **Population age <15 (%):** 16
- **Population age >64 (%):** 17
- **Total fertility rate (births per woman):** 1.46
- **Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):** 74/79
- **Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):** 5

**GDP & Debt**
- **GDP (millions $):** 44,120
- **GDP per capita ($, PPP):** 16,386
- **GDP growth (%):** 1.9
- **Public Debt (% of GDP):** 58.7
- **Public Deficit (% of GDP):** 3.9
- **External Debt (millions $):** 34,549
- **Inflation Rate (%):** 3.1

**FDI**
- **Inflows (millions $):** 3,191
- **Outflows (millions $):** 188

**International tourism**
- **Tourist arrivals (000):** 1,497
- **Tourism receipts (million $):** 1,705

**Migrant remittances**
- **Receipts (millions $):** 4,703
- **Receipts (% of GDP):** 9.6

**Total Trade**
- **Imports**
  - in goods and services (millions $): 25,874
  - in goods (millions $): 20,367
  - in services (millions $): 5,506
- **Exports**
  - in goods and services (millions $): 23,368
  - in goods (millions $): 15,876
  - in services (millions $): 7,492
- **Balance**
  - in goods and services (millions $): -2,506
  - in goods (millions $): -4,492
  - in services (millions $): 1,886
  - in goods and services (% of GDP): -5.1

**Economy**

**Economic Sectors**
- **Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):** 6.0
- **Industry, value added (% of GDP):** 26.4
- **Services, value added (% of GDP):** 50.0

**Labour market**
- **Labour participation rate, female (%):** 47.0
- **Unemployment rate (%):** 13.5
- **Youth unemployment rate (%):** 31.5

**Employment in:**
- **Agriculture (% of total employment):** 17.2
- **Industry (% of total employment):** 25.3
- **Services (% of total employment):** 57.5

**Energy**
- **Production (millions mt oil eq):** 10.7
- **Consumption (millions mt oil eq):** 15.3
- **Consumption per capita (kg oil eq):** 2,164
- **Import (% energy used):** 28.8

**Main Trading Partners**
- **Import:**
  - Germany (13%), Italy (10%), China (8%),
  - Russian Federation (7%), Hungary (8%)
- **Export:**
  - Italy (13%), Germany (13%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (8%),
  - Russian Federation (6%), Montenegro (5%)

**Society**

**Education**
- **Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):** 99.5/98.2
- **Net enrolment rate (primary):** 95
- **Gross enrolment rate (secondary):** 95
- **Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):** 66
- **Mean years of schooling:** 11.1
- **Public expenditure jn education (% of GDP):** 3.9
- **R&D expenditure (% of GDP):** 0.87

**Water**
- **Water resources (km³):** 8.4
- **Water withdrawal (m³ per capita):** 469
- **Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):** 66
- **Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):** 12
- **Desalinated water production (millions m³):** 30

**Security**
- **Total armed forces (000):** 32
- **Military expenditure (% of GDP):** 2.0

**Development**
- **Human Development Index (value):** 0.787
- **Human Development Index (position in ranking):** 67

**Health**
- **Physicians density (per 10,000):** 24.6
- **Hospital beds (per 10,000):** 57.0
- **Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):** 9.4

**Emissions**
- **CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita):** 6.5
- **Passenger cars (per 1,000 people):** 207

**Protected areas**
- **Terrestrial (% of total land area):** 6.6
- **Marine (% of territorial waters):**

**ICT**
- **Mobile subscriptions (per 100):** 124.0
- **Households with computer (per 100):** 68.1
- **Internet users (per 100):** 70.3
# SLOVENIA

**Official Name:** Republic of Slovenia  
**Form of Government:** Parliamentary constitutional republic  
**Head of State:** Borut Pahor  
**Head of Government:** Marjan Sarec

### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, conservative)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Marjan Sarec</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Democrats (SD)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Centre Party (SMC) (Social liberalism)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Left</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Slovenia - Christian People's Party (NSI)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Alenka Bratusek</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Pensioners' Party of Slovenia (DEUS) (Single-issue)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenian National Party (SNS)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Population

- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Ljubljana (0.29)
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Maribor (0.10); Celje (0.05); Kranj (0.04)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Population (millions)</th>
<th>Population age &lt;15 (%)</th>
<th>Population age &gt;64 (%)</th>
<th>Total fertility rate (births per woman)</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years)</th>
<th>Average annual population growth rate (%)</th>
<th>Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20,675</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>78/84</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Economy

#### GDP & Debt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP (millions $)</th>
<th>GDP per capita ($, PPP)</th>
<th>GDP growth (%)</th>
<th>Public Debt (% of GDP)</th>
<th>Public Deficit (% of GDP)</th>
<th>External Debt (millions $)</th>
<th>Inflation Rate (%)</th>
<th>FDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48,553</td>
<td>34,420</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Economic Sectors

- **Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):** 1.8  
- **Industry, value added (% of GDP):** 28.8  
- **Services, value added (% of GDP):** 56.4  

#### Labour market

- **Labour participation rate, female (%):** 53.8  
- **Unemployment rate (%):** 6.6  
- **Youth unemployment rate (%):** 11.3  

#### Employment in:

- **Agriculture (% of total employment):** 5.6  
- **Industry (% of total employment):** 33.3  
- **Services (% of total employment):** 61.2  

#### Energy

- **Production (millions mt oil eq):** 3.6  
- **Consumption (millions mt oil eq):** 6.8  
- **Consumption per capita (kg oil eq):** 3,290  
- **Import (% energy used):** 48.5  

#### Main Trading Partners

- **Import:** Germany (17%), Italy (13%), Austria (9%), China (7%), Croatia (5%)  
- **Export:** Germany (20%), Italy (10%), Croatia (8%), Austria (8%), France (5%)  

### Total Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35,522</td>
<td>40,179</td>
<td>4,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,314</td>
<td>32,074</td>
<td>1,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,208</td>
<td>8,105</td>
<td>2,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Society

#### Education

- **Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):** 99.7/98.6  
- **Net enrolment rate (primary):** 98  
- **Gross enrolment rate (secondary):** 115  
- **Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):** 78  
- **Mean years of schooling:** 12.2  
- **Public expenditure in education (% of GDP):** 4.9  
- **R&D expenditure (% of GDP):** 2.00  

#### Water

- **Water resources (km³):** 31.9  
- **Water withdrawal (m³ per capita):** 556  
- **Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):** 0  
- **Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):** 85  
- **Desalinated water production (millions m³):** 3  

#### Security

- **Total armed forces (000):** 7  
- **Military expenditure (% of GDP):** 1.0  

#### Development

- **Human Development Index (value):** 0.896  
- **Human Development Index (position in ranking):** 25  

#### Health

- **Physicians density (per 10,000):** 27.7  
- **Hospital beds (per 10,000):** 46.0  
- **Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):** 8.5  

#### Emissions

- **CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita):** 6.6  
- **Passenger cars (per 1,000 people):** 524  

#### Protected areas

- **Terrestrial (% of total land area):** 53.6  
- **Marine (% of territorial waters):** 100.0  

#### ICT

- **Mobile subscriptions (per 100):** 117.5  
- **Households with computer (per 100):** 79.5  
- **Internet users (per 100):** 78.9
Country Profiles

### SPAIN

**Official Name:** Kingdom of Spain  
**Form of Government:** Parliamentary constitutional monarchy  
**Head of State:** King Felipe VI  
**Head of Government:** Pedro Sánchez

### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Congress of Deputies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE, social democrat)</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Party (PP, conservative)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United We Can and allies (left wing)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vox (far right)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Population

#### Main urban agglomerations (population in millions)
- Madrid (6.50)
- Barcelona (5.49)
- Valencia (0.83)
- Zaragoza (0.72)
- Seville (0.71)

### Economy

#### GDP & Debt

| GDP (millions $):                      | 1,316,951 |
| GDP per capita ($, PPP):                | 38,320    |
| GDP growth (%):                        | 3.0       |
| Public Debt (% of GDP):                | 98.1      |
| Public Deficit (% of GDP):             | -0.7      |
| External Debt (millions $):            | -         |
| Inflation Rate (%):                   | 2.0       |

#### FDI

| Inflows (millions $):                  | 19,086    |
| Outflows (millions $):                 | 40,786    |

#### International tourism

| Tourist arrivals (000):                | 81,786    |
| Tourism receipts (million $):         | 68,437    |

#### Migrant remittances

| Receipts (millions $):                | 10,692    |
| Receipts (% of GDP):                  | 0.8       |

#### Total Trade

| in goods and services (millions $)     | 414,147   |
| in goods (millions $)                  | 337,850   |
| in services (millions $)               | 76,297    |
| in goods and services (% of GDP)       | 31.5      |

#### Economic Sectors

- Agriculture, value added (% of GDP): 2.7
- Industry, value added (% of GDP): 21.9
- Services, value added (% of GDP): 66.1

#### Labour market

- Labour participation rate, female (%): 51.9
- Unemployment rate (%): 17.2
- Youth unemployment rate (%): 38.7

#### Employment in:

- Agriculture (% of total employment): 4.4
- Industry (% of total employment): 20.1
- Services (% of total employment): 75.6

#### Energy

- Production (millions mt oil eq): 34.1
- Consumption (millions mt oil eq): 119.8
- Consumption per capita (kg oil eq): 2,578
- Import (% energy used): 71.4

#### Main Trading Partners

**Import:**
- Germany (13%), France (11%), China (8%), Italy (6%), United States (4%)

**Export:**
- France (15%), Germany (11%), Italy (8%), Portugal (7%), United Kingdom (7%)

### Society

#### Education

| Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%): | 98.8/97.7 |
| Net enrolment rate (primary):        | 98        |
| Gross enrolment rate (secondary):    | 128       |
| Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):     | 91        |
| Mean years of schooling:             | 9.8       |
| Public expenditure in education (% of GDP): | 4.3 |
| R & D expenditure (% of GDP):        | 1.22      |

#### Water

| Water resources (km$^2$):             | 111.5     |
| Water withdrawal (m$^3$ per capita):  | 801       |
| Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture): | 68 |
| Water withdrawal by sector (% industry): | 18    |
| Desalinated water production (millions m$^3$): | 100 |

#### Security

| Total armed forces (000):             | 196       |
| Military expenditure (% of GDP):     | 1.2       |

#### Development

- Human Development Index (value): 0.891
- Human Development Index (position in ranking): 26

#### Health

- Physicians density (per 10,000): 38.2
- Hospital beds (per 10,000): 30.0
- Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): 9.2

#### Emissions

- CO$_2$ Emissions (mt per capita): 5.1
- Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 482

#### Protected areas

- Territorial (% of total land area): 28.1
- Marine (% of territorial waters): 8.4

#### ICT

- Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 113.3
- Households with computer (per 100): 78.4
- Internet users (per 100): 84.6
## SYRIA

**Official Name:** Syrian Arab Republic  
**Form of Government:** Dominant-party semi-presidential state  
**Head of State:** Bashar al-Assad  
**Head of Government:** Imad Khamis

### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (People's Council of Syria)
- National Progressive Front (NFP, coalition led by the Baath Party): 200
- Independents: 50

### Population
- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Damascus (2.32)
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Aleppo (1.75); Homs (1.30); Hamah (0.89); Latakia (0.64)
- **Area km²:** 185,180
- **Population (millions):** 18.3
- **Population density (hab/km²):** 99
- **Urban population (%):** 54
- **Average annual population growth rate (%):** -0.9

### Economy
- **GDP & Debt**
  - GDP (millions $): ..
  - GDP per capita ($, PPP): ..
  - GDP growth (%): ..
  - Public Debt (% of GDP): ..
  - Public Deficit (% of GDP): ..
  - External Debt (millions $): 4,654
  - Inflation Rate (%): ..
- **FDI**
  - Inflows (millions $): ..
  - Outflows (millions $): ..
- **International tourism**
  - Tourist arrivals (000): ..
  - Tourism receipts (million $): ..
- **Migrant remittances**
  - Receipts (millions $): 1,623
  - Receipts (% of GDP): 6.3
- **Total Trade**
  - Imports (millions $): ..
  - Exports (millions $): ..
  - Balance: ..

### Development
- Human Development Index (value): 0.536
- Human Development Index (position in ranking): 155

### Health
- Physicians density (per 10,000): 15.5
- Hospital beds (per 10,000): 15.0
- Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP): ..

### Emissions
- CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita): 1.4
- Passenger cars (per 1,000 people): 246

### Protected areas
- Terrestrial (% of total land area): 0.7
- Marine (% of territorial waters): 0.2

### ICT
- Mobile subscriptions (per 100): 84.2
- Households with computer (per 100): ..
- Internet users (per 100): 34.3
## TUNISIA

**Official Name:** Republic of Tunisia  
**Form of Government:** Semi-Presidential Republic  
**Head of State:** Mohamed Ennaceur (acting)  
**Head of Government:** Youssef Chahed

### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (National Constituent Assembly)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ennahda (Islamist)</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call for Tunisia (NT) (Secularist, Social democracy)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machrouh Tounes</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Front (FP) (Secularist, Socialist)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Patriotic Union (UPL) (Secularist, Liberalist)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisian Aspiration (Secularist, Liberalist)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Irada</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Current (Pan-Arabist)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Movement (Secularist, Socialist)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Population

- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Tunis (2.29)
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Sfax (0.75), Sousse (0.67), Kairouan (0.57)
- **Area km²:** 163,610
- **Population (millions):** 11.5
- **Population density (hab/km²):** 74
- **Urban population (%):** 69
- **Average annual population growth rate (%):** 1.1
- **Population age <15 (%):** 24
- **Population age >64 (%):** 8
- **Total fertility rate (births per woman):** 2.20
- **Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):** 74/78
- **Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):** 11.2

### Economy

#### GDP & Debt
- **GDP (millions $):** 39,956
- **GDP per capita ($, PPP):** 11,936
- **GDP growth (%):** 2.0
- **Public Debt (% of GDP):** 70.3
- **Public Deficit (% of GDP):** -3.5
- **External Debt (millions $):** 32,152
- **Inflation Rate (%):** 5.3

#### FDI
- **Inflows (millions $):** 880
- **Outflows (millions $):** 57

#### International tourism
- **Tourist arrivals (000):** 7,052
- **Tourism receipts (million $):** 1,782

#### Migrant remittances
- **Receipts (millions $):** 1,903
- **Receipts (% of GDP):** 4.8

#### Total Trade
- **Imports in goods and services (millions $):** 22,498
- **Exports in goods and services (millions $):** 17,489
- **Balance in goods and services: -5,009**

#### Economic Sectors
- **Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):** 9.5
- **Industry, value added (% of GDP):** 23.1
- **Services, value added (% of GDP):** 58.8

#### Labour market
- **Labour participation rate, female (%):** 21.5
- **Unemployment rate (%):** 15.4
- **Youth unemployment rate (%):** 34.7

#### Employment in:
- **Agriculture (% of total employment):** 15.0
- **Industry (% of total employment):** 32.9
- **Services (% of total employment):** 52.0

#### Energy
- **Production (millions mt oil eq):** 6.0
- **Consumption (millions mt oil eq):** 11.0
- **Consumption per capita (kg oil eq):** 966
- **Import (% energy used):** 36.2

#### Main Trading Partners
- **Import:** Italy (16%), France (15%), China (9%), Germany (8%), Turkey (5%)
- **Export:** France (31%), Italy (16%), Germany (12%), Spain (4%), Algeria (3%)

### Society

#### Education
- **Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):** 86.1/72.2
- **Net enrolment rate (primary):** 98
- **Gross enrolment rate (secondary):** 93
- **Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):** 33
- **Mean years of schooling:** 6.7
- **Public expenditure in education (% of GDP):** 6.3
- **R&D expenditure (% of GDP):** 0.60

#### Water
- **Water resources (km³):** 4.6
- **Water withdrawal (m³ per capita):** 304
- **Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):** 80
- **Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):** 5
- **Desalinated water production (millions m³):** 20

#### Security
- **Total armed forces (000):** 48
- **Military expenditure (% of GDP):** 2.3

### Development
- **Human Development Index (value):** 0.735
- **Human Development Index (position in ranking):** 95

### Health
- **Physicians density (per 10,000):** 16.5
- **Hospital beds (per 10,000):** 23.0
- **Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):** 6.7

#### Emissions
- **CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita):** 2.2
- **Passenger cars (per 1,000 people):** 88

#### Protected areas
- **Terrestrial (% of total land area):** 7.9
- **Marine (% of territorial waters):** 1.0

#### ICT
- **Mobile subscriptions (per 100):** 124.3
- **Households with computer (per 100):** 47.1
- **Internet users (per 100):** 55.5
## TURKEY

**Official Name:** Republic of Turkey  
**Form of Government:** Parliamentary republic  
**Head of State:** Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
**Head of Government:** Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

### Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Grand National Assembly)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice and Development Party (AKP, Islamism, conservative)</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican People’s Party (CHP, social democracy, laicist)</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP, Democratic socialist, anti-capitalist)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, Turkish nationalist)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YI Party (centre, Turkish nationalist)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacants</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Population

- **Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):** Ankara (4.92)
- **Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):** Istanbul (14.95); Izmir (2.94); Bursa (1.92); Adana (1.73); Gaziantep (1.63); Konya (1.27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area km²</th>
<th>Population (millions)</th>
<th>Population density (hab/km²)</th>
<th>Urban population (%)</th>
<th>Average annual population growth rate (%)</th>
<th>Population age &lt;15 (%)</th>
<th>Population age &gt;64 (%)</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years)</th>
<th>Total fertility rate (births per woman)</th>
<th>Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>785,350</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73/79</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Economy

#### GDP & Debt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP (millions $)</th>
<th>GDP per capita ($, PPP)</th>
<th>GDP growth (%)</th>
<th>Public Debt (% of GDP)</th>
<th>Public Deficit (% of GDP)</th>
<th>External Debt (millions $)</th>
<th>Inflation Rate (%)</th>
<th>FDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>851,521</td>
<td>27,049</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>454,725</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>10,864</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### International tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist arrivals (000)</th>
<th>Tourism receipts (million $)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37,601</td>
<td>31,870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Migrant remittances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receipts (millions $)</th>
<th>Receipts (% of GDP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>249,170</td>
<td>210,163</td>
<td>-39,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225,114</td>
<td>166,161</td>
<td>-58,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24,056</td>
<td>44,002</td>
<td>19,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>-4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98.8/93.6</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Water

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water resources (km³):</th>
<th>Water withdrawal (m³ per capita):</th>
<th>Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):</th>
<th>Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):</th>
<th>Desalinated water production (millions m³):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>211.6</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total armed forces (000):</th>
<th>Military expenditure (% of GDP):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>512</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Development Index (value):</th>
<th>Human Development Index (position in ranking):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.791</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physicians density (per 10,000):</th>
<th>Hospital beds (per 10,000):</th>
<th>Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Emissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CO₂ Emissions (mt per capita):</th>
<th>Passenger cars (per 1,000 people):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Protected areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territorial (% of total land area):</th>
<th>Marine (% of territorial waters):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile subscriptions (per 100):</th>
<th>Households with computer (per 100):</th>
<th>Internet users (per 100):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Political Situation in Italy

Daniele Lazzeri
Chairman
Think tank “Il Nodo di Gordio”
www.NododiGordio.org

The Italian political landscape of 2019 presents a complexity that is difficult for Italian analysts to read, and is even more incomprehensible to foreigners. In fact, it is the result of a substantial collapse of the forces that dominated the scene from the 1990s onwards; forces such as the leftist “Democratic Party” and “Forza Italia,” with the subordinate center-right coalition, which proved incapable of understanding and interpreting the changed national and international reality, and, above all, unable to adapt to it. Adaptation required a substantial metamorphosis in order to follow that of the traditional social blocs, which were disintegrating at an increasing speed. From 2008 onwards, the economic crisis led to the substantial pulverization of the social blocs that had alternatively supported the center-right and center-left governments in the last two decades. To make matters worse the crisis was strongly aggravated by the recessionary policies of Mario Monti’s technocratic government, designed with the sole aim of guaranteeing the interests of the major international financial groups and actually imposed through a sort of “bloodless coup,” supported, if not directed, by France and Germany.

Matteo Renzi had perceived the situation and tried to transform the PD from a left-wing party into a sort of “Whale Party,” modelled on the old Christian Democratic Party, in whose ranks Renzi himself was trained in his youth. This was a party capable of merging all the components and contradictions of Italian society and forcing them to coexist. It represented their differing interests and marginalized de facto the most prominent right and left forces, putting them in sterile extremist positions. The attempt failed, however, because of strong opposition from within the PD itself, and due to a host of political mistakes made by Renzi, causing him to lose the popular support he initially enjoyed. After him, the Democratic Party made a mess of itself, espousing causes that do not belong to the tradition of the Italian left, but rather to a sort of libertarian and liberal movement of radical origin, such as the civil rights of minorities, especially LGBT, the rights of immigrants and, above all, a Europeanism increasingly inclined to the dictates of Brussels. There was a total loss of contact with the world of work and production, a sort of chic radicalism, which pushed the “Dems” away from the people, putting them in a sort of snobbish Indian reservation.

As for the right, the explanation is even simpler. Silvio Berlusconi is now old, dogged by health concerns and a host of personal issues. “Forza Italia” has always been a “one-man party,” but this man alone is no longer able to hold the tiller; and more importantly, is apparently no longer able to read the current reality. He is surrounded by a void, aggravated by the outflow of many who fear being overwhelmed by the inevitable “Forza Italia” syncopation. This melancholic decline will become an electoral meltdown when Berlusconi is no longer willing or able to expose himself. On the right, Giorgia Meloni’s “Brothers of Italy,” minor heirs of what remains of the tradition of the Italian Social Movement and then the National Alliance, are now freed from Berlusconi’s protection, and increasingly cozying up to Matteo Salvini’s League.

Two “new” political forces filled the ensuing vacuum: the “League” of Matteo Salvini and the “Five Star Movement.” The “League” can in fact be considered a new movement, although rooted in the historic par-
ty of Umberto Bossi, from which it inherited the strong electoral base in northern Italy, particularly in the regions of Lombardy and Veneto. However, under the leadership of Salvini it has undergone a profound change. With the appeals for autonomy muted - which still remain in Veneto and Lombardy - the “League” has turned into a national movement riding on the growing social discontent of the lower middle classes, above all on issues such as immigration, employment, the tax burden and, ultimately, public order.

Two “new” political forces filled the ensuing vacuum: the “League” of Matteo Salvini and the “Five Star Movement”

According to the surveys, its growth curve is remarkable. However, it suffers from two very specific handicaps. First of all, the obligatory government alliance with the “Five Star Movement” has forced the “League” to accept welfare policies, in particular the burdensome “Citizenship Income,” which are viewed with little sympathy by its electorate. It has also had to give up, or at least postpone, the introduction of the flat tax, a much awaited tax policy by the productive classes, which constitute the backbone of its electoral strength.

As Minister of the Interior, Salvini managed to compensate for these disappointing developments by pushing his foot harder on the accelerator on issues relating to public order and the fight against illegal immigration. However, it should be verified whether, in the medium term, these requests could really guarantee the “League” broad and widespread support, in the absence of concrete answers on its electorate’s much-loved economic issues. Another problem is precisely the growth in stature of Matteo Salvini himself, who is increasingly seen as being a man alone at the helm, in the collective imagination at least.

Strong leadership is characteristic and, in part, a chronic illness of the forces of Italy’s right wing. It produces results in the short term which, however, prove to be self-defeating

On the other hand, the “M5S” is perpetually suspended between being a relatively chaotic movement with the radical left-wing leanings of some of its top representatives - such as the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Roberto Fico - and a certain conservative moderatism represented by the leader and Minister of Economic Development, Luigi Di Maio. In fact, it remains a hard one to assess, as it does not represent real social interest blocs. It has simply exploited the disintegration and crisis of traditional political forces to capture broad support off the back of a growing discomfort and broad mistrust of Italians in the institutions. But it is a shaky support, and therefore difficult to condense and maintain. The “M5S,” in essence, and beyond pockets of marginalization in the South, has no hold on defined so-
cial blocs, but only on the individual discomfort of individual citizens, the type of support more likely to evaporate at the blink of an eye.

The “M5S” is perpetually suspended between being a relatively chaotic movement with the radical left-wing leanings and a certain conservative moderatism

It is clear that the game is currently being played between the two government allies, which are participating in an increasingly quarrelsome and difficult cohabitation. However, an immediate return to the polls is complex, and the Italian President Mattarella does not seem very keen. And then there is the drafting of the Financial Planning Document, a particularly delicate issue given the increasingly virulent pressure from Brussels.

A government crisis could, therefore, easily lead to a technocratic cabinet, similar to Monti’s, perhaps with Cottarelli as leader or, according to many, Mario Draghi. This, however, would be a devastating solution both for the “League” and for “M5S,” who would lose considerable support across the country, especially among those social blocs that would be mortally wounded by a technocratic government, controlled under conditions set by the European Union. Furthermore, the economic indicators show signs of recovery in the Italian system in many sectors, particularly exports; a recovery that a government crisis could nullify. This difficult cohabitation is therefore likely to continue to be an unavoidable option, at least until the spring of 2020, by when, in a political scenario as fluid as Italy’s, we could have been witness to further, unpredictable metamorphoses.
Solving the Name Issue: An Act of Political Bravery with a High Political Price

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The conflict between the now renamed Republic of North Macedonia and Greece over the use of the term “Macedonia” started at the beginning of the 1990s and escalated after the Greek veto on the country’s NATO accession in 2008. What followed was a decade of nationalist escalation, until the political constellation was right for a change. In late 2017, a process was set in motion that would lead to the signing of the Prespa agreement on 12 June 2018. The two main actors, Prime Ministers Zoran Zaev and Alexis Tsipras concluded the agreement, despite fierce criticism in their respective countries, and had to pay a high political price. As a result, North Macedonia’s international political blockade has come to an end: the process of acquiring NATO membership has been set in motion and the EU Council is expected to approve the start of accession negotiations with North Macedonia in June 2019.

Macedonia’s Slippery Start

The new country’s slipping into independence as a result of Yugoslavia’s disintegration was bumpy from the very beginning. Surrounded by less than friendly states, it was left defenceless and in the hands of mostly inexperienced politicians. A number of uninspired symbolic gestures offered a broad platform for Greek nationalists to contest the name of the State – Republic of Macedonia –, and claim ownership of the name (“Macedonia is Greek”) for the entire region. Nationalist pressure, orchestrated largely by Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, was able to impose a common Greek line, insisting that no solution to the “name issue” would be agreed to which contained the term “Macedonia.” Furthermore, accession to the UN and recognition by the EC were delayed by Greek pressure. Under much international pressure, both sides eventually agreed to the country’s UN membership under the provisional reference of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,” which was to be used until a solution to the issue was found. Greece also agreed not to block Macedonia’s accession to international bodies under the provisional reference. Following a worsening political climate in both countries, an 18-month Greek economic embargo, and under intense diplomatic pressure, an interim accord was reached in 1995, leading to changes in Macedonia’s constitution and national symbols, and enabling the country to access international organizations, such as the OSCE, under the provisional reference.

A Possible Mediated Formula

The process of finding a mediated solution to the name issue was taken over by the UN, where it remained until 2018. A variety of proposals were tabled by UN mediator Matthew Nimetz, and it became increasingly clear that a formula that would be acceptable to both sides would include some kind of a geographic qualifier, thus delimiting the Macedonian State from the whole region, and especially the northern Greek region of Macedonia. The main difference was in the Greek insistence that this composite name would be used “erga omnes,” while the Macedonian position varied, but mainly foresaw a double formula, with the composite name to be used internationally, while the constitutional...
name “Republic of Macedonia” would continue to be valid internally. However, the mediation process was permanently undermined by political gestures and pressure in both countries. Besides this, one contentious issue was the depth of the issues to be negotiated. While the UN’s position was that the name of the country was the only issue of the mediation process, both sides expressed fears over issues of identity, including the name of the people and the language.

The process of finding a mediated solution to the name issue was taken over by the UN, where it remained until 2018.

In general, the Greek side was in no hurry to resolve the issue, as it evolved into a political career enabler, the most prominent example of this being Antonis Samaras. On the other hand, the Macedonian State became more and more desperate in its attempt to avoid isolation, especially after its official application for EU accession in 2005. For more than two decades, neither of the two sides found the courage or opportunity to make a decisive step towards a solution. Indeed, positions became increasingly entrenched and during the decade of nationalist rule in Macedonia, policies were directed at actually deepening the rift, making a solution increasingly improbable.

The Bucharest Trauma

The NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 saw a last minute change of heart, when a draft resolution including an invitation for Macedonia to join under the provisional reference was altered at the insistence of Greece. This de facto veto was a blow to the face of US diplomacy, which had become more involved and created an atmosphere of optimism regarding NATO accession. The humiliation suffered by Macedonian Prime Minister Gruevski has been described by many as so traumatic that it determined a change of heart and brought him onto the path of the so-called “antiquization,” i.e. redefining Macedonian identity as being that of descendants of Alexander the Great. However, this partial mystification of a political defeat simplifies matters. Among nationalists, the thesis that claimed Macedonians were not only Slavs, but also had more “noble,” ancient roots, was not new. Besides, shortly after coming to power in 2006, Gruevski’s government renamed the Skopje airport “Alexander the Great.” This was a gesture whose aim was mainly internal, to restore national pride, etc. It was also, of course, quite a childish provocation of Greek nationalists, which especially the then Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis was glad to use as a pretext to harden the Greek position.

Nationalist Excesses

What followed the NATO debacle was a decade of nationalist excess in Macedonia. Nikola Gruevski’s government put into action a master plan that was based on the idea of redefining national identity. Public places were renamed, the content of schoolbooks was revised accordingly, civic education was scrapped from the education curricula, and a myriad of increasingly aggressive publications flooded the market. Within a decade, the government managed to implement almost total state capture, including control of the media, ensuring that the new ideology would be propagated on all channels.

The Greek side was in no hurry to resolve the issue, as it evolved into a political career enabler, the most prominent example of this being Antonis Samaras.

The most visible manifestation of what came to be known as “antiquization” was the revamping of the capital Skopje’s central area into an absurd, dystopian agglomeration of random statues and buildings in an imitation of neo-classicism. At the centre of all this was a 20-metre statue of Alexander, named in Gruevski’s typically childish and “witty” manner “War-
rior on Horse." The official explanation for the statue’s name was that they did not want to offend Greece. Of course, this was a barely disguised frontal blow, meant as revenge. Needless to say that this was fuel for Greek nationalists. Moderate positions towards the name issue became less and less tenable. The more Greece slipped into its financial and economic crisis, with extremist parties emerging and gaining massive support, especially in the north, the less a solution to the Macedonian name issue seemed probable. Despite a number of solutions being discussed, the mediation process did not enjoy any success.

What followed the NATO debacle was a decade of nationalist excess in Macedonia. Nikola Gruevski’s government put into action a master plan that was based on the idea of redefining national identity.

The International Court of Justice Ruling

In 2008, following the Greek refusal to allow NATO accession, the Macedonian government filed a complaint with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing Greece of breaching the interim agreement from 1995. The ICJ ruled in favour of Macedonia in late 2011. However, the benefit Macedonia reaped from this move is questionable: on the one hand it worsened relations with Greece, while allowing Prime Minister Gruevski to adopt a “told you so” attitude. It did not, however, strengthen Macedonia’s negotiating position. On the contrary, an increasingly autocratic governing style drove the country step by step into international isolation.

Finding a Solution

A political crisis tied to a series of leaked, secret wiretaps toppled Gruevski’s government. In a bumpy process, the new government, led by the Social Democrat Zoran Zaev took office in June 2017. At the same time, SYRIZA’s Alexis Tsipras brought about a change of paradigm in Greece, putting an end to the rule of traditional parties. Both politicians have defined themselves as non-nationalist, and both ran on promises to change traditional patterns of policymaking in their respective countries. Zaev first invested time and energy in a bilateral treaty of good neighbourly relations with Bulgaria, and in improving relations with Albania and Kosovo. Following some informal, preliminary sounding out sessions, the two leaders expressed a will to resolve the issue. The UN mediation process was revived in early 2018 and resulted in some concrete proposals, including the one eventually adopted. In a joint show of good will at the World Economic Forum in Davos, both prime ministers made optimistic declarations. A series of confidence-building measures were agreed upon, such as renaming Skopje’s airport and the main highway through the country, and putting an end to the policy of “antiquization.”

The UN mediation process was put into the hands of foreign ministers Dimitrov and Kotzias, and by June 2018, an agreement was reached. This put an end to the interim accord and relations between the two countries have been gradually normalized. Greece lifted its veto on Macedonia’s NATO membership and EU accession. NATO then extended an invitation to North Macedonia to join the organization. This will happen as soon as all members have ratified the decision. EU accession talks are expected to start in July 2019.

The Compromises

While taking a bold leap towards a solution, both prime ministers faced fierce opposition at home. Tsipras had to dismiss his Foreign Minister to avoid his coalition collapsing, and is facing parliamentary elections in 2019. The compromise is seen as treason by ultra-nationalist forces and will be a major issue in the election campaign.
Prime Minister Zaev, on the other hand, had to secure a two-thirds majority in Parliament in order to enact constitutional changes to implement the Prespa agreement. In an uninspired move, he promised to back a solution through a referendum. This was held in September 2018 against a boycott campaign run by the opposition. Although the results were overwhelmingly in favour of the Prespa agreement, the referendum did not meet the required 50 per cent quorum, thus weakening Zaev’s position. In order to secure the parliamentary majority, he had to agree to a number of very unpopular measures, including amnesty for perpetrators of a violent attack on Parliament in April 2017.

It is likely that these compromises will negatively affect the credibility of Zaev’s government. The first blow came in the first round of the presidential elections in April/May 2019, when the government’s candidate only very narrowly beat the main opposition one.

**It Will Last**

Although the name agreement is under heavy attack from the opposition in both countries, there are clear signs that it won’t be formally contested. The agreement has already triggered a number of international processes, and it cannot be in the interest of either side for these to come undone. Both countries will benefit from North Macedonia’s EU accession process, which will firstly deepen economic ties, and eventually cultural and societal ones, too.

Although the name agreement is under heavy attack from the opposition in both countries, there are clear signs that it won’t be formally contested

This success story would be somewhat unique in the region and would certainly go down in history as a rare victory over ethnic nationalism and exclusivism, in a region where, unfortunately, such approaches are still highly prevalent.

**Relevant links**

- Balkan Insight: Name Dispute [https://balkaninsight.com/macedonia-name-dispute/](https://balkaninsight.com/macedonia-name-dispute/)
The Influencers’ Futile Toils: Russia and Turkey in the Balkans

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Oddly, the Western Balkans, a region with a population constituting barely 3.5% of the European Union’s total population, regularly manages to attract the interest and engagement of all three world powers – the US, Russia and China –, as well as major regional actors such as Turkey and the Islamic states in the Gulf region.¹ The roots of this unlikely competition go back to the post-1991 disintegration of non-aligned Yugoslavia. It coincided with the end of the Cold War in Europe and triggered a quest among external powers to fill the emerging void in this geopolitically important part of the continent. After all, the region connects the east and west, and north and south of the continent. In modern history, it has been the arena for conflicts among great powers, including the outbreak of the First World War. This competition has persisted to the present day, three decades after the outset of Yugoslavia’s disintegration. In the first place, however, it is the EU that is still labouring to achieve its long-standing goal to usher into membership the so-called Western Balkans, meaning the former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia (this country being at that moment already at the gates of the EU) plus Albania, a formal offer of membership once conditions were fulfilled. The motivation was to put an end to the conflicts for Yugoslavia’s succession, which in the previous decade had escalated into the first war on the continent since 1945, and repeatedly caused division among the Western allies. In parallel, the US strategy for the region focused on making it part of a continent that was “whole and free,” meaning that every European state should be as much a part of Euro-Atlantic integration as possible.

Thus, the EU is offering supranational economic, social and political integration to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia as well as Serbia and Kosovo, the so-called Southeast Europe Six (SEE6).² NATO is making a similar offer in the field of security and defence. For the SEE6, membership of these two organizations would mean giving up central sectors of national sovereignty in exchange for the promise of rising prosperity and unquestionable security.

In the meantime, the EU has enclosed the region, leaving only the SEE6 outside of its territory: Croatia became an EU member in 2013. Albania and Montenegro entered NATO in 2009 and 2017, respectively, so that there is now a chain of NATO states stretching from the Baltic to the Black sea. Essentially, the SEE6 have been economically “swallowed” by the EU, and the ring of NATO states around the region isolates it from power projections by third parties.

² Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia are the EU members that are refusing to recognize the secession of Kosovo from Serbia that took place in 2008. China and Russia are the two members of the United Nations Security Council also withholding recognition.
Stalled Drive for EU Membership and External Spoilers

Map 1 shows several “blank spots” in the Western Balkans surrounded by NATO and/or EU Member States: Serbia with Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. Pristina (because of its unresolved international status), Belgrade (because of NATO’s war against Serbia in 1999) and Sarajevo (because most Serbs in this country see the West as the protector of their Croat and Muslim compatriots and contenders) are not likely to join the Western military alliance any soon. Similarly challenging is their bid to enter the EU, not only because of the many political and economic flaws these applicants still have to overcome, but also because of Brexit, the populist wave, the repercussions of the financial and economic crises in 2008 and the other facets of the EU’s current travails.

However, the EU as a pole of attraction in terms of economic and political integration is far from being substituted by external competitors. Overwhelmingly, foreign direct investments, financial sector ownership, remittances from migrant workers and foreign trade stem from the EU, mostly from Germany and Italy. Trade between the EU and the SEE6 is about ten to 15 times bigger than with China, Russia or Turkey. About 1.7 million people from the former Yu-

MAP 1
NATO Member States 1990 and 2009


CHART 10
Western Balkans 6, International Trade. Top Trading Partners 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Value, million €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU 28</td>
<td>51,861</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>4,138</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>3,322</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>3,009</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1,415</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>643</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>512</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the world</td>
<td>5,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>71,851</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IMF, EU DG Trade.
goslavia have migrated to Germany alone. Vienna is probably the third biggest Serbian city in terms of the number of inhabitants of that ethnic origin.

The EU as a pole of attraction in terms of economic and political integration is far from being substituted by external competitors

Yet, as long as the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans is stalled, Russia, Turkey and the other external “influencers” have the opportunity to act as “spoilers” in the region, mostly through political manoeuvres, public diplomacy and agitation as well as, particularly in Moscow’s case, according to Western allegations, through undercover subversion.

Three Instruments of Russia’s Influence in the Region

Alongside its strategic and economic displacement from southeast Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the instruments of Russian leverage in the region are becoming less and less effective. The first instrument was always more imagined than enacted: although Serbs, Montenegrins and Slavic Macedonians share Slavic roots and the Orthodox religion with Russia, and while memories of historical alliances with Russia continue to play an important role in the construction of their identities, the region’s numerous ethnic minorities, such as the Hungarians and Albanians, are indifferent to tales of historical and religious ties with Russia. On the contrary, over-stated closeness to Russia breeds ethnic tensions that no one government in the region can afford, in light of the determination to join the EU. Also, many Orthodox Slavs in the region view Russia with scepticism, as a great power whose actions, as demonstrated by a number of episodes in the past centuries, have not always being supportive of their goals.

Surveys have shown that even in a country such as Serbia, where a majority of the population favours alliances with Russia and overwhelmingly rejects NATO membership, support for joining the EU hovers at around 50 percent. In fact, the public opinion towards the EU in the whole region is contradictory and shifting. The percentage that approve membership shot up after each successful step in the EU accession process, such as the lifting of visa requirements in 2010, only to fall again when bad news came from Brussels – whether in connection with the euro crisis, the flow of migrants through the Balkans, the difficulties in the EU-brokered talks between Belgrade and Pristina, or most recently the Brexit referendum. The foreign policy leanings of the Serbs and other Western Balkan nations considering EU accession are plainly shaped more by political perceptions of current events than by supposedly deep-seated preferences and animosities.

Moscow’s second instrument of influence – southeast Europe’s dependency on Russian energy supplies and especially natural gas – is also diminishing. In 2015, Russia abandoned the planned construction of the South Stream gas pipeline partly on account of the EU’s strict conditions, alongside high construction costs and uncertain price trends for fossil fuels. The Western Balkan countries are members of the EU’s Energy Community and have agreed to adopt its acquis. This has prevented Russia’s Gazprom from using South Stream to expand its predominance in southeastern Europe.

Moscow’s third and most effective instrument of influence in the region relates to Serbia, and is the threat to use its Security Council veto if the West attempts to make Kosovo a member of the United Nations. This is the only critical tie between the two states. Moscow is keen to draw Serbia further from the West because no politician who wants to succeed in Serbian politics can risk losing Russia’s support over the Kosovo conundrum. A sign of Moscow’s advancement in this respect would be for Serbia to raise its military and security cooperation with Russia to the same level that it has with the US and NATO. According to Russian figures, there were 22 Serbian military exercises with NATO in 2015,

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Turkey: Dissonance between Ambitions and Capabilities

The Balkans is especially important for Turkey’s relations with the EU and presence on the European continent in general. Simply put, there is no point in Europe to which Turkish political and other influence reaches further west than Bosnia and Herzegovina. Consequently, Turkey acted as a fierce ally to Bosnian Muslims during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later wholeheartedly supported the pursuit of Kosovo Albanians for secession from Serbia. In this manner Ankara gained standing and influence among those population groups that it considered from the very beginning to be inclined to re-establish close ties with Turkey after the collapse of Yugoslavia and the end of the Cold War. In his speech at the opening ceremony of the conference “Ottoman legacy and Balkan Muslim Communities today” held in Sarajevo in October 2000, former Turkish Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister Ahmed Davutoğlu claimed that it was only during the Ottoman era that the Balkans had a central role in the world’s politics. In his vision, the countries in the Balkans could escape the destiny of being on the periphery or a victim of geostrategic competition of great powers, by re-establishing their success from the Ottoman period.

There is no point in Europe to which Turkish political and other influence reaches further west than Bosnia and Herzegovina

Around 2010, when peace consolidations and the quest for EU membership was on the top of the agenda in the region, Turkey also invested much diplomatic effort in a political rapprochement with Serbia, particularly in the context of opening channels of communication between the more politically conservative Bosnian Muslim leaders and Belgrade. Parallel to this, Turkey gave special focus to strengthening its economic and cultural influences in the whole region. The political gains that Turkey accomplished during the times of crises and war in former Yugoslavia started dissipating in times of political stabilization in the region. There are five main reasons for this:

— Turkish public diplomacy did not convince the political actors in the region that its interests and goals would also benefit those communities that were not marked as potential Turkish political “clients” in the region from the very beginning, e.g. Muslims of various ethnicities;
— The “Leitmotif” of the Turkish public diplomacy discourse directed at the Western Balkans, focusing on a romantic and rose-tinted interpretation of the history of Ottoman rule in the region, rekindled resentments and stirred suspicion in many parts of the region, rather than fostering commonality;

The political gains that Turkey accomplished during the times of crises and war in former Yugoslavia started dissipating in times of political stabilization in the region

— Turkey has not achieved substantial progress in the field of trade and investments in the Western Balkan regions and has been unable to catch up with Germany, Italy, Russia, and, more recently, China, who remain its main external economic partners;
— Turkey has not significantly progressed on its path towards EU membership, whereas Western Balkan countries consider EU membership

as the paramount goal of their domestic transformation and foreign policy: the capability of Turkey to present itself as an example of successful “Europeanization” has regressed; — Turkey’s domestic conflicts and its tarnished record regarding human rights and the rule of law has diminished its international image, and, consequently, the country does not currently have potential to act as an example for modernization and development in the eyes of the majority of the population of the Western Balkans.

Conclusions

Russia and Turkey’s toils to gain a decisive standing as geo-political “influencers” in the Western Balkans will remain futile as long as the EU credibly pursues its enlargement goals in the region. However, should the presently narrow and restricted approach taken by the EU and its most important Member States towards integrating the SEE6 persist, the other “influencers” might gain more traction. But they have a long way to go in terms of strengthening their trade relations, financial ties and human interaction with the SEE6. Even if the authoritarian political models emanating from Moscow and Ankara resonate today in significant parts of the population in SEE6, there are no indications that Russia and Turkey are willing or able to invest enough political and financial capital to match the region’s already existing level of integration with the EU.

Russia and Turkey’s toils to gain a decisive standing as geo-political “influencers” in the Western Balkans will remain futile as long as the EU credibly pursues its enlargement goals in the region

Recommended Bibliography


Who Does the King Speak for? Executive Power, the Executors and Protests in Morocco

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On 30 July 2018, Mohammed VI chose the city of Alhucemas to pronounce his annual Feast of the Throne speech. The choice of location for the event had great political significance: the King was turning the page on the protest movement that for months had shaken the city, the force of the law was still being brought against the rebels and he appealed to patriotic unity to garner support for the development projects aimed at resolving the “social question.” Looking beyond royal speeches, Moroccan political life has continued its course, marked by the following events: 1) the controversies caused by statements made by the former President and Islamist leader of the Justice and Development Party (PJD), Abdelilah Benkirane, who the King sacked in March 2017 for refusing to lead a government coalition formed, at the request of the Palace, by his staunchest opponents; 2) the debates surrounding a series of pledged legal reforms, some of which have been pending since the ratification of the Constitution in 2011; and 3) lastly, protest movements of varying natures, such as the consumer boycott, which, having a large degree of anonymity, reduces the risk of participants being subjected to repression at the hands of security forces.

The Return to a Citizen Monarchy?

Since his accession to the Alaouite throne in 1999, Mohammed VI has presented himself as a king who governs and listens to his people. He summed up what he hoped would be the nature of his new regime under the formula of an “executive and citizen monarchy.” This placed the King above the political parties and meant that decisions on defining the major strategic lines for the country’s future were his authority. The political parties called upon to form a government based on their electoral results were charged with the task of carrying out his policies. However, the country’s modernization project stands in sharp contrast to its current social problems, the famous “social question,” a major topic on the country’s agenda thanks to the emergence of numerous, substantially long-lasting protest movements, which have shown a strong capacity to mobilize. Despite the municipal and legislative elections held in 2015 and 2016, respectively, the monarchy generally blames the elected representatives for the social situation’s deterioration. It was their mission as mediators between the population and the Palace that must have failed. Mohammed VI had no hesitation in firing several ministers in October 2017 and proposing their replacements four months later to the President of the government, Saadeddine El Othmani, the mediator, who simply went along with the decisions taken by the Palace. It was a similar story in the summer of 2018, when El Othmani, following the King’s instructions, announced three important decisions taken without prior debate:

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1 This article is a part of the results of the project, “Crisis y representación política en África del Norte. Dispositivos institucionales y contestación” (CSO2017-84949-C3-2-P) funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, the State Research Agency (AEI) and the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER).
the dismissal of the Economy Minister; the bill reinstating compulsory military service; and remaining on daylight saving time. All this has perplexed observers who believe the changes are damaging to the regime’s “soft authoritarianism” and its goal to further democratize its institutions. Others, however, welcome the presence of political leadership with a clear vision; one that opts for technocratic solutions and sidesteps the vacillations of political parties.

The “social question,” a major topic on the country’s agenda thanks to the emergence of numerous, substantially long-lasting protest movements, which have shown a strong capacity to mobilize

Fully aware of this reality, in the King’s national addresses in 2018, he repeatedly made mention of the “social question,” improvements to his subjects’ living conditions and his concern that society be listened to. Thus he hoped to show his self-proclaimed commitment to listen to society and respond to its legitimate demands. Mohammed VI has drawn out another roadmap in which he incorporates everything from plans for far-reaching reforms to specific measures in different areas (a new administrative register for users, vocational training reforms and the widespread use of foreign languages in teaching certain subjects, a new phase of the National Human Development Initiative (INDH), the extension of healthcare coverage to the disadvantaged, the reactivation of regional business investment centres, a new water and agriculture policy and, last but not least, the reinstatement of military service). All these announcements have been applauded by the political elite, and the government has hurriedly adopted certain reforms, while leading people to understand that preparations were underway for the others. However, in most cases, it was simply a question of relaunching, renewing or updating policies and initiatives which already have precedents in recent decades. This is the case for the INDH (2005) or the “Green Morocco Plan” (2009), hailed in the recent past as success stories of the new reign.

A Government of Executors

Saadeddine El Othmani is somehow aware that he has been given what could be described as a “free ride” to his position as head of government. Hence, the opposition he has to face is threefold: the supporters of Benkirane within his own party, the PJD; his government’s National Rally of Independents (RNI), whose new leader, Aziz Akhannouch, is already setting his sights on leading the country, and, lastly, from within the Parliament, the Istiqlal party and Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), who aspire to become the real opposition to the Islamists.

A year after failing to form a government, Benkirane ended his silence in thunderous fashion in February 2018. For his return to public life, he chose the PJD’s youth congress, in whose ranks he enjoys great popularity. His criticisms were aimed at Akhannouch and the mixing of two different worlds: that of private business (great fortunes) and public service (senior politicians); a mix that he describes as a “danger to the State.” This kind of discourse seduced the grassroots supporters of the PJD, who are yet to assimilate the Seraglio’s opposition to their demands as victors of the last legislative elections. Even though Benkirane has lost the battle with the Palace, it is true to say that his popularity has been bolstered in a kind of “David and Goliath” scenario. In contrast, his successor, El Othmani, is criticized by the party’s grassroots support for accepting his role as mere executor of decisions adopted by others. Within this political composition, Benkirane plays his corresponding role: that of a political “scarecrow.” After all, his outbursts suit the monarchy fine, since such provocations help to suggest the existence of an active political life, fuelled by ideological differences and deliberations over inaccurate results. However, it is also true to say that this attitude hinders the work of the Prime Minister, who has to adopt the role of “firefighter,” putting out the flames ignited by Benkirane’s attacks each time he criticizes a government member who does not belong to the PJD.

It should be acknowledged that El Othmani’s job is not at all straightforward, and is made more difficult by the independent ministers (Secretary General of the government, Ministers of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Religious Affairs) and other political groups that are only accountable to the Palace. If we exclu-
sively consider matters affecting the social model or public freedoms, it is worth noting that, although the King has repeatedly given instructions in recent years for legislation to take definitive steps forward, the fact is that learning foreign languages at the different schooling stages, giving official status to the Amazigh language, the criminal code reform or the National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights have all continued to raise controversy and hurdles throughout the political year.

The King is quick to show the world that he listens to his people, and has demonstrated on different occasions that he can make or break political careers. However, the political elite’s capacity to listen also has its limits, which return to the surface of debates when it comes to renouncing founding ideological principles. This is especially valid for certain parties, like the Islamist PJD, which revolves around the central issue of Muslim identity and, as a corollary to this, the Arabization of Moroccan society. After having assumed the leadership of the government, the PJD has to learn to conciliate the will of the executive monarchy, managing a heterogeneous ministerial coalition, a parliament with unstable and unpredictable majorities, a militant base with expectations of change and a society that is demonstrating its discontent with increasing frequency. That is why the erratic nature of many decision-making processes is not solely the result of obstructions caused by the Palace-imposed legislative and decisional filter system or the absence of consensus between political groups in the government with very different political persuasions and trajectories. It is also the result of certain political parties learning to play the parliamentary game, whose members do not always fully understand the complexities and subtleties of the written rules on how Parliament operates, or the behind-the-scenes manoeuvres that these rules and the party leadership power systems allow.

The King may often express his preferences, but he will only impose these if he sees that the balances of power or the pressure of the national or international context work in his favour. If this is not the case, there may be certain adjustments made, which allow for scaled-back versions of the reforms to be undertaken or which allow these to be shelved until such time that their implementation is more favourable. In the meantime, naturally, the negligence of the political establishment receives the blame.

**Side-lining the Legitimacy of Opposition in the Public Space**

On 26 June, after eight months of trials, the main figures that were arrested from the Rif protest movement were sentenced in the first instance to up to 20 years in prison for criminal acts that watered down the movement’s social demands. Their confessions and testimonies were taken as sufficient evidence, despite their being obtained under pressure, as an unofficial report from the National Human Rights Council (CNDH) seems to confirm, which was leaked to the press. The grounds for handing down such tough sentences were, firstly, the human and material damage from the buildings that were set alight and the acts of violence carried out against the agents of authority; secondly, conspiracy with foreign agents, by using the support of separatist media from the Rifian diaspora in Europe; and, thirdly, the refusal to negotiate with local or government delegations on the ground.

The protest movement, however, made mistakes which were later used to discredit it: the absence of Moroccan flags in the demonstrations was enough to satisfy those who claimed there was involvement from pro-independence supporters; the attacks on the police called into question the movement’s peaceful ethos; and, lastly, the statements made by the protest leader, Nasser Zefzafi, before his arrest, have damaged the movement, as they were, on occasion, directly aimed at the King. These were compounded by Zefzafi’s interruption of an imam’s controversial sermon aimed at discrediting the movement.
Nevertheless, Moroccan society as a whole has been sensitive to the demands and sentences of the young Rifians, although the visibility of symbols of Riffian irredentism have led to a certain reticence. Several protest demonstrations took place to denounce the court verdicts. But, far from being a show of strength, as was the case with the march in Rabat on 6 June 2017 (the biggest mobilization since 2011), the marches in July 2018 in Casablanca and Rabat, in contrast, allowed the rifts within the forces opposing the executive monarchy to rise to the surface. The Federation of the Democratic Left (FGD) refused to allow Amazigh and, especially, Islamist militants from Justice and Spirituality to officially join the protests, aware that the latter are the only ones with real power to rally the masses together.

Meanwhile, the population awaited some kind of gesture from the King. Mohammed VI offered a Solomonic response: 188 arrested activists received the royal pardon, but none of its main leaders were among them. Another episode worthy of mention are the events that unfolded in late December 2017 in the old mining town of Jerada, where two young men died after getting trapped in an abandoned coal pit. This tragic occurrence gave rise to a series of demonstrations that were organized to draw the government’s attention to the region’s situation. Neighbourhood committees were set up to dialogue with the visiting government delegations and follow-up on the government’s promises to relaunch investments and stimulate employment. Finally, last spring, the authorities proceeded with the arrest of some sixty people. The court later handed down tough three-to-nine-month prison sentences to four of the demonstrators. Like in the Rif, an atmosphere of martial law has taken hold in Jerada, and the repression has been justified by accusations of manipulation, in which the population has fallen victim, depending on the case, to the Islamists of “Justice and Spirituality,” the leftists of the “Democratic Way” or even the coal mafia (businessmen who benefited from clandestine exploitation known as the “coal barons”).

The Boycott: An Unprecedented Success of Civil Disobedience

On 20 April, a campaign to boycott three commercial brands was launched on social media. The boycott’s enormous popular success reveals the population’s demands for improvements in their living conditions in the belief that social equalities have worsened the first time that a popular mobilization launched exclusively on social media has enjoyed such levels of success (Mesbah, 2018). After the repression suffered by the protestors in the Rif and Jerada, the boycott was run as an act of civil disobedience and was seen to be less dangerous for those participating. Who was behind the campaign is, as of yet, unknown, and, in any case, is of little significance. What is relevant here, is the boycott’s enormous popular success, which reveals the population’s demands for improvements in their living conditions in the belief that social equalities have worsened. It also ratifies their rejection of a political elite they have not elected, which is far removed from their daily realities and looks upon the protesters with contempt. The latter can be seen in the descriptions used for the boycotters, who were branded as “stupid” by the Finance Minister, “removed from reality” by the Agriculture Minister or even “traitors of the nation” by a senior manager at “Central Danone” in Morocco.

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Conclusions

Mohammed VI assures everyone he is listening to his people. But who is to know if, beyond the government, anyone is listening to the King? His goal of relaunching a broad series of projects is being undertaken without any mention of the protest movements that have affected different regions in the last two years or the boycott launched in April 2018. What all these protest actions have in common is the perception of rising inequalities among the different population groups and the different regions. The discrepancy between the country’s success story and the population’s daily reality is increasingly less tolerable for wide sectors of the population, particularly for the youth, who have participated en masse in the protest movements, even to the point of leading them. It is true that “letting time take its course” is still a prevalent approach of the Moroccan monarchy. The King understands that by waiting until the seemingly irreconcilable differences between conflicting interests are visible to everyone, his role as arbitrator, above the different actors, will be given fresh strength. Nevertheless, Mohammed VI has no other choice than to adapt his discourse and strategy to the current scenario, typified by the simultaneity and immediacy of the international, regional and local circulation of information, which young Moroccans follow on social media; youth who, mostly, have known only the “executive” monarchy and its promises of social and economic modernization.

Bibliography


Since 1999, Algeria’s main characteristic has been its political stability. Some have analysed this as an advantageous quality that is all the more noteworthy because many of the countries in the region have faced internal tension and wars during the same period. A stability that also seemed like the country’s revenge on its recent past, marked during the 1990s by a high-intensity internal conflict as well as (nearly complete) international isolation. For others, however, this period is less one of stability than of total inertia. An immobility that President Bouteflika’s illness illustrated through the most telling and troubling of images, that of 1 November 2018. The official announcement of the President’s wish to run for a fifth term was the last straw. On 22 February 2019, the population woke up. It rejected “el istimiraria” (the continuity) advocated by Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s supporters and began an uprising unprecedented in the history of Algeria. What are the main causes? And what directions can this wave of dissent take?

The Political Causes of the Uprising

The popular demonstrations that saw millions of Algerians marching every Friday beginning on 22 February overturned 20 years of rule by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in six weeks. Nonetheless, a month earlier, there was no indication of such a revolt, with the calls for President Bouteflika to run for a fifth term becoming increasingly insistent. The coalition parties and the representatives of power within civil society made the call, in all likelihood believing that rejection of the fifth term would be limited to a few opponents and activists as was the case in 2014. Ostentatiously, the National Liberation Front (FLN) organized a meeting at the Algiers Coupole arena on 17 January, where they announced that Bouteflika would be the FLN’s candidate. Defying all logic, party officials offered a photograph… of the President’s portrait. An image that has become a cult symbol, after providing inspiration for criticism and ridicule on social media and gaining significant coverage in both Algerian and foreign media.

President Bouteflika’s resignation on 2 April marked the end of a political order, without, however, leading to a democratic transition. And there is cause for alarm. The last four presidential terms imposed a mutation of the Algerian political regime towards a sort of “sanctuarization” or shielding of presidential power, an obsession of the President’s since his arrival in office in 1999. As of his first term, his aim was to break with the collegiality that had been the Algerian regime’s modus operandi since 1962, if not before. This “sanctuarization” began in 2004 with the ousting of Mohammed Lamari, Chief of the Defence Staff, replaced by General Gaid Salah, and was strengthened in 2015 when Head of the Information and Security Bureau, Lieutenant General Mohamed Mediène, known as Toufik, was likewise ousted after 25 years of rule in this department. In parallel to these two spectacular events, this shielding was progres-
sively reinforced through changes in the different security and army corps, offering President Bouteflika ample margin to consolidate his power. The latter was granted legal force through the adoption of the 2016 Constitution, which officially endows Algeria with an “ultra-presidentialist” regime.

The last four presidential terms imposed a mutation of the Algerian political regime towards a sort of “sanctuarization” or shielding of presidential power

Institutional Disintegration and Its Consequences

These changes occurred in a special context for at least two reasons. The first was President Bouteflika’s health. His illness marginalized him from the national and international political scene for six years, which should have weakened him politically and diminished his power of decision. Paradoxically, this was not the case. The second particular factor is the rise of private economic actors, employers united through the Forum des chefs d’entreprises (FCE), or Forum of Business Owners. Founded in 2004, their influence has grown continuously, to the point of gaining the capacity to sway economic and political decisions, and contributing to making Prime Minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune step down from his post three months after his appointment.

In addition to reshuffling in the circles of power, the salient feature of these past five years has been the systematic undermining of the institutions of the republic. Arbitration of conflicts is increasingly taking place outside institutional frameworks. By way of illustration, let us consider the case of the wrestling match between Prime Minister Tebboune and certain FCE members, and the Head of State’s revocation of the decisions taken by his Prime Minister. On the political level, the overthrow of the president of the People’s National Assembly (APN) by MPs of the ruling coalition and the image of the Assembly doors chained shut will long remain an eloquent symbol of this advanced process of institutional disintegration. The latter was further aggravated when President Bouteflika decided to postpone the 18 April presidential elections and dissolve the High Independent Commission for Election Oversight (HIISE). Considered a gross violation of the constitution, these two decisions provide information on the distinguishing feature of Bouteflika’s rule: an avowed propensity for autocracy.

The institutional weakening naturally also affected the security aspect. There is no denying that, from a “hard security” point of view, Algeria has maintained a stability that contrasts sharply with its neighbours to the South and East. No terrorist attacks have been perpetrated over these past years. The borders are tightly controlled and security cooperation with neighbouring countries has been pursued. Nonetheless, non-military threats have not disappeared. The affair with the seizure of 700 kilos of cocaine in May 2018 attests to this. The largest ever recorded in Algeria, this seizure has provided proof, if more were needed, of Algeria’s vulnerability to non-military threats. Moreover, and by admission of politicians themselves, financial crime and corruption networks linked to the interest groups within the structures of power (el issaba, i.e. “the gang”), are not only a threat to national security, but also to the survival of the political system itself. As evidence, the wave of arrests of generals, the deposal of the head of the General Directorate of National Security, after having indirectly challenged his opponents to conduct a real anti-corruption campaign, and the media war.

The Economic Causes of the Uprising

While waiting to ascertain whether there will be an economic before and after 22 February 2019, it is already possible to provide some answers regarding the 2014 economic before and after. That was the year the Algerian economy entered a stage of rising financial difficulties due to the collapse in the price of

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the oil barrel, which led to the halving of foreign exchange earnings.

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Despite the warnings and alerts given by numerous economic experts since at least 2008, date of the onset of the world financial crisis, the Algerian government clung to a reassuring discourse, ensuring that the crisis would have no direct consequences on the national economy, arguing that the Algerian financial fabric’s weak integration into global finance was ultimately a blessing in disguise.

**Effects of the Oil Counter-Shock**

This optimism lasted only six years, because since 2014, foreign exchange income has dropped by nearly half.\(^3\) The discourse changed drastically with the introduction of notions such as import reduction and rationalization of expenses, all the while refusing to evoke an austerity the Algerians associate with the economic crisis of the 1990s.\(^4\) The authorities then began to prepare the population for accepting unpopular measures. The massively subsidized price of energy was raised; the import of certain products such as vehicles and foodstuffs was cut drastically. The government attempted to attract the mass of money circulating outside the bank system through a tax compliance measure offering impunity in exchange for a 7% tax on sums deposited in the bank. Shortly thereafter, it issued a bond with an interest rate ranging from 3 to 5% according to the established maturity period. The remaining option was to stop generalized subsidies and turn to a policy of targeted assistance to households. The major communication campaign to prepare public opinion for this significant socio-economic turn was stopped cold as the presidential elections approached. Suspected of arriving too late or being too limited to be effective, these measures have indeed failed to turn the balance of payments around, with the deficit continuing to rise. For, in parallel to these measures designed to cut expenditure, the government has maintained the redistributive system, with social benefit transfers amounting to 8% of the GDP in 2018.\(^5\)

As an indication, overall subsidies cost 14% of the GDP in 2015 and contributed to aggravating the budget deficit, which amounted to twice the Health and the Education budgets together. This choice was dictated by a highly political imperative, namely, the approaching presidential elections, planned for April 2019. The last measure would then be unconventional financing, in other words, issuing banknotes with no counterpart. According to then-Prime Minister, Ahmed Ouyahia, the recourse to the “banknote press” would serve to pay civil servants’ salaries.\(^6\)

**Consequences on the Social Level**

The oil counter-shock has not only had consequences on the micro and macroeconomic levels. Social discontent has truly settled in. For, at the same time as the unpopular economic measures were being implemented, certain Algerian business leaders rose on the political-media scene whose ties to the authorities were as conspicuous as their alleged involvement in corruption scandals. The import sector became the lobby of importers responsible for the exorbitant weight of imports, which, while diminishing quantitatively, remained enormously important on the financial level. Overbilling was then officially acknowledged as being connected to extremely

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\(^4\) At the start of the 90s, Algeria entered a situation of suspension of payments. It resorted to debt rescheduling. The social consequences were dramatic for the middle class, particularly with the closing of dozens of public enterprises and the laying off of thousands of employees.

\(^5\) Note that 12% of these social transfers are allocated to food subsidies. Energy is likewise an extremely expensive, budget-consuming sector in terms of subsidies. Thus, the majority of the 50.8-billion-dinar envelope of the budget earmarked for the operation of the energy department is allocated to subsidizing the cost of desalinating seawater (87%).
large-scale corruption, together with the underground economy and bureaucracy.\(^7\) In this regard, the NGO Transparency International gave Algeria a score of 3.5 out of 10 in 2018 and ranked it 105th out of 180 countries. It thus rose seven points since 2017, when the country was ranked 112th, with a score of 3.3 out of 10. This notwithstanding, in the Maghreb region, Algeria remains far behind its two neighbours, Morocco and Tunisia, better ranked with a score of 4.3 out of 10 (73rd). Algeria is also ranked 10th among Arab countries and 18th in Africa.\(^8\)

Corruption, combined with an economic governance that has been controversial for its inability to effect any significant economic progress, has fuelled rising social unrest. The latter has grown despite gestures made by the government these past few years. Recall, with regard to identity, that the Amazigh language was granted national then official status in 2016. On another note, the status of women has seen various improvements, namely, a law criminalizing domestic violence, reform of the family code granting greater rights to divorced women/mothers, and a law fostering female political participation through positive discrimination (quotas).

**Conclusion**

The revolt of millions of Algerians beginning on 22 February 2019 gives the impression of a people forming part of a historic moment. A point during which a growing realization has led to categorical rejection of a political project. Will such realization, by definition limited, lead to political awareness ushering in a structuring project?

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The political and social causes behind this uprising are likewise those that have allowed the system of governance to be resilient for so long. Hence, this logic will have to be progressively dismantled through negotiation to prevent the uprising from becoming a simple parenthesis without a future. By way of example, overcoming the rentier economic crisis is conditional to leaving behind the rentier model,\(^9\) which in turn is conditioned by the legitimacy of both the revolution and security being associated with a temporary time frame and a generation. The success of a democratic transition will also depend on the capacity to avoid the pitfalls to which Algeria and nearby countries have fallen prey: the temptation to use violence, the radicalization of demands, and ideological divisions.

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Reaching the End of the Tunisian Consensus: Disaffection and Pending Challenges

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Throughout 2018, Tunisia has been witness to a process of disaffection towards its institutions and political class, revealing the limits of the consensus the country’s political life has revolved around in recent years.

Although the Constitution provides for a semi-presidentialist political system, the consensual dynamic generated between Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda after the 2014 legislative elections has allowed Beji Caid Essebsi to strengthen the role of the President of the Republic (Gobe, 2017). Elected by universal suffrage, and therefore with the personal legitimacy that the ballot box provides, he pushed for the formation of coalition governments of national unity, but without strong political leadership. The efforts of successive heads of government to achieve a more autonomous role have been a source of friction throughout his mandate. Thus, the dismissal of Habib Essid, a technocrat that led the government between 2015 and 2016, did nothing to stop these tensions continuing with his successor at the head of the National Unity Government, Youssef Chahed (Gobe, 2018). These strains, together with the worsening economic situation and the absence of responses to the regional imbalances and inequalities at the heart of the 2011 revolution, have contributed to widening the rift between the population and the political elite, a situation reflected in the survey conducted by Afrobarometer in 2018, according to which 81% of Tunisians did not identify with any political party (Afrobarometer, 2018).

The Limits of an Asymmetric Cohabitation

The government alliance between Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda was set up following the 2014 legislative elections, in a hostile regional context for Islamist movements after Morsi’s ousting in Egypt. It alleviated the climate of identity polarization between Islamists and modernists, which almost derailed the transition process in 2013. In 2016, the Carthage Agreement extended this alliance to other political and social actors and opened the door to the formation of a national unity government, tasked with running an agreed-upon programme aimed at bolstering the economy, government efficiency and the fight against terrorism.

Ennahda opted for a self-limiting strategy, accepting its diminished influence in the successive Nidaa Tounes-led governments, despite the comparatively high number of lawmakers it had in the Parliament. Notwithstanding this asymmetric cohabitation, however, mutual distrust remains between the two parties, which, in turn, has slowed down the adoption of economic and social reforms, as well as prevented consensus on key issues related to the drafting of the Constitution in 2014. Five years after it was pronounced, the Constitutional Court is yet to be created, due to the failure of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP) to elect its designated four members. This distrust also delayed approval of the Local Authorities Law until April 2018, passed just 10 days before the first local elections following the fall of Ben Ali. This delay and the law’s subsequent regulatory development reflect the central government’s reluctance to develop the principles of positive discrimination in favour of the less developed regions, as enshrined in the Constitution. The management of Tunisia’s regions continues to be overseen by an unelected governor, who acts as an intermedi-
ary between democratically elected town councils and the central State, with no date set by the government for holding regional elections (Yerkes and Ben Yahmed, 2019). The distrust between both parties has also affected the functioning of the independent bodies created by the Constitution, such as the Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Élections (ISIE), tasked with organizing elections. Following the resignation of its president Mohamed Tili Mansri, after the local elections, the Parliament took seven months to appoint a successor. Nabil Baffoun was elected president of the body in January 2019, with just nine months remaining before the legislative and presidential elections set for the autumn.

**2018 Tunisian Local Elections**

Having been postponed on several occasions, one of 2018’s milestones was the country’s first local elections since the revolution, a first step in the transformation of a state with a long centralist tradition. The election of new town councils enabled the replacement of the “special delegations,” which had provisionally managed local affairs since 2011, with democratically elected local bodies.

The election law reform allowed members of the army and security forces to exercise their right to vote for the first time. Voting for women was encouraged through new measures. In addition to vertical parity, horizontal parity was ensured through a requirement for half the lists presented by political parties across the nation to be headed by women. These measures contributed to the fact that 47.5% of councillors were women. The presence of women in municipal government institutions was also fostered by the Local Authorities Law, which established that the positions of mayor and deputy mayor in local councils had to be occupied by a man and a woman respectively. The electoral law also established positive discrimination measures in favour of young people, requiring at least one out of the three first candidates of each list to be under 35 years old. In addition, the next six candidates also had to include at least one in the same age bracket. The participation of young people in local government has also been facilitated by the requirement that the mayor or their deputy be under 35 years old.

However, the introduction of these positive discrimination measures in favour of women and young people did nothing to boost turnout at the ballot boxes, with the number of voters standing at 1,909,742, way below the turnout for the 2014 legislative elections, in which 3,579,257 citizens participated. The official participation rate, calculated based on the number of registered voters, was 35.7%; a figure that falls to 23.5% if calculations take into account the number of potential voters (Hernando de Larramendi and Govantes).

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The deteriorating image of political parties, together with the weak base of many of them, was reflected in their struggle to present candidates for the country’s 350 local councils. Only Ennahda was able to run in all of them, closely followed by Nidaa Tounes (345). The third biggest political party in terms of candidates presented was the Front Populaire (132). Another indicator of the disaffection towards political parties was the high number of independent lists that ran in the elections and the support they received. The 860 independent lists together received 32.3% of the votes nationwide, surpassing all other parties in number of votes.

The election results show how support has diminished for the country’s main political parties. Although Ennahda obtained 28.6% of the votes, it lost 430,000 voters with respect to the 2014 legislative elections. The party has held onto its hegemony in the country’s south, with strong penetration in areas which, in 2014, had been won by Nidaa Tounes. Thanks to the support of many councillors from independent lists, the party led by Rachid Ghannouchi was able to take 36% of town councils, including the country’s two biggest cities, Sfax and Tunis (ICG, 2019). Souad Abderrahim, who had already been an MP in 2011 in the National Constituent Assembly, thereby took the job of heading the country’s capital. Nidaa Tounes, for its part, was severely punished by its electorate as a consequence of its alliance with Ennahda and the infighting over the party’s leader-
ship. It obtained 20.9% of the vote, but lost 800,000 votes with respect to the 2014 legislative elections, with historic defeats in constituencies in Greater Tunis, such as Ariana or Ben Arous.

The Breaking of Consensus and the Reconfiguration of Alliances

The local election results highlighted the infighting within Nidaa Tounes, destabilized the national unity government and brought about a reconfiguration of alliances with a view to the legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 2019. The widening rift between Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda, a prelude to the breaking of consensus between the two parties, could be seen in the process of drafting a new Carthage Agreement. Pushed forward by President Essebsi to address the political and economic crisis the country was still immersed in, the signing of the Carthage Agreement II was blocked by Ennahda’s refusal to support Youssef Chahed’s dismissal; a demand made by the President of the Republic with the backing of the country’s biggest trade union, the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), which opposed his programme of economic reforms. Support from Ennahda and the National Coalition Bloc, a parliamentary group led by defectors from Nidaa Tounes, has enabled Youssef Chahed to remain at the head of the cabinet and drive forward the creation of a new political party, Tahya Tounes.

The breakdown in consensus was made official in September 2018, when President Essebsi publicly announced the end of relations between Ennahda and the presidency in a television interview. The announcement of the split was preceded by the President’s efforts to highlight the differences between his party and that led by Rached Ghannouchi in matters of identity linked with the role of religion in public life. In accordance with recommendations proposed by the Committee for Individual Liberties and Equality (COLIBE), created in 2017 at the President’s request, Essebsi announced his support, in August 2018, for a law that would ensure equal inheritance rights for men and women, a proposal that was rejected by Ennahda’s Shura Council.

Ennahda’s support was also decisive in November for Youssef Chahed to go ahead with a partial cabinet reshuffle. Although it did not affect key portfolios, such as the defence and foreign affairs ministries, the changes were openly criticized by the President of the Republic, who said they were organized without prior consultation. The replacement of 13 ministers and five state secretaries did not change the balance of power within the government, in which Nidaa Tounes, even after having boycotted its ratification in the Parliament, has maintained a higher number of ministries (12) than Ennahda (8), despite the latter still having a greater number of lawmakers in the Parliament. The government has incorporated independents like Rene Trabelsi, the third Jewish minister since independence, prominent figures from the Ben Ali regime like Kamel Morjane, the leader of al-Moubadara, and members of Machrouu Tounes, the party created in 2016 as a breakaway from Nidaa Tounes. This reshuffle gave rise to a divided government with little chance of tackling the country’s many challenges, in a political context focused instead on the upcoming 2019 legislative and presidential elections.

The breaking of consensus could be seen in the process of drafting a new Carthage Agreement, pushed forward to address the political and economic crisis the country was still immersed in.

The Social Issue: An Endless Wire

The aim of strengthening the political stability which has upheld consensus between the main political parties has failed to improve the economic situation or achieve greater social stability. The lack of response to the socioeconomic demands that triggered the 2011 revolution continues to fuel regular protests in the country against the government’s economic policy and the marginalization of less developed regions suffering from persistent inequalities and high unemployment rates (Hernando de Larramendi and Thieux, 2018).

The erosion of people’s trust in the political system, which is especially important among the youth, is reflected in the number of protests staged throughout the country. According to data from the Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Économiques et Sociaux (FTDES),
there were 9,356 protests in 2018. Most of these social movements took place in the governorates of Kairouan (1668), Sidi Bouzid (881), Gafsa (791), Tunis (749) and Kasserine (667) (FTDES, 2018). Eight years after the revolution, the same regions continue to be the victims of economic inequality, social exclusion and deficient public services. (Ben Romdhane, 2018).

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Another major source of social tension has been the implementation of reforms demanded by the IMF for the gradual disbursement of the 2.9-billion-dollar loan agreed in 2016 to revitalize the country’s economy. The austerity measures included in the Finance Act sparked major protests throughout the country in January 2018. The UGTT leads the rejection of the privatization programme, tax hikes and salary reductions for public workers, as instruments to reduce the fiscal deficit. The union, a signatory of the Carthage Agreement, opposed Chahed continuing at the head of the national unity government, accusing him of renouncing “national sovereignty” under pressure from international lenders. The clashes between the union and the government have given rise to sectoral strikes in the education sector and two national strikes, in November 2018 and January 2019, supported mostly by civil servants - which account for around 6% of the country’s total population.

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More than eight years after the 2011 uprising that toppled 30-year ruler Hosni Mubarak and six years after the military coup against Mohammed Morsi, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi tightens his grip on Egypt. The March 2018 presidential elections, described by international NGOs as "neither free nor fair,"1 secured Sisi another term in office until 2022. A comprehensive constitutional reform in 2019 is aimed at fortifying his reign and the supreme role of the military, on a permanent basis. Therefore, the political, economic and social outlook of Egypt is clouded by the centralization of power in the hands of President Sisi and his omnipresent armed forces. The most populous country in the European neighbourhood is witnessing a successive encroachment of the military into all realms of the economy, politics and society – with uncertain prospects.

A President for Life and a Military above All

In late April 2019, Egypt held a referendum on a constitutional amendment that further fortifies the powers of President Sisi and the armed forces. While separation of powers was hitherto a de facto formality, the amendment transfers further competencies of the judiciary into the President’s hands and moreover places the military as a custodian of democracy and constitution above politics and other state institutions. In essence, the referendum foresees the extension of the President’s term, his more active role in the selection and control of the judiciary, as well as the reorganization of the legislative branch.2 Facing vast criticism at home and abroad, the Sisi regime installed a National Dialogue to cover the amendments’ authoritarian appearance. However, the referendum was only the illusion of a democratic deliberation process. It took place in a climate of fear, intimidation and repression of dissent, just like the presidential elections of 2018. An all-encompassing pro-referendum campaign on the Egyptian streets and media pre-determined the vote’s outcome. Officially, 89% of electors voted in favour of the amendments at a turnout of 44%. However, the backdrop of empty polling stations calls into question the credibility of official statistics.3

In general, political participation and party pluralism were only temporary phenomena in Egypt up until the July 2013 coup. After Sisi’s election to the Presidency in 2014 and the passing of a new parliamentary election law, Egypt’s political parties have faced effective “strategies of neutralization.”4 The regime executes extensive control over the public sphere.

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and the managed selection of political competitors (e.g. through party bans and restricted licensing) does not offer a realistic chance of power rotation.\(^5\)

A lacking willingness to reform, widespread corruption\(^6\) and excessive repression are characteristic of Sisi’s military regime.

The armed forces’ reach into the political realm is complemented by the extensive control over the judicial branch. Those rights guaranteed in the constitution are permanently restricted by the state of emergency, which was extended last April 2019. Egypt is facing an extensive episode of violence - both judicial and extrajudicial. The judiciary, biased and often arbitrary, issued close to 600 death sentences in 2018 alone.\(^7\) Simultaneously, even if on a much lower scale, the Egyptian military also stringently carried out capital punishment. A salient example was the execution of nine young Egyptians, alleged co-conspirators in the assassination of Egypt’s prosecutor general Hisham Barakat in 2015, which drew sharp international criticism due to the reported use of torture during interrogations.\(^8\)

The judiciary, biased and often arbitrary, issued close to 600 death sentences in 2018 alone

Arbitrary justice against traditional opponents of the regime, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, is complemented by extrajudicial violence that is only rarely investigated or publicized. According to a Reuters investigation,\(^9\) Egyptian security forces have killed more than 460 people since the middle of 2015 in gun battles - all of those in highly disputed circumstances. The continuous erosion of the security situation, with recurring flare-ups of violent episodes, reaching far into the heart of Cairo, provides grounds for President Sisi’s war on terror campaign with all the necessary prerogatives for the armed forces. With most of Sinai on military lockdown, only punctual indications might serve as insights into the actual humanitarian situation. The 2015 anti-terrorism law and the 2018 social media one have further curtailed civic freedoms and suppressed the possibility of larger social mobilizations.

Egyptian security forces have killed more than 460 people since the middle of 2015 in gun battles - all of those in highly disputed circumstances

Smokescreen Development in Favour of the Armed Forces

While Egypt was able to avert bankruptcy by securing a $12-billion aid programme set up by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with the support of other national and international donors, the economic outlook is anything but promising. The short-term macroeconomic stabilization is neither intended nor designed to promote structural reforms aimed at sustainable, inclusive growth.\(^10\) Austerity measures like cuts in energy or food subsidies trigger vast socio-economic fallout. Rising costs of living burden lower income groups and aggravate hardships for most Egyptians.

The omnipresence of the Egyptian armed forces is also a fundamental obstacle to further economic development. The military is expanding its civilian

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economic activities\textsuperscript{11} and, counter to the government figure of 1.5\%,\textsuperscript{12} its share of the economy could have reached up to 40\%.\textsuperscript{13} Regardless of unreliable public statistics, the lacking managerial efficacy is mirrored in Sisi’s development vision for Egypt. Large-scale projects, such as the new capital or the extension of the Suez Canal, stand in stark contrast to the socio-economic needs of the young Egyptian population, the dilapidated infrastructure or the ineffective bureaucracy. While some analyses conflate relatively strong economic growth and government reports show comparatively low unemployment rates with Egypt’s overall positive development, other economic indices reveal a more pessimistic picture.\textsuperscript{14} The business climate remains grim (in the World Bank’s Doing Business Index Egypt ranks 120/190 in 2019); foreign direct investment is plummeting\textsuperscript{15} and remains significantly lower than during the 2006-2008 economic boom. Public debt service consumes up to 40\% of the government’s budget and external debt rose by 142\% between March 2013 and the end of 2018. Additionally, military spending is on the rise. Egypt more than tripled its arms purchases between 2014 and 2018 compared to the 2009-2013 period, making it the world’s third-largest arms importer. Sisi’s development vision, therefore, comes at a high price.\textsuperscript{16}

The military is expanding its civilian economic activities and, counter to the government figure of 1.5\%, its share of the economy could have reached up to 40\%

With the termination of the IMF programme at the end of 2019, Egypt is facing myriad challenges, including but not limited to the lack of reliable and trustworthy public statistical systems, which is a central impediment to both systematic reform and investment. The armed forces’ opaque approach adds only more uncertainty to the muddy waters of Egypt’s economy.

Egypt more than tripled its arms purchases between 2014 and 2018 compared to the 2009-2013 period, making it the world’s third-largest arms importer

Militarization of Foreign Policy?

The extensive acquisition of foreign weaponry is not only a burden for Egypt’s state budget, but might also create the necessary basis for a militarization of the country’s foreign policy and prompt readiness for stronger military engagement in the region. Until today, Egypt’s military involvement in regional conflicts has been largely indirect. As part and parcel of the Saudi-led coalition in the Yemen war, Egypt has thus far concentrated on logistical support without being involved in direct combat. In the case of the blockade of Qatar in 2017, Egypt joined the Saudi-UAE alliance without providing direct robust military support. In Syria, Egypt’s ties with Assad’s national intelligence apparatus were apparent, without being militarily visible on the ground.\textsuperscript{17} Only in Libya did Egypt actively conduct limited airstrike


\textsuperscript{14} MEHE and ROLL. “Three Scenarios… op. cit.


\textsuperscript{16} MEHE and ROLL. “Three Scenarios… op. cit.

operations with a rather symbolic character. In sum, the country’s regional policy stands in partial contrast to European interests. Only in its mediating efforts in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as the intra-Palestinian struggle, does Egypt play a more complementary role, though largely motivated by a conflict management goal rather than a comprehensive conflict resolution.

Uncertainty remains over the use of the imported weaponry in ongoing conflicts such as the Nile water conflict with Sudan and Ethiopia or a future intervention in Libya.

Against this backdrop, extensive arms imports and the to-be formalized, supreme role of the armed forces in the Constitution might prospectively run counter to the rather restricted military doctrine of the past. In neighbouring Libya, Sisi’s regime sided with Khalifa Haftar and continues to undermine UN efforts to mediate between the different factions. Uncertainty remains over the use of the imported weaponry in ongoing conflicts such as the Nile water conflict with Sudan and Ethiopia or a future intervention in Libya. The questionable role of continued and increasing arms exports from European states – Egypt is France’s biggest arms importer, amounting to 37% of its overall exports – remains virulent.

Encroaching Militarism: Three Scenarios for Egypt’s Future

In perspective, the 2020 parliamentary election will hardly make a difference to Egypt’s current predicaments. The country will continue to be held hostage by the vision of the armed forces. With the constitutional amendments fortifying Sisi’s grip to power, three scenarios for the future development of Egypt are conceivable, with a varying degree of probability. Firstly, a successful “developmental dictatorship” could be materializing. However, Sisi’s economic vision comes at a high cost and macroeconomic developments point to a further erosion of the socio-economic hardship of Egyptians. Secondly, a prolongation of a Mubarak 2.0 scenario is likely if Sisi manages to keep his armed forces loyal and social repression remains high. Even without making any developmental progress, Sisi’s regime might be able to use its broad competencies and security apparatus, presuming international donors are ready and willing to continue supporting the regime with financial aid and avoid criticizing it. Thirdly, the scenario of Sisi failing is as abstract as it is acute. Diverse internal or external triggers might induce an abrupt destabilization of the regime – only this time it will likely be more eruptive and less peaceful.

Jordan: Constant, but Fragile, Stability

For another year, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has followed the political dynamics of recent decades, whereby the country operates in a seemingly fragile equilibrium between the stability and continuity of the monarchy and increasingly recurring demonstrations and popular protests. Thus far, all of this has taken place within a context of calls for the system’s reform \textit{(islah)} rather than its fall, as demanded in the famous slogan of Arab revolutions past, “The people want the fall \textit{(isqat)} of the regime.” Whilst 2018 was not an important year for elections in this small Middle Eastern country, it did witness numerous popular mobilizations that led to the fall of the government and the withdrawal of sweeping economic laws.

Tribal Patronage and Politics in Jordan: Tribes as the Core?

It is impossible to understand Jordan’s historical and political development without acknowledging the central role that tribal organization has played, and continues to play, in the country. The tribes sustain the monarchy within the framework of the regime’s founding “authoritarian pact,” which establishes the King as a \textit{shaikh ash-shuyukh}, a sort of “king of kings” amongst the tribal leaders. In turn, the tribes have been configured as an intermediate structure in the logic of tribal clientelism, ensuring the social order in exchange for the distribution of state assets and resources (Melián, 2018). However, in recent years, and especially in 2018, two related phenomena have been observed within the context of this “authoritarian pact.”

First, since the 2011 demonstrations in the country, the tribes – as a result of the regime’s eroded clientelist distribution capacity due to the economic adjustment reforms promoted by the IMF – have begun, in a more or less veiled manner, to directly criticize the monarchy, exposing the existence of cracks in the authoritarian pact. Second, the popular protests of the second half of 2018 point to a significant generational change, whereby social mobilization is no longer organized around tribal identity, but rather the new identity shared by Jordanian youth, which goes beyond membership in a given clan. The precariousness, unemployment, corruption and political disaffection shared by a large part of young Jordanians have managed to unite and channel a malaise that transcends tribal boundaries. This still incipient change in the core of the socio-political structure seems to be displacing the once indisputable predominance of tribal identity in favour of new identities of belonging, in which the “authoritarian tribal pact” is regarded as obsolete by most young people. It could thus be conducive to the emergence of a party system based on new demands and identities, in opposition to the weak Jordanian party system, in which tribal representation has been the key component to date.

Political Disaffection and Decentralization

No important elections were held in Jordan in 2018 (other than repeat elections in two electoral districts for 2017 municipal elections following their annulment). Jordanian electoral processes have traditionally been characterized by legislative instability with regard to electoral regulations, which has hindered the formation of a learning process for the people to
learn how the system works. Accordingly, the 2016 parliamentary elections were held under a new electoral system designed to meet some of the social demands of the 2011 uprisings. However, political disaffection has been present in the country for years, and the political and electoral reforms to come out of the protests failed to increase interest in voting, resulting in a turnout of just 36%.

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The following year, in August 2017, the so-called “decentralization” elections were held. These were local and municipal elections in which, for the first time, government representatives were elected directly, in keeping with the decentralization policy established by law in 2014. These elections entailed significant new developments, as, even though according to the data published by the Jordanian newspaper al-Ghad, tribal candidates captured 85% of the vote, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood stopped boycotting elections and stood candidates, netting the mayoralty of three Jordanian cities, including Zarqa, the country’s second most populous city. However, none of these changes has managed to increase Jordanians’ interest in elections, and turnout, in line with the 2016 parliamentary elections, remained very low, at barely 32% of the electorate.

The precariousness, unemployment, corruption and political disaffection shared by a large part of young Jordanians have managed to unite and channel a malaise that transcends tribal boundaries.

In 2018, the country failed to overcome the economic problems that have hampered it virtually since it was founded, with an especially troubling increase in recent years of the public debt, which now stands at nearly 100% of GDP. This is compounded by a highly educated, young population without real access to a job market that is unable to absorb them. According to official data, unemployment in the country is 18.4%, although the figure is two times as high amongst the youth population, making it the highest it has been in the last 25 years. Furthermore, the policies imposed by the IMF, in exchange for liquidity to reduce the country’s debt, have had various conse-
quences, such as a reduction in the State’s capacity for clientelist distribution or a decrease in subsidies for staple goods, such as flour, bread or fuel. Similarly, the situation of insecurity in the region and neighbouring countries has negatively impacted the tourism sector, the main economic engine. Nevertheless, the World Bank estimates that GDP growth in the country will be 2% for 2018.

Jordan currently has an especially young and well-prepared population pyramid that lacks access to the job market and is riven by a growing generational divide that has steadily diluted the once all-powerful tribal identity.

This economic situation is a breeding ground for hopelessness and despair, especially amongst the younger population segments (Ryan 2013). Thus, Jordan currently has an especially young and well-prepared population pyramid that lacks access to the job market and is riven by a growing generational divide that has steadily diluted the once all-powerful tribal identity.

This socioeconomic context helps shed light on the increase in political protests that have taken place in the country and that led to the general strike on 30 May 2018. The trigger for the strike, in a context already marked by unease due to rising commodity prices, was the bill introduced by former Prime Minister Hani Mulki. The new law sought to establish a tax model in keeping with the austerity measures imposed by the IMF in 2016 in exchange for a $723 million injection of liquidity. As a result of the demonstrations, the King dismissed Mulki and appointed Omar Razzaz as the new Prime Minister on 4 June. The new chief executive withdrew the bill promising new economic measures following the strategy of defensive liberalization that has characterized the Jordanian regime at times of civil unrest. However, these measures were not enough, and the demonstrations have continued, from summer to the present, reflecting the persistence of popular discontent and, in particular, that of the discouraged youth.

An Oasis of Peace in the Midst of Chaos?

The situation in the region in recent years has been particularly tumultuous, with intense armed conflicts and a high level of insecurity. It was further exacerbated by the emergence of Daesh in Syria and Iraq. Nevertheless, the Hashemite Kingdom has always managed to maintain a high level of stability and security with few, although not non-existent, terrorist attacks or armed threats. Support for the Salafist movement and Daesh has increased in some regions, especially in the south of the country, in provinces such as Karak or Ma’an. This increase in support by certain sectors of the youth in recent years can be explained by two closely related dimensions. First, the economic hardships that these young people face and the meagre expectations of improvement in their social status and lack of venues for political participation are effectively wielded by the Salafist and terrorist organizations to attract them to their causes and demands. Second, the identity crisis that certain sectors are experiencing due to the weakening of the tribal bond leaves a vacuum that organizations such as Daesh have successfully leveraged to forge new shared identities (Yom and Sammour, 2017).

This context of chaos and regional violence, which Jordan has managed to stay out of, has also been strategically used by the monarchy through a “discourse of fear”.

It is worth noting that this context of chaos and regional violence, which Jordan has managed to stay out of, has also been strategically used by the monarchy through a “discourse of fear.” The King has linked the possibility for political change called for by the movements of unrest to the chaos in neighbouring countries, presenting himself as the pillar on which the State’s stability depends (Köprülü, 2014). This mechanism has proved relatively successful in the country, which was largely unaffected by the Arab Spring, where the protests, although recurring,
are low-intensity, and in which the opposition has remained loyal to the monarchy.

Conclusions

For Jordan, 2018 was generally a year devoid of major processes of political or economic change, but whose progress reinforced the socio-political dynamics of recent years. Although the country has stayed within the bounds of relative stability and political continuity, no analyst would define it as solid and well founded. On the contrary, there is increasing evidence of deep cracks in the very foundations of the regime of which we can only see the very surface. With a society primarily made up of young people who are educated but without hope, a powerful identity crisis, a corrupt and precarious economy that relies on international aid and alliances, and a tribal social structure that is less and less compelling for its members, it is increasingly complicated to determine how much longer the regime’s traditional strategy, based on defensive liberalization and a discourse of fear, will be able to contain the no-longer-so-latent demands for greater democracy within a framework of stability. The political situation of a country in which nothing ever seems to happen is now defined by uncertainty.

References


Lebanon: A Country of Three Crises

Since it was founded in the early 1920s, Lebanon has brought 18 ethno-religious communities under a single political roof. Unfortunately, at a time when identity politics are dividing the world, this message of conviviality that the Land of Cedars might deliver is struggling to survive. At the economic and social level, Lebanon is plagued by exclusionary dynamics, due to widespread poverty and mass unemployment, and the risk of financial collapse is real. Politically, the way the country is organized hinders the emergence of public policies that could actually improve this state of affairs. First, geopolitical conditions would have to stop complicating the country’s proper political and economic functioning. Poverty, political immobility and geopolitical interference are thus all linked in Lebanon.

A Financial and Socio-Economic Crisis

Lebanon is reputed to have one of the highest debts in the world. In February 2018, the IMF published an alarmist report on the country’s economy and finances, forecasting a debt of 180% of GDP by 2023, versus slightly over 150% at present, if major reforms were not undertaken. The institution was also concerned by the weak growth in diaspora deposits, which, to date, have allowed the Lebanese pound to remain pegged to the dollar and not collapse. Beyond this financial risk, the entire economic and social context is troubling, especially the poverty and unemployment. In 2015, 35% of Lebanese households were considered poor and unemployment was estimated at 25% of the population. President Aoun even referred to 46% unemployment in 2018. The self-immolation of George Zreik on 7 February 2019 outside his children’s school, the tuition for which he could no longer afford, caused an uproar in a country whose population is overwhelmed by the high cost of living.

This situation is certainly not new. Lebanon has been subjected to many political vicissitudes, which partly explain its high indebtedness and the economic slump. The real economic boom it experienced after its independence in 1943, for which it came to be known as “the Switzerland of the Middle East,” was followed by 15 years of civil war that destroyed the country and dismantled its economy, to the sole benefit of the political militias, true criminal enterprises. The end of the civil war, in 1990, was marked by continued Syrian occupation, which had a heavy impact on the Lebanese economy (predation, deterrence of investment). The same thing happened in South Lebanon, occupied by Israel until 2000. Following the departure of the Syrian troops in April 2005, Israel, which had left the south in 2000, returned by air in the summer of 2006 to massively destroy the country’s transport infrastructure. Since that “33-day war,” the civil war in Syria, which broke out in 2011, has displaced some 1.5 million Syrian refugees to Lebanon, with the ensuing deleterious effects for the economy and public finances.

However, whilst that string of hardships has had a strong impact on Lebanon, the choice of growth model and the level of corruption of part of the country’s political and economic elite likewise have their share of the blame for this state of crisis. The free-market model, adopted at independence, which minimizes taxes to encourage service companies (banks, business, insurance, etc.), has undermined the pro-
productive, agricultural and industrial sectors, which are penalized by the weak budget support and tariff protections. Furthermore, the practice of high interest rates, designed to provide incentives for the diaspora to invest their savings in the country’s banks, deter investment in these sectors, which are often less profitable than others. Similarly related to the free-market model, the insufficient tax revenue has prevented the construction of a real public sector (schools, universities, hospitals, etc.), and these services are largely still left in the hands of the private sector.

All of this results in blatant inequalities. First, at the territorial level, the country is sharply divided: the more prosperous commercial services sector is found primarily in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, whilst the highly marginalized productive sectors affect the more peripheral regions (Bekaa, Akkar, South Lebanon). This hardly has the best effect in terms of national integration, as some communities are concentrated there. However, given the imbalance at the territorial level, it is no surprise that social development is also uneven. According to the World Inequality Lab, in 2017, the wealthiest 1% of the Lebanese population accounted for 23% of national income and owned 40% of the country’s wealth, making it one of the most unequal countries in the world. In these conditions, it is hardly surprising that a large part of society has difficulty accessing basic needs (housing, energy and food). Nor is poverty the only barrier to accessing these goods; corruption also plays an important role, especially in the production of electricity, which is considered amongst the most expensive in the world.

Political Immobilism

All of this calls for major reforms, but Lebanon is stymied by political immobilism. Whilst politics, understood as political rivalries, is omnipresent, public policy often remains weak in critical areas, such as health, education, the environment and agriculture. This political paradox stems, in particular, from the current political regime. The choice of consociationalism, that is, of a political confessionalism established to prevent any hegemonic drift of one community over the others, has largely impeded decision-making processes since independence. First, the governing troikas (the President of the Maronite Republic, the Sunni Prime Minister, and the Shiite Speaker of the National Assembly) do not always share the same programme, with all the risks of gridlock that entails. Additionally, the Council of Ministers itself functions more as a venue for clashes between political poles than a place for consultation and decision-making. According to the political scientist Nawaf Salam, “Ministers, engaged in fierce competition for services and benefits, rarely feel bound by the constitutional principle of collective responsibility. In fact, in the Taif period, ministers on multiple occasions publicly criticized the composition of the cabinet to which they belonged, condemned the positions taken by their colleagues, disapproved of the Prime Minister’s actions, denounced the cabinet’s overall orientation and even boycotted its meetings for a period of time without feeling any need or obligation to resign – or being forced to do so.”

In addition to these weights on governance, there are recurring political vacuums. Between May 2014 and November 2016, Lebanon did not have a President of the Republic; likewise, from 2007 to 2008. Similarly, it took almost 10 months after the legislative elections of May 2018 for Lebanon to form a very fragile government.

Every time, the appointment processes give rise to tough negotiations between the various Lebanese leaders, especially as their political agendas are partially influenced by regional actors, in particular, Saudi Arabia and Iran, which are the current “godfathers” of the Lebanese political arena.

Geopolitical Weight

Since independence, the political arena has been exposed to external winds, often ill and destabilizing ones. As early as 1949, the Lebanese journalist George Naccache expressed his pessimism at what he con-

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sidered an identity divide within the country, with the ensuing consequences in terms of submission to external interference. At the time, that schism separated those who wanted an independent Lebanon backed by the West from those who championed a Lebanon that looked to Syria and the Arab world. “Two negations will never make a nation,” he wrote.

This assertion has regularly played out in many tragic episodes. The brief war of 1958 was the first, with US support for the staunchly pro-Western President Chamoun, who sought to keep his country far from the winds of Arabism blowing, especially, from Egypt. Nasser was then at the peak of his power and numerous Lebanese Muslim leaders wanted the Land of Cedars to join the United Arab Republic (UAR) with Egypt and Syria. Another example: when, in the early 1970s, the Palestinians, after having been chased from Jordan (the Black September episode), asserted themselves in the Lebanese political arena, this internal polarity was quickly rekindled until it ultimately erupted, in 1975, in a civil war between pro-Palestinian Lebanese and Lebanese committed to the country’s sovereignty.

We know how much this war benefitted neighbouring Syria, which has never really accepted that the French separated it from Lebanon in the early 1920s. In 1976, Syria saw an opportunity, in the invitation of certain Lebanese leaders, to take control of a large part of Lebanon, including the ports of Beirut and Tripoli. Throughout the 15-year civil war, Damascus thus pursued a flip-flopping policy, backing some militias against others, without any long-term loyalty to anyone. It was not so much concerned with its clients’ loyalty as with the possibility of dividing so as better to rule.

Far from distancing Damascus from Lebanon, the end of the civil war strengthened its presence with US consent. Washington thus rewarded the Assad regime for having participated in the international coalition against Iraq, which tried to annex Kuwait in August 1990. Until 2005, Syria took advantage of this opportunity to unburden itself of its excess labour, further using its Lebanese go-betweens to develop a criminal economy. Syria orchestrated all this with the help of a very dense security and military apparatus, helmed by the head of the intelligence services, a true authoritarian governor based in Anjar in Bekaa. Beyond political gridlock and the economic plundering suffered by Lebanon, it also fuelled inter-community discord, as the Shiite parties massively supported it, whilst the Christians were mostly inclined against it.

Since its forced departure in 2005, following the UN resolution of 3 September 2004 and the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, of which it was accused, the two sides – pro-Syrian and anti-Syrian – have continued to face off, the latter having grown to include the vast majority of Sunnis. Although the massive Israeli attacks in July and August 2006 brought the Lebanese communities back together, it was short-lived. In May 2008, clashes between anti-Syrian Sunnis from Saad Hariri’s Future Movement and pro-Syrians, mainly Shiites from Hezbollah and Amal, gave the lie to this temporary internal peace. The civil war in Syria likewise interfered in the Lebanese political arena, especially since, from June 2013, the Shiite Hezbollah would intervene directly alongside Bashar al-Assad against various Sunni rebel groups. Beyond the link from Lebanon to Syria, the links to Saudi Arabia and Iran have also, and especially, been at play for many years, with Riyadh supporting the anti-Assad Lebanese faction and Tehran supporting the pro-Damascus one. Thus, Saudi Arabia has made the Hariri clan its proxy in Lebanon, first, through Rafik and, then, following his assassination on 14 February 2005, through his son Saad, who has intermittently served as Prime Minister. However, believing that he had lowered his guard against Iran since becoming Prime Minister in 2016, the Saudi powers did not hesitate to detain him in the Saudi capital in November 2017, before releasing him in the face of international and Lebanese pressure. In the slow birth of the government, between May 2018 and February 2019, Riyadh had no choice but to let him become Prime Minister again, despite his softening towards Iran, the pro-Syrian clan in Lebanon, and even Syrian power, which emerged reinforced from the civil war. This evolution highlights Iran’s supremacy in the Land of Cedars and, especially, that of its proxy, Hezbollah.

This linkage of Lebanese political life with external dynamics, whilst not new, is probably not the best omen in terms of political sovereignty and, especially, public policy, which has been left to languish in the country for too long.
Israel and the Politics of Entrenchment

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Israel's Illiberal Turn

The 9 April 2019 Israeli elections resulted in a tie between the two leading parties. The centre-right Likud, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and its challenger, the centre-left Blue and White party, headed by former IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz, each secured 35 seats. However, the balance between the political blocs within the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, is tilted heavily towards the centre-right bloc. Netanyahu and his potential coalition partners won 65 of the 120 available Knesset seats while the centre-left parties secured only 55.1 The election result was significant, particularly given the string of corruption allegations implicating Netanyahu. On 28 February 2019, less than six weeks before polling day, the attorney general, Avichai Mendelblit, announced that Netanyahu was facing charges of bribery and breach of trust in connection to three cases, pending a public hearing.2 Netanyahu responded with an effective campaign to counter these allegations, arguing that they were part of a witch-hunt orchestrated by the media and the Prime Minister’s political rivals. This was not the only factor explaining the success of Likud in the recent elections. Another reason was Israel’s impressive economic performance under the Netanyahu-led governments. According to a 2018 OECD report, Israelis were “more satisfied with their lives than the residents of most other OECD countries,” while the Israeli economy has continued to record “remarkable” macroeconomic and fiscal performance.3 Nevertheless, the centre-right bloc’s election victory was attributable mostly to a shift to the right of the Israeli political centre-ground. Since the 2015 elections, this shift has consolidated with Netanyahu presiding over the most right-wing government in the history of the State of Israel. A string of laws, passed since 2015, reflect the government’s view that democracy is synonymous with unchecked majority rule and the government’s opposition to judicial review and the protection of minority rights. This illiberal trend was reflected most strongly when, on 19 July 2018, the Jewish nationhood law was passed by the Knesset as a basic law, meaning that it becomes part of the country’s constitutional foundation. The law’s text, which makes no mention of the word “equality” – a crucial ingredient of “democracy,” which is similarly not stated – is unequivocal. Plainly and simply, it asserts that the Jewish people have the exclusive right to self-determination in the State of Israel. This exclusionary terminology stands in stark contrast to Israel’s declaration of independence, which recognizes the equality of all the state’s citizens “without distinction of religion, race, or sex.”4 In addition, Arabic was demoted to a “special language” from being one of the official lan-

4 The Israeli Declaration of Independence can be accessed at the Knesset’s official website, https://main.knesset.gov.il/About/Occasion/Pages/IndDeclaration.aspx, last accessed 20 February 2019.
guages alongside Hebrew. The law demonstrates the long-standing view of Prime Minister Netanyahu and his coalition partners that Israel is a Jewish state and a democratic state – in that order. The largely secular and progressive version of Israel that once captured the world’s imagination has been dealt a very serious, possibly mortal, blow.

The law demonstrates the long-standing view of Prime Minister Netanyahu and his coalition partners that Israel is a Jewish state and a democratic state – in that order

A Foreign Policy of Entrenchment

Benjamin Netanyahu is currently the longest-serving Prime Minister in the history of the State of Israel. Netanyahu’s recent decade in power has been marked indelibly by what came to be known as the Arab uprisings. From the outset, Netanyahu portrayed the uprisings as an epic struggle between “good and evil.” Iran and the Islamist groups, argued Netanyahu, were leading the Middle East region into “medieval barbarism” and turning it into “a dark, savage, and desperate Middle East.” He argued that Israel, on the other hand, “stood out as a towering beacon of enlightenment and tolerance.” This black and white view of the Arab uprisings had significant implications for Israel’s negotiations with the Palestinians. Prior to the Arab uprisings, Benjamin Netanyahu, although grudgingly, had conceded the need for a Palestinian state, in a speech delivered at Bar Ilan University. However, eight years into the uprisings, Netanyahu has been instrumental in undermining the two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians and, more broadly, the principle of exchange of land for peace. As the Israeli broadsheet, Ha’aretz, reported, in February 2016, Netanyahu rejected a proposal made by the then US Secretary of State, John Kerry, for a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinians. Crucially, the proposal submitted to Netanyahu was commensurate with the Prime Minister’s own conditions for a deal, in three key respects: agreement would be based on recognizing Israel as a Jewish state; the Palestinian State would be demilitarized; and Israel would receive security assurances from the US.

More recently, the Israeli government has been active in promoting the Trump Administration’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and to recognize Israel’s authority over the Golan Heights. This has rendered extremely low any prospect of renewing a peace process with Syria and the Palestinians on the basis of land-for-peace – an integral part of Israeli foreign policy prior to Netanyahu’s rise to power. This shift is entirely commensurate with Likud’s foreign policy towards the Middle East since the return of Netanyahu to power, a policy that could be described as entrenchment. In line with this foreign policy of entrenchment, Israel will explore peace with the Arab world only in exchange for peace, not territory; will continue to rely on its iron wall of military force rather than prioritizing diplomacy and negotiations; and will maintain the Palestinians under occupation by strengthening its grip on the West Bank. To some extent, Netanyahu’s approach has been vindicated, since the twin threat posed by Iran and radical Islamist movements to Arab states has facilitated closer Arab relations with Israel. Netanyahu

has become the first Israeli Prime Minister since 1996 to make an official visit to Oman, a country with no diplomatic relations with Israel, where he met the country’s leader, Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, on 27 October 2018. Concurrently, Israeli and Saudi officials have been open about the covert cooperation between their two states. In January 2019, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi confirmed that Egypt’s military cooperation with Israel had reached unprecedented levels. Indicatively, Israel and Egypt jointly imposed a 12-year siege over the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas. Although Israel and Hamas have engaged in several skirmishes during this period, the Islamic Resistance Movement has failed to harness Arab government support for its conflict with Israel.

The notion of common values, based on democracy and human freedoms, with the US and the EU, its traditional allies, is questionable given the deepening occupation of the Palestinians

A Wondrous Decade?

Ostensibly, Israel’s foreign policy of entrenchment record warrants the claim made by Benjamin Netanyahu that Israel has experienced “a wondrous decade.” In addition to Israel’s foreign policy record in the Middle East, Netanyahu points to its stronger relations with the EU, which remains its largest trading partner, with total trade with the EU amounting to approximately €36.2 billion in 2017. The Prime Minister also celebrated Israel’s burgeoning diplomatic and economic relations with China and India and “the further consolidation of our strong alliance with the US.” At the same time, he conveniently glossed over some inconvenient truths. His foreign policy of entrenchment has deepened Israel’s occupation of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which has entered its 52nd year. Despite Netanyahu’s claims that a new Arab-Israeli axis is in the making, so far it has yet to come to fruition. The peace with Egypt and Jordan remains merely a strategic peace between narrow security elites, with wide swaths of the societies in both countries still utterly opposed to normalization. The Gulf countries, despite the clear threat they face from Iran, refuse to normalize relations with Israel until it resolves its conflict with the Palestinians. Meanwhile, Iran continues to expand in the Middle East, under the auspices of Russia; an expansion that Israel is incapable of halting using military means alone. Amid this uncertain regional environment, Israel’s long-term relations with powers beyond the region seems indeterminate. The notion of common values, based on democracy and human freedoms, with the US and the EU, its traditional allies, is questionable given the deepening occupation of the Palestinians. Thus, the short-term gains of “entrenchment” may pose grave threats to Israel in the longer run.

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The Triple Palestinian Dilemma

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The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a complex one. Its origins, the nature of the Zionist settlement effort and, later, the particularities of the State of Israel, the duration of the conflict, the international community’s incapacity to force a resolution in accordance with international law and the massive regional and international impact it has caused are elements that set it apart from other conflicts.

Today, however, Palestinian leaders are facing a particularly difficult and delicate situation that appears to be the precursor of a reformulation of the Palestinian question, just as were the catastrophe (nakba) in 1948, the occupation in 1967 or the launch of the peace process in 1993. The Palestinians are faced with three interrelated quandaries: continue with or abandon the Oslo parameters, opt for statehood or resistance, and reformulate their relationship with the international community.

Doubts over the Current Validity of the Oslo Parameters

In 1993, a sui generis process was set in motion aimed at resolving the longstanding conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinians. The Declaration of Principles and the Rabin and Arafat handshake in Washington raised many hopes. Its singularity - being gradual and based on the generation of mutual trust, untethered from the United Nations, with a bilateral approach, without mediators and without clear end objectives - was accepted as being the price to pay to resolve the extraordinary complexity of a frozen conflict. The subsequent years saw the slow Israeli withdrawal from major Palestinian towns and cities, the formation of an interim Palestinian Authority and the signing of successive partial agreements, all of which had to contend with crises, tensions and sabotage. The international community accompanied this process with political and financial support.

However, when the interim period came to an end, in 1999, the result painted a grim picture. Israel had skillfully exploited the situation. On the international panorama it had succeeded in undoing the direct and indirect boycott and further normalized its foreign relations. It had also signed a peace agreement with Jordan and withdrawn from South Lebanon. As regards its condition as occupier of Palestine, it obtained crucial advantages using the bilateral nature of the negotiations and its asymmetry in relation to its opponent: it shirked its economic responsibilities as an occupying force, limited the withdrawal to the most populated urban centres, withholding more than 60% of the West Bank, continued with its settlement efforts to strengthen its position in the future negotiation on the final statute, furthered its economic dominion over the West Bank and Gaza, intensified the judaization of Jerusalem, maintained control of the external borders and laid the foundations for a regime of separation, reinforcing segregation and restricting mobility. The Camp David Summit (July 2000), in which Israel hoped the Palestinians would accept the situation as definitive, exposed the failure of the whole experiment.

Since then (and that was 19 years ago) the peace process has slowly fizzled out and dissolved, but there has not been a regression to the previous situation. There are no longer negotiations; cooperation is limited to the area of security and one-off financial issues. There is a Palestinian Authority in the occupied territories that nobody wants to disappear, sus-
tained largely by the international community. Today, the reality is radically different to what it was in 1993; fruit of the intense settlement construction of the last 25 years, the West Bank has become an Israeliized territory with Palestinian enclaves. For its part, Gaza is a distant and radically different reality; under siege and blockade since 2007, it has become an enormous prison in which a dignified life is no longer possible. Today, neither Palestinians nor Israelis believe in the Oslo parameters anymore. The only parties apparently still pushing for them are European diplomats. The experience of the nineties made it very clear to the Palestinians that Israel will never agree to surrender what it gained by force in 1967, nor to complete its withdrawal from the West Bank or accept a fair solution for the refugees. Its sole ambition was to shirk its obligations as an occupier and seek acknowledgement and legalization of events that had already taken place. Israel continues with its settlement efforts by other means, in the hope that the Palestinians will eventually be too exhausted to resist and will leave the area of their own accord. In turn, the Israelis have found the Palestinians unready to be docile and passive victims. They cling tightly to their land, bent on attaining their own viable and sovereign state and finding a fair solution for the 5.5 million refugees.

Today, neither Palestinians nor Israelis believe in the Oslo parameters anymore. The only parties apparently still pushing for them are European diplomats. On different occasions the Palestinians have stated they feel no obligation to comply with commitments made in 1993 and successive agreements. They consider Israel to have failed to fulfil its obligations and that their unilateral measures (like the construction of the wall), unremitting settlement construction and use of violence have nullified the agreements in letter and spirit. In fact, Oslo’s institutional architecture has disappeared; reduced to coordination on security (an obligation imposed by certain donors, in particular Washington). The Quartet itself, which tried to reactivate the talks, no longer makes any sense. The lack of a negotiating framework has produced an anomalous situation and is a source of continuous tension and clashes. Three dynamics coexist - Israel, the authorities in Ramallah and the government of Gaza - and there are almost no coordination mechanisms and no joint roadmap to resolve the situation. Various international incentives (European among others) have tried to reactivate talks within the Oslo parameters. Whether because of Israel’s refusal to participate or Palestinians’ deeply-held scepticism, they have all been unsuccessful. Today, the parties involved, particularly the Palestinian leadership, the international community and the United Nations, are faced with the challenge of formulating an alternative to Oslo. New parameters are needed that have learnt from the failed experiences of the past; based on international law and including guarantees.

Statehood or Resistance

In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was created, a national liberation movement that brought together most of the existing political organizations and which quickly gained legitimacy among the population, as well as international recognition, like other similar movements of the era. General Assembly Resolution 3070 (1973), which recognized the right of colonial peoples to use all means at their disposal, including armed struggle, made explicit mention of Palestine. In 1974, the organization was granted observer status in the United Nations. The PLO acted as a classical national liberation movement, and, with the support of other states, combined resistance with its political and diplomatic struggle, and even developed pre-state institutions in exile. The PLO adapted its strategy based on developments internally and internationally. In the mid-seventies, it accepted the irreversibility of the State of Israel and that its Palestinian state project would have to be restricted to the West Bank and Gaza. In 1988, Palestinian independence was declared, essentially as a symbolic act as it could not exercise control over the territory. The 1993 agreements marked a transcendental historic commitment for the Palestinians, although there was not total consensus. The PLO agreed to temporarily renounce its own practice as a national liberation movement to start acting as a state, despite the Palestinian Authority being formally just an interim admin-
Administrative entity. The “peace for land” formula meant replacing armed struggle with political dialogue, in exchange for the Israeli withdrawal and the gradual creation of institutions that would become state institutions after five years. This logic even led the Palestinian Authority to become a guarantee of Israeli security as it took on security competences and agreed to persecute groups that did not give up resistance.

Three dynamics coexist - Israel, the authorities in Ramallah and the government of Gaza - and there are almost no coordination mechanisms and no joint roadmap to resolve the situation

Formally, the PLO continues to exist and represents all Palestinians, but it has opted to prioritize political negotiation and the preparation of an independent state. Against all logic, however, this state-building effort is being made before reaching a definitive peace deal. Rhetorically, the PLO has not given up its legitimate resistance, but has put it on hold. Acting as a state means not resorting to violence, negotiating and respecting commitments. At the same time, other Palestinian political forces consider that the resistance is legitimate and must be upheld, especially when the structural violence of the occupation is a daily reality, with recurrent Israeli military offensives, continued repression and more than 6,000 Palestinian political prisoners. The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) is not the only political group, although it is the most visible; a large part of Palestinian public opinion is based on the idea that resistance cannot be renounced and is one of the few levers they have available to them.

Since 2010, the government in Ramallah has opted for a strategy of strengthening statehood and internationalization. It calls itself the State of Palestine and behaves like a state. It has deployed a successful diplomatic offensive to achieve international recognition from more than 136 countries, has undersigned treaties and has joined various international bodies. However, it continues to be a quasi-state, with only some of the necessary characteristics: it does not have effective sovereignty over its territory, does not have competences over a large part of the population, its institutions are partially effective and depend on international aid, and a significant number of countries with international clout, including those in Europe, will only recognize a Palestinian state if there is an agreement with Israel. In sum, statehood is not even supported by many of Palestine’s supposed allies. To this we should add the lack of democratic legitimacy and its authoritarian practices (HRW, 2018). That is why many Palestinian voices bring into question the relevance of maintaining the illusion of a quasi-state of this nature, if this also means repressing and disabling the resistance, a legitimate right of any occupied people.

Conciliating statehood and resistance seems an impossible exercise. The PLO eclipsed and replaced by the Palestinian government in Ramallah has not assumed the task of defining the formula that can make both strategies compatible with one another. The beleaguered government in Gaza, turning to pragmatism and moderation in order to survive, is also incapable of doing this. And this is where one of the most significant phenomena of recent years comes into the equation. Since the middle of the last decade, different initiatives of peaceful popular resistance, usually at the local level, have taken shape, faced with the expropriations, the wall or to rebuild links between Palestinians that live in different areas (outside of the territory, in the occupied areas or in Israel). Between 30 March and 15 May 2018, the Gaza Strip was the stage for the Great March of Return against the siege. This was a large-scale demonstration staged by the people of Gaza which was brutally repressed with military means (more than 280 deaths and 6,000 bullet wounds) and which was closely covered by all international media. This protest was the expression of a dynamic that today characterizes the Palestinian political camp: a new generation of Palestinians have taken the political initiative and are demanding the urgent reunification of the two Palestinian authorities, fighting for the rights of refugees, condemning the apartheid in Israel and demanding a new direction in government strategy.

In 1987, the first Intifada brought the Palestinian rejection of the occupation and the need to end it to the public eye. Today, new protests from areas outside of the stagnant PLO and the traditional political formations reveal a widely-held desire for a new Palestinian political strategy which combines statehood and resistance.
Trump's Disruptive Policy and the Paralysis of the International Community

The Palestinians know they are weak and are calling for Israel to come under international pressure, but their confidence in the outside world is waning considerably. The lack of a firm and coherent commitment from the international community has been compensated with massive financial aid that has allowed the Palestinian Authority to survive, and has also supported a counter-insurgency statehood strategy. Since 2011, international attention has turned towards the processes of political change in other countries in the region, their descent into war and the humanitarian consequences. Palestine slipped into the background and Israel made the most of the situation to continue settlement construction and wage various wars against Gaza.

Trump's policy as of 2017 has brought a new element to the scene. Washington has always been a key actor in this conflict, a strategic ally to Israel and also an important partner of the Palestinians since Oslo. In these past two years, the Trump Administration has deployed its interventionist and punitive diplomacy, aligning with Israel and announcing a radically novel proposal, pompously named, the deal of the century. To win over the Israelis and defeat the Palestinians, Washington has taken measures which have exasperated the problems and generated a cascade of collateral effects: the transfer of its embassy to Jerusalem, the reduction of bilateral aid to the Palestinian authorities, the suspension of its contributions to UNRWA, its withdrawal from the Human Rights Council and UNESCO and similar threats to other organizations who open their doors to Palestine, the closure of the PLO office in Washington…

Under the protection of this US position, Israel has announced a new annexation phase of the West Bank. To this is added the notable rapprochement between Israel and a number of conservative Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt), uniting in their shared opposition to Iran. The announced US proposal promises not to deliver. Some of the elements it will supposedly comprise (the legalization of annexations, redefinition of borders, infrastructure and areas of economic development paid for by the international community) are unacceptable for the Palestinians and for neighbouring Arab countries. In all likelihood, when it is presented it will generate a unanimous counter-response, paving the way to an uncertain scenario. A group of former European foreign ministers have already come forward (The Guardian, 14 April 2019) and sounded the alarm, in a letter concerning the risks of a proposal that will end in an apartheid regime and make a viable Palestinian state impossible. In other words, it will effectively represent a death blow to the spirit of Oslo. They also state that “in situations in which our vital interests and fundamental values are at stake, Europe must pursue its own course of action.”

So, the Palestinians’ third dilemma is connected with this area of external support, which is essential but contradictory: set conditions or give in to the pressure and remain dependent on an economic aid that serves as a pretext for donors to shirk their obligations and responsibilities. Palestine’s traditional allies either have their hands tied or lack the political will to offer the necessary support. Europe is absent, paralyzed by internal strife and incapable of building enough consensus to take an initiative in this conflict. And, for the time being, other increasingly relevant actors in the Middle East, like China and Russia, do not seem willing to get involved.

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India Takes the Arab and Mediterranean Markets by Storm

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Since independence, the Arab countries have focused on Europe, signing trade agreements with the European Economic Community (EEC) and, later, cooperation, partnership or neighbourhood agreements with the EU. In 2017, the EU accounted for nearly 50 per cent of all Arab countries’ trade and nearly 60 percent of the Maghreb countries’ trade. Total trade reached a record $318 billion (€250 billion) in 2017, making Europe the Arab countries’ largest trading partner and turning the Arab countries into a captive market, in which, that same year, the EU had an estimated trade surplus of €74 billion.

Today, the EU’s privileged situation is under serious threat from newcomers to the Arab markets: China and India. Indeed, the Chinese have been making remarkable strides in the Arab markets since the early 1990s, with trade increasing from just $10 billion in 1990 to $250 billion in 2017 and expected to top $300 billion by 2025. But whilst the Arab media have been focussing on the new economic relations between China and the Arab countries, another Asian country has been nibbling away larger and larger shares of the Arab and Mediterranean markets, namely, India. With nearly $140 billion in trade with the Arab countries in 2017, India is now the third most important player, after the EU and China. This article aims to analyse this inexorable rise of India and its recent penetration of the Arab and Mediterranean markets.

India and the Arab Countries

From the start, India’s relations with the Arab countries were marred by the Arab Muslim countries’ support for Pakistan in the wars of 1947 and 1949. Not only did the Arab countries support Pakistan’s independence, they also stand behind it on the issue of Kashmir. Nevertheless, this did not prevent India from participating in the Bandung Conference (18-24 April 1955), alongside many Arab countries, from condemning the tripartite (Franco-Anglo-Israeli) aggression against Egypt in 1956, from founding, on 1 September 1961, together with Nasser’s Egypt and Tito’s Yugoslavia, the Non-Aligned Movement, from fiercely supporting the Palestinian question, or from establishing diplomatic relations with the independent Arab countries, whilst refusing to establish relations with Israel until 1992. From 1947 to 2002, India’s relations with the Arab countries remained modest and limited to the import of oil, the immigration of Indian workers to Arab countries, particularly the Gulf countries, and the timid entry of Indian companies into Arab markets.

Oddly enough, the first official contact with the League of Arab States, in March 2002, was undertaken by the Hindu nationalist government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Since then, everything has accelerated: an Arab-Indian Cooperation Forum was set up, political

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consultations are held regularly, investment forums have been organized (the first in 2008), agreements have been signed, and visits, on both sides, have increased.

The Congress Party’s return to power in 2004 gave a boost to economic relations between India and the Arab countries, especially as India’s energy needs have become increasingly large. Between 2004 and 2014, trade between India and the Arab countries rose dramatically, to more than $100 billion.

The return of the Hindu nationalists to power, with Narendra Modi, in 2014, did little to hinder the relations. On the contrary, through a remarkable balancing act, Modi has managed to strengthen ties with the Arab countries whilst maintaining excellent relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia’s geopolitical rival, and, especially, to take India’s relations with Israel to an unprecedented level, regardless of the Arab countries’ reactions.

A staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause, India did not establish diplomatic relations with Israel until the end of the Cold War, in 1992. Relations remained timid until 2004. Modi’s election gave them new impetus, as witnessed by the first trip to Israel by an Indian president, Pranab Mukherjee, on 13 October 2015, and, especially, Modi’s own visit, in July 2017, as well as Benjamin Netanyahu’s trip to India in January 2018.

However, whilst Mukherjee made the trip to Ramallah in 2015, Modi did not bother to visit the Palestinian Authority on his trip to Israel in 2017. This was perceived by many Arab and Muslim countries, as well as by many Indians, as a “snub,” and it triggered a general outcry. Was it to make amends that Modi travelled to Ramallah on 10 February 2018 to meet with President Mahmoud Abbas? We will have to wait and see. Nevertheless, the fact remains that during his visit to the Palestinian Authority, Modi pledged $41 million in aid for health and education projects in occupied Palestine and showed great sensitivity to Palestinian rights, even quoting Mahatma Gandhi’s words from 1938: “Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English and France to the French.”

This balancing act was not without contradictions. In 2015, India abstained from a vote by the United Nations Human Rights Council concerning human rights violations by Israel in occupied Palestine, but in 2017 it voted against the US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, regardless of its American ally’s reaction.

Clearly, the Indians no longer want Palestine to be a thorn preventing them from consolidating their relations not only with the Arab countries, but also Israel. But they are no fools: whilst trade with Israel ($5 billion) accounted for just 1 per cent of India’s overall trade ($560 billion) in 2017, trade with the Arab countries ($140 billion) accounted for 20 per cent. And everyone knows that Indians have a taste for mathematics!

Thus, India has turned its gaze to the Arab countries. It is from these countries that India imports most of its oil and gas, and it is these countries that are home to a diaspora of more than 7 million Indian migrants, whose remittances to their country range from $30 to 40 billion each year. It is moreover in the Middle East and the Maghreb that Indian companies find considerable investment opportunities. India’s policy of opening up to West Asia (Modi’s “Go West” policy) has forged unbreakable ties between India and the Arab countries that the vagaries of the Palestinian, Iranian or Kashmiri questions can no longer strain. Particularly since the Arab countries themselves, especially the Gulf countries, see their interests swinging towards Asia in a sort of “Go East” policy. Meanwhile, the Maghreb countries remain focussed on the European Union. However, without intending to compete with European companies, public and, especially, private Indian companies are beginning to take a serious interest in them.

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Two Case Studies: The Rise of India from the Gulf to the Maghreb

With a population of 1.324 billion, an area of 2,273,190 square kilometres, and a gross domestic product of $2.4 trillion, today India is the world’s fifth-largest
economy, after the US, the EU, China and Japan. It is thus no wonder that India has emerged as an important trading partner for the Arab countries, with trade reaching $140 billion by the end of 2017. However, not all the Arab countries are equally important to this trade. The Gulf countries clearly occupy a prominent position in the deployment of India’s trade strategy. In contrast, the Maghreb countries account for little more than a tenth of India’s total trade with the Arab countries as a whole.

**India and the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries**

With average growth of around 7 per cent, India needs to import a large share of the energy it consumes, as well as find new export markets and investment opportunities. For numerous reasons, the Gulf region has become a major focus of Indian trade strategy since the early 1990s. Not only does the region supply India with oil and gas, it also attracts many Indian investments in a variety of sectors and moreover hosts nearly 7 million Indian workers.

Amongst the Gulf countries, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ranks first. With a population of 2 million and foreign trade that, at $569 billion ($298 billion in exports and $271 billion in imports), is almost equal to India’s, it is the second largest exporter to India (11.5 per cent of the total) and the third largest importer (5.4 per cent).

And yet, throughout the Cold War, trade between the two countries was just a trickle. The pro-American UAE was reluctant to foster relations with a country not only from the socialist camp but also in conflict with a Muslim country, namely, Pakistan, which had trained the Emirati military forces. The end of the Cold War unlocked the floodgates, and the UAE opened its doors wide to Indian investors and workers, welcoming nearly 3 million of them. Meanwhile, trade saw meteoric growth, exceeding $60 billion in 2014 and standing at nearly $65 billion today.

At the same time, relations between the UAE and Pakistan have soured somewhat since 2015, following Pakistan’s refusal to participate in the Saudi-led “Arab military coalition” in its standoff with the Houthi rebels in Yemen and, especially, since the January 2017 suicide attack in Kandahar, Afghanistan, that killed five Emirati diplomats. Unrestricted by its former alliance with Pakistan, the UAE is now free to pursue and develop a productive relationship with India that offers several advantages: market diversification, the ability to take advantage of the huge investment opportunities in the Indian market, where the UAE is now the tenth-largest investor with investments totalling $8 billion (in 2016), and access to an inexhaustible supply of skilled labour.

Already substantial in 1992, cooperation between India and the UAE received a major boost with Prime Minister Modi’s arrival to power in 2014. In 2017, the two countries signed a “comprehensive strategic partnership.”

Like China, India has managed to maintain excellent relations with the UAE without renouncing its friendship with Iran, which Modi visited to sign a “Transport and Transit Agreement” as part of an Indian project called the “International North-South Transport Corridor.” The project aims to connect the port of Bandar Abbas with Central Asia and is intended to be the Indian response to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor linking the Chinese province of Xinjiang to Pakistan’s Gwadar port.

Although larger than the UAE, Saudi Arabia is only India’s second-largest trading partner amongst the GCC countries. And yet their trade relations date back quite far (with the spice trade) and their political relations are well-established, as evidenced by Jawaharlal Nehru’s visit to Saudi Arabia in 1955, Indira Gandhi’s in 1982, and Manmohan Singh’s in 2010. Likewise, Ibn Saud, the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, visited India in November 1955. However, India and Saudi Arabia were on opposite sides during the Cold War, and that prevented them from developing significant economic relations.

With the end of the Cold War, relations accelerated, spurred by Saudi Arabia’s new market diversification strategy and India’s increased need for oil and gas. King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud’s 2006 visit to India gave a serious boost to cooperation. By 2007, trade had reached $16 billion, of which $13.4 billion

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5 Khaleej Times, 12 February 2018.
were Saudi exports. The evolution in trade was accompanied by a massive influx of Indian workers into the kingdom, who today number more than 1.5 million. At the same time, investments have risen dramatically, particularly in the fields of construction, telecommunications management, medicines and IT services.

In 2016, total trade stood at $26.7 billion, with a comfortable trade surplus for Saudi Arabia of $13.9 billion ($20.3 billion in exports versus $6.4 in imports). Although in 2013-2014 trade reached a record $39.2 billion, it was mainly due to soaring oil prices.

Since June 2017, India has found itself unwillingly caught up in a conflict beyond its control: the opposition between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. India has excellent relations with Qatar and is keen to “stay out of the fray” as it buys most of its gas from Qatar (62 per cent of India’s gas imports). Nor is its trade with the emirate negligible ($16.3 billion in 2016, $9.7 billion in Indian imports and $6.6 billion in exports).

Thus, just the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar account for nearly $100 billion in trade with India. If we factor in its trade with Bahrain ($1.2 billion), Kuwait ($6.2 billion), and Oman ($4.1 billion), the figure climbs to $111.5 billion, making the GCC countries India’s largest trading partner.

In addition to trade and the large Indian diaspora to which they play host, the GCC countries have become major investors in India, with an estimated stock, in 2014, of $3.2 billion. Whilst this total accounts for only 1.42 per cent of foreign investment in India, given the rapid progression of economic relations, the Gulf countries’ investment in the Asian country is likely to grow significantly in coming years.

*India and the Maghreb Countries*

Indians do not usually use the term “the Maghreb.” They prefer “North Africa,” which comprises the five Maghreb countries and Egypt. As early as the 1950s, India supported the independence movements in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, whilst the Egyptian leader Nasser and Indian Prime Minister Nehru were the linchpins of the Non-Aligned Movement.

During the Cold War, India remained active in the Non-Aligned Movement. In fact, it was in the context of the meetings of those countries, in New Delhi, that King Mohammed VI visited India, in 2001 and 2003. In 2015, King Mohammed VI travelled to India to participate in the third India-Africa Forum Summit (24 October-4 November 2015). His talks with the Indian authorities, on the sidelines of the summit, enabled the economic relations between the two countries to take off, as witnessed by the multiple visits on both sides, the most recent being that by Indian Foreign Minister Shri Salman Khurshid (30 January-1 February 2017). However, India’s relations with Morocco continue to be dominated by phosphates. In 2011, out of a total trade of $2 billion, Morocco had a trade surplus of $863 million. This is because India has become a major importer of phosphates. In 1999, the Indian company Chambal Chemicals and Fertilizers and the Office Chérifien des Phosphates launched the joint venture “Imacid” for the production of phosphoric acid. In 2005, Tata Chemicals became an investor in Imacid.

However, that is hardly the only Indian investment in Morocco. Tata Motors produces mini-buses in Morocco, whilst GEN Pact, Tata Consulting Services, Wipro, Infosys, IBM DA, KSH and Fire Stone (to name but a few) are involved in the production of software, IT services and information technology. In an entirely different sector, the Oberoi hotel group has also opened establishments in Morocco.

Whilst all these companies are attracted by the opportunities that the Moroccan market offers, they also aim to use Morocco as a platform for reaching European and African markets. At least, that is what an Indian Secretary of State said at the seminar “India and Morocco: Imperatives of Cooperation” held by the Society for Policy Studies on 10 April 2015.

Unfortunately, despite the old relationship, trade between the two countries has levelled off and even declined over the last decade, standing at $1.36 billion in 2014 and $1.42 billion in 2016. Whereas India’s relations with Morocco are dominated by phosphates, its relations with Algeria are dominated by oil and gas. Virtually all Indian energy companies have operations in Algeria: Indian Oil Corporation,ONGL Yidesh, Gafarat State Petroleum. In 2008, trade reached $2.14 billion. However, because of the collapse of oil prices beginning in 2014, it has fallen to just $1.48 billion, albeit with a surplus for India.

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Nevertheless, Algeria remains a key part of the Indian strategy to penetrate the Maghreb. Whether in the construction, engineering, computer, pharmaceutical or satellite sectors, Algeria offers broad opportunities for India’s private companies. Tunisia is not a priority target for Indian companies, given the country’s size. Indeed, India waited until 1976, 20 years after Tunisia’s independence, to open an embassy there. Indira Gandhi did visit the country in 1984, as did Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in 1992. However, since then the visits have been less frequent or limited to ministerial meetings, such as that by Shri E. Ahmed (5-7 November) in the wake of the Tunisian Spring.

Whereas India’s relations with Morocco are dominated by phosphates, its relations with Algeria are dominated by oil and gas.

Trade, too, has remained modest. In 2016, it fluctuated around $370 million, despite the existence of Tunisia-India Fertilizer SA (Tifert), a major joint venture launched in 2006, but which did not start production until 2013. In addition to phosphates, Indians are present in the electricity sector through the companies KEC International and Jyoti Structures.

As in Algeria, Indo-Libyan relations are centred on oil. Of the estimated trade in 2013, in the midst of the Libyan chaos, of $1.35 billion, oil accounted for the lion’s share. In this case, it is Indian public companies, specialized in energy, that operate in the country (BHEL, India Oil Corporation, Oil India, Onur and Viles). The few private companies are related to the pharmaceutical sector, such as United Tec and Sun Pharmaceutical, or construction and public works. It is no surprise that Libya is home to the largest number of Indian expatriates in the Maghreb (30,000 in 2013).

Egypt accounts for a surprisingly modest share of India’s trade with the Arab world, even though the political relations between the two countries are very old and rather warm. In 1955, India and Egypt signed a Treaty of Friendship, followed by a trade agreement in 1978. And yet, in 2005, trade stood at just over $1.2 billion, rising to $5.45 billion in 2013, before falling off again to $3.25 billion in 2016-2017. This was despite a stock of Indian investments in Egypt totalling nearly $3 billion and the presence in Egypt of more than 52 Indian companies, half of them in the textile and construction sectors.

In all, despite the presence of dozens of Indian companies in the North African countries, trade with these six countries stands at around $7.8 billion. Adding India’s trade with Sudan ($1.3 billion) brings the total figure to $9.1 billion, or one twelfth the amount of India’s trade with the GCC countries ($111 billion) and only one fifteenth the amount of its trade with the Arab countries as a whole ($140 billion).

General Conclusion

It is apparent from the above that the rise of India, following that of China, is undeniably one of the highlights of the 21st century. Not only has India become the third largest energy consumer, it has also become the third largest importer. India shares the same ambition with China: to open up to the Arab world as a whole, not only as a source of energy, but also as a source of financing, investment opportunities and, especially, insatiable markets. Trade shows this clearly: $250 billion in Chinese trade with the Arab countries and nearly $140 billion in Indian trade (2017).

However, India’s dealings with the Arab countries differ from China’s due to the involvement of its private companies, which, today, are the main agents of its commercial strategy and which act either by acquiring local companies to access local markets (Egypt or Algeria), by creating joint ventures with local companies (Morocco), or simply by implementing new activities (Jordan, Egypt or Tunisia and the Gulf countries).

India also differs from China in the size of the Indian diaspora in Arab countries, consisting of more than 7 million Indians, mainly in the Gulf countries. However, although India has seen remarkable growth in recent years, it is still far from competing with Chinese ambitions, especially the new Silk Roads project, or “Belt and Road Initiative,” in which it does not participate.
Washington will continue to have a significant impact on Mediterranean security, but not necessarily as a result of America’s European policies. The most substantial influence could come as a result of US efforts to stabilize the Greater Middle East.

**America and Europe**

There is a tendency to obsess about American presidential rhetoric and the swirl of partisan commentary as a means for interpreting US foreign policy and strategy. Such a focus obfuscates an understanding of American statecraft and defence. In contrast, the US National Security Strategy published in December 2017 has proven a far more accurate template for understanding American actions. Washington’s efforts have largely comported with the strategy. The President’s campaign rhetoric of “America first” was interpreted in various ways. Some suggested the US would become isolationist. Others argued the US President intended to make American policies wholly transactional, akin to big business deals. Still others viewed the pronouncement as disdain for traditional alliances. In practice, none of these interpretations have proven accurate.

Europe is a case in point. America’s current European policies reflect strong elements of continuity with previous presidential administrations, including continued support for the transatlantic community and NATO.

That there are underlying features of consistency in American policy regarding Europe is not surprising. The US is a global power with global interests and responsibilities. The exercise of that power is dependent on America’s interconnectedness to the world. The US needs to be present to safeguard its interests, as well as having the capacity to get to places where those interests are threatened. Three key strategic regions link the US to the world - Europe, the Middle East and Asia. For the trans-regional linkages to remain strong in and of themselves, the regions have to remain stable. It is in US interests that those regions continue to be peaceful and prosperous. Thus, the security and stability of Europe has long been and remains a vital interest of the United States. In turn, the US has long seen participation in NATO as the main American contribution to peace and stability in western Europe.

The list of reassuring measures the present administration has taken is long and illustrative. Actions include support for Georgia and Ukraine; the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI); increased bilateral defence planning and exercises; discussions over additional forward-basing of US forces in central Europe; and recent increased US naval activity in the Black Sea.

**Black Sea Security and the Mediterranean**

Of particular note in regards to the future security of the Mediterranean is the attention the US has given to the Black Sea. The US clearly regards Russian activities in the region with deep suspicion. The US government has concluded that Moscow’s military build-up and expansive diplomatic, political and economic efforts are intended to establish the Black Sea as a power projection platform for the Russian armed forces.
Mediterranean, the US and Great Power Competition

It is not surprising that the US government has shown increasing concern over Russian Black Sea activities and a growing interest in countering them. US strategy identifies two principal external threats to the peace and stability of Europe. They are the destabilizing influence of the Russian government in Moscow and the spillover of conflict, terrorism, and competition in the Middle East. Of the two, Moscow tops the list of US worries. The US strategy outlines a plan for dealing with Russia. That is not likely to change anytime soon. The prospects for significant shifts in Russian behaviour in the near term are dim. With the approaching 2020 national elections in the United States, many analysts are offering fresh thinking on what shifts the elections might bring. New ideas for dealing with Russia are becoming a cottage industry. Proposals range from ending NATO enlargement to new arms control initiatives, to ending sanctions and other trust and confidence building measures. The problem with all these initiatives is that they misdiagnose the problem. The problem is not US policy. The problem is an unyielding regime in the Kremlin. Moscow isn’t changing. Policies seeking to induce Moscow to act differently will inevitably fail. Therefore, the best policy remains to increasingly work to marginalize Russian influence on the West from deterring military aggression to undermining the influence of disinformation and active measures to marginalizing Russian energy dominance, corruptive practices and economic influence.

In concert with the American focus on renewed “great power” competition and concerns posed by Russia, the US is also increasingly concerned about Chinese influence in Europe

The Middle East and the Mediterranean

Rather than China and Russia policy, Middle East policy is probably more relevant to understanding the US impact on future Mediterranean security in the near term. As in Europe, this administration’s primary goal in the Middle East is to create a stable region. In the Middle East, the US sees two major threats - the destabilizing influence of Iran and the disruption and violence caused by transnational Islamism terrorism. How the US handles these challenges will have a significant impact on Mediterranean security. The most common vector for problems in the Greater Middle East is for the consequences to overflow across the sea into southern Europe. In the Middle East, the US has actively engaged to contain Iranian influence and defeat the physical territory controlled by ISIS. Both efforts have yielded significant results. The US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or Iran Deal, was part of the American effort to isolate and weaken the regime. The US also supported efforts to abate or limit Iranian surrogates including the Houthi rebels in Yemen, Hamas, Hezbollah and Shia militias in Iraq. Meanwhile, the US supported an aggressive campaign to destroy ISIS-territorial control in Iraq/Syria, as well as broadly supporting counter-terrorism operations in the region.
Yet, these efforts are at best a qualified success. Some of the most persistent problems have been exacerbated by US missteps. Others are stubbornly resistant to American influence. Geo-strategic headaches range from a debilitating war in Yemen to the unsettled relations of the Gulf Coast Countries, contentious relationships with Turkey, the frustrating lack of progress in the regions on human rights and economic freedom, and the uncertainty over Syria, refugees and illegal migration, as well as the persistent threat of transnational terrorism and Islamist fundamentalism. How the US address these could have a significant impact on the future security environment of the Mediterranean region.

US-Turkish Relations and Regional Security

One of the most consequential issues the US will have to address is its contentious relations with Turkey. As a member of NATO astride the access point from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean, it is difficult to overstate the importance of Turkey’s geostrategic position. Likewise, Turkey has a significant influence and impact on peace and security in the Greater Middle East. Tensions between Turkey, the United States and Europe pre-date the current regime in Ankara. For insistence, in the run-up to the Iraq War (2003), Turkey denied US forces an avenue of approach for the invasion. Long contentious negotiations over Turkey’s accession to the European Union have been another source of friction in the past. That said, without question, relations have been significantly further strained under the presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Several factors have exacerbated the difficulties of relations with Turkey. During his tenure, Erdogan has sought to balance relations with Western nations and Iran and Russia. Predictably, this has resulted in a heightening of mistrust among NATO allies. The US response to Erdogan has been measured. President Trump routinely exchanges phone calls with the Turkish President. The US President has also expressed an interest in expanding free trade with Turkey. On the other hand, the US has also threatened Turkey with tariffs and recently ended key trade preferences for the country. Perhaps the signature issue at present involves Turkey’s commitment to purchase the S-400 air defence system from Russia. The US has warned the Turkish government that employing this system involves grave security risks and jeopardizes Turkey’s participation in the F-35 fighter programme. Not only would the US not allow Turkey to procure planes, but the US would also end Turkey’s role in the aircraft’s production. In addition, Turkey would be open to US sanctions under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CATSA).

Several factors have exacerbated the difficulties of relations with Turkey. During his tenure, Erdogan has sought to balance relations with Western nations and Iran and Russia. Predictably, this has resulted in a heightening of mistrust among NATO allies. The US commitment to sustain US-Turkish relations despite the many differenc-
es and a growing bipartisan anti-Turkish stance in the US Congress, in addition to the increasing animosity towards Turkey among US-based human rights advocacy groups and think tanks.

Nevertheless, continued US engagement with Turkey is the right course for the US to take and this administration will, in all likelihood, seek to maintain constructive relations with Ankara. This is certainly the most efficacious course of action for promoting stability in the region. Whether this course is sustainable over time largely rests on how the Turkish President responds.

**US Engagement in Libya**

Another bellwether issue that will affect Mediterranean security, is US engagement in North Africa as part of its strategy for the Greater Middle East - in particular, the future of Libya. Libya is of concern as a gateway for illegal migration to Europe and as a target for Islamist extremism. While deals have been cut to mitigate some of these concerns in the near term, these solutions are not sustainable over time. There is scant European consensus on the way forward in Libya. The likelihood of strong external support for peace and reconciliation is grim without more active US engagement.

There are several reasons why it makes sense for the US to ramp up its engagement in Libya. One is oil. With the US pressuring countries to divest away from Iranian oil, getting more oil on the market ought to be a US priority. Libya has the capacity, with a more settled domestic situation, to significantly ramp up its production. A stable Libya would also be part of a more resilient firebreak, protecting the Middle East and Europe from the troubles in North Africa flowing north. It is in both the interests of the US and Europe for Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt to be as stable as possible and to have friendly and constructive relations among themselves.

While the US has yet to step up its diplomatic game and ramp up efforts to promote economic development and trade in the region, that is likely coming, in part as the US expands efforts to compete with Chinese and Russian influence in the region.

**The Way Forward**

In summary, a case could be made that the US is practicing an “indirect approach” to enhancing the security of the Mediterranean. By focusing on the destabilizing influence of Russia and China, addressing concerns about security competition in the Black Sea and most importantly dealing realistically in a sustained manner with the challenges of the Greater Middle East, the US has the potential to make a strong positive contribution to a better future for the region.

**Bibliography**


4 April 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Washington Treaty, the founding document of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). A time for celebration, but also a time for reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the alliance, and its readiness to confront the threats of the future from both within NATO and beyond its borders. As NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg noted in his speech in front of the United States Congress, the organization faces an unprecedented set of challenges, including a generational fight against terrorism, containing a more assertive Russia, competition with China and the changing nature of warfare in the digital age. Internally, NATO is threatened by the uncertainty of enduring American leadership, inadequate European defence strength and a drift from its core democratic values by some of its members.²

Within this context, the Mediterranean, or NATO’s southern flank, is of crucial importance and concern. It is a place where a lot of these external and internal challenges come together, testing both the relevance and unity of the alliance. It is also a place where NATO’s current and future role is ambiguous and contested, both by its members and by regional actors. Finally, it is a place where NATO’s partnerships will be put to the test, as they play a central role in an effective strategy South. This article will take a closer look at the current and future challenges that the Mediterranean security environment poses to the alliance, discuss the evolving strategy of NATO towards the region and how that strategy is perceived by regional stakeholders. It will argue that, to remain relevant in the future, NATO must put more energy and resources into its partnerships and focus on the Mediterranean Dialogue partnership, as well as on cooperation with the European Union and other regional and international organizations.³

Why the Mediterranean Matters

The Mediterranean space holds an enormous amount of challenges for NATO. Ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the war in Syria, the collapse of Libya, the risk of further state-breakings in the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel due to economic, social and political inequality, and climate change are among the factors that have contributed to a situation of durable chaos, which will be difficult for the alliance to keep at arm’s length. Under these conditions, NATO faces a set of diverse, interlinked challenges. Some are familiar, others new; some are from within the region, others from beyond its borders; and still others are looming on the horizon.

The fight against terrorism remains a core concern. Beyond the ongoing NATO-led combat operation...
in Afghanistan and the debate on whether and how to reconsider this mission, the alliance will be increasingly challenged by the foreign fighters’ phenomenon. Thousands of recruits from Europe, Russia, North Africa and the Middle East have travelled to Iraq, Syria and Libya, or have taken up arms with jihadist groups in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. As ISIS strongholds in Syria and Iraq have been progressively eliminated, these fighters will return home or travel to battlegrounds elsewhere. This process will produce a steady mutation in the nature and capabilities of terrorist networks across the Mediterranean region and NATO Member States. Migration also continues to be perceived as a major challenge and has increasingly driven the interest of the alliance European members in supporting NATO action in the Mediterranean. The traditional threat posed by ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Mediterranean still poses a risk, but much less than a decade ago. The exception is Turkey, which is affected by the situation in the Levant, where Iran’s capabilities and the spread of weapons to its proxies in Syria and Lebanon are an issue of major concern.4

The Mediterranean, is a place where NATO’s current and future role is ambiguous and contested, both by its members and by regional actors

A crucial feature of the Mediterranean security environment is the destabilizing presence of other external powers in the region, notably Russia. Russia’s military intervention in Syria, its engagement in Libya, Egypt and Algeria, its presence in the Levant and renewed naval presence in the Mediterranean suggest that confrontation with the West can not only happen in the East, but also in the South. And Russia is not the only actor with competing stakes in the Mediterranean. As NATO increasingly focuses its attention on the looming challenge of global competition with China, this country’s growing diplomatic and economic presence in the Mediterranean and Africa will become more of a priority for the alliance. The Gulf states and Iran play an increasingly relevant role in affecting Mediterranean stability, including the direct use of force in Syria, Iraq and Libya; the rivalry between Qatar and Saudi Arabia; and in the case of Iran, its influence on Shia communities within countries in the Maghreb.

What makes the Mediterranean especially problematic for NATO is that issues related to Mediterranean security challenge the cohesion of the alliance itself. Europe and the United States clash on the two fundamental pillars of Middle Eastern geopolitics – Iran and Palestine – and are actively trying to undermine each other’s actions in the region.5 Turkey is crucial for managing many of the security threats on NATO’s southern flank, but at the same time poses a challenge in itself. The US-Turkey crisis over the Syrian Kurdish People’s Protection Units in the fight against the Islamic State in Syria, coupled with Turkey’s purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defence system, have caused a serious rupture between the two NATO allies. A more existential threat is Turkey’s drift from NATO’s core values of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. These values, and the adherence of NATO allies to them, are fundamental for the alliance cohesion. The democratic backsliding in Turkey has posed the question of what the organization should do when its core values are attacked from within. And for now it does not have an answer.

Why NATO Struggles with Its Strategy South

Tackling these challenges will require strategy and actions that go beyond traditional crisis management operations and capacity building. For NATO today, an

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existential question is how to divide its resources and attention between the relatively simple but demanding problem of defence against an eventual Russian aggression in the East, versus a diffuse, but arguably more likely, set of threats in the South. Tackling this dilemma is further complicated by the fact that NATO’s role in the Mediterranean is challenged by individual alliance members, who question the comparative advantage of NATO action in the region against a backdrop of political and military engagement undertaken by its member states on a national and multilateral basis. NATO’s role is also challenged by regional stakeholders. There is a general uncertainty about the alliance aims in the South, and a sensitivity to questions of national sovereignty. Some partners retain images of NATO based on Cold War perceptions, others remain concerned about the aftermath of the intervention in Libya. In other cases, views of NATO are closely tied to perceptions of specific allies, above all the United States. Under these circumstances, it is worth considering how the organization sees its own role on the southern flank – and what its Mediterranean partners expect.

The fact that NATO struggles with its strategy South does not mean that it has not made efforts to develop one. The question of how a NATO strategy South should look like first emerged on the agenda of the Wales Summit in 2014, when an internal review process of the southern flank was launched with the purpose of better understanding the security environment in the region and determining appropriate reforms for NATO structures. This led to the adoption of a framework for the South at the 2016 Warsaw Summit. This framework provided a first step toward strengthening training, exercises and operations in the Mediterranean region, including the possibility of deploying the NATO Response Force, if needed. It also aimed to improve joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. After the Summit, NATO launched a new maritime operation, Sea Guardian, in order to carry out maritime security capacity building, provide support to maritime situational awareness and counter-terrorism, and help EU’s Operation Sophia in addressing migration issues in the central Mediterranean. In February 2017, a new Strategic Direction South (NSD-S) Hub was created, based at the Allied Joint Forces Command in Naples. The NSD-S Hub’s mission is to contribute to NATO’s situational awareness of the Mediterranean and adjacent areas and to better understand how to address them.

The democratic backsliding in Turkey has posed the question of what the organization should do when its core values are attacked from within. And for now it does not have an answer.

At the Brussels Summit in 2018, the alliance leaders declared the Hub fully operational and adopted a package for the South, outlining three core objectives: (1) to strengthen NATO’s deterrence and defence against threats emanating from the South; (2) to contribute to international crisis management efforts in the region; and (3) to help NATO’s regional partners build resilience against security threats. NATO leaders announced the launch of a non-combat training and capacity building mission in Iraq, continued commitment to their longstanding relations with Jordan and Tunisia, and support for the political process in Libya.

Why NATO Must Work More and Better with Partners

NATO’s evolving southern strategy has increasingly put emphasis on capacity building and partnerships, which suggests that its successful implementation will depend to a considerable degree on the effectiveness and legitimacy of its cooperation with countries in the region and other organizations. NATO’s Mediterranean partners’ interest in working with the organization on shared security concerns will be crucial. Since 1994, NATO has been engaged in political dialogue and practical cooperation with Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania, and Algeria (since 2000) under the Mediterranean Dialogue. This partnership has evolved significantly over more than
two decades, especially in the field of practical cooperation, which has intensified and become more tailored to the needs of individual countries. Research suggests that there is an opportunity for NATO to put the tools of the Mediterranean Dialogue at the core of its southern strategy, as regional partners have an interest in deeper engagement with NATO as an influential strategic actor, and as a practical contributor to their security needs. But to consolidate this interest, the alliance must urgently address two interrelated limitations from which the Mediterranean Dialogue – like other NATO partnerships – currently suffers: too little money and too little focus. Overall, less than one percent of NATO’s budget goes to partner programmes. The alliance must rely on member states’ national contributions, sometimes placed under a NATO flag, while most of them implement their own programmes. There is a need for a more systematic approach to surveying the range of these national projects to avoid duplication and promote alignment between these and NATO activities.

The alliance must urgently address two interrelated limitations from which the Mediterranean Dialogue currently suffers: too little money and too little focus

The Mediterranean should also be central to new joint NATO-EU initiatives. Both institutions have an interest in capacity building and security sector reform, and their list of strategic priorities is, essentially, shared. NATO should support the EU in areas where it has a comparative advantage rather than duplicating operations with similar objectives. Much more can be done also to share information between NATO and EU missions in order to improve crisis awareness and response times. In addition, other regional initiatives have the potential to contribute to Mediterranean security and could become more significant interlocutors for NATO in the years ahead. NATO should seek (deeper) partnerships with the African Union, the Arab League, the G5 Sahel and the Gulf Cooperation Council. These organizations could all benefit from NATO’s experience in building a political institution and framework for regional military cooperation. These partnerships would not have to replace NATO’s current Mediterranean Dialogue or bilateral partnerships, but over time could significantly increase the impact the alliance has beyond its borders.

To sum up: NATO faces a daunting set of different challenges on its southern flank. Its potential to effectively confront them is limited by the absence of a comprehensive strategy, negative public perceptions toward NATO action in the Mediterranean, and a lack of resources and focus from NATO members. Within this context, the organization will have to increasingly rely on its partners to guarantee its security vis-à-vis threats from the South. Compared to potential competitors, NATO still enjoys a strategic advantage in the Mediterranean, today and for the foreseeable future. But this strategic advantage can only be sustained by nurturing its partnerships. The alliance would therefore be well advised to invest more resources into its partnerships with the Mediterranean Dialogue countries, the European Union and other regional organizations.

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Defence Expenditures in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf Region: The Impact on Regional Security

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The eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf region remain an extremely turbulent and unstable neighbourhood, where a “Hobbesian” security environment prevails. There is a general failure of governance and a long list of frequently interacting – and in some cases interconnected – security problems, including a number of protracted conflicts. Traditional global players have either been weakened (EU) or seem resolute to reduce their presence in the region (US, with the pivot to Asia), while others have apparently regained part of their past influence (Russia). Regional powers have been strengthened (Iran, Saudi Arabia) and new actors have made a dynamic – mostly economic-driven – appearance (China). The Trump Administration’s demonization of Iran and the Saudi-Iranian geopolitical competition, manifested through several proxy wars, have further inflamed a very unstable region.

This paper will examine the trends in defence expenditures and (advanced) weapons procurement in the eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf region in order to explore their impact on regional security and the multitude of existing conflicts and conflictual relationships. The analysis will focus on the following countries: Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE.

Defence Expenditures in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf Region

There is a clearly visible upward trend in the defence expenditures of major regional powers in the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf region. Given the large number of conflicts and the high regional – and, in many cases, also domestic – instability, it is hardly surprising that the average share of military spending (as part of GDP) stands at approximately 5.5% in the Middle East, while the global figure is 2.2%. Since the late 1960s, partly as a consequence of the Arab-Israeli conflict but also because of regional and domestic instability, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries have been spending a considerable percentage of their GNP – often at the expense of other, probably more urgent, domestic needs – for the procurement of sophisticated military equipment and for their security needs in general (there is extremely limited information and it is practically impossible to ascertain how much is actually being spent for internal security purposes). Despite relatively low oil prices, arms imports in the region increased by 87% between the periods 2007-2011 and 2012-2016.1 According to SIPRI, “arms imports by states in the Middle East increased by 87% between 2009-2013 and 2014-2018 and accounted for 35% of global arms imports in 2014-2018. Saudi Arabia became the world’s largest arms importer, with an increase of 192% compared with 2009-2013. Arms imports by Egypt, the third largest arms importer in 2014-2018, tripled (206%) between 2009-2013 and 2014-2018. Arms imports by Israel (354%), Qatar (225%) and Iraq (139%) also rose. However, Syria’s imports fell by 87%” (SIPRI, 2019).

1 This article was finished by April 2019.

2 According to SIPRI, “arms imports by states in the Middle East increased by 87% between 2009-2013 and 2014-2018 and accounted for 35% of global arms imports in 2014-2018. Saudi Arabia became the world’s largest arms importer, with an increase of 192% compared with 2009-2013. Arms imports by Egypt, the third largest arms importer in 2014-2018, tripled (206%) between 2009-2013 and 2014-2018. Arms imports by Israel (354%), Qatar (225%) and Iraq (139%) also rose. However, Syria’s imports fell by 87%” (SIPRI, 2019).
end of the Cold War, those countries have been trying to strengthen their security through weapons acquisition for their armed forces, but also through external balancing (procurement, mostly by the US, in exchange for protection against security threats).

**Saudi Arabia** is by far the largest military spender in the area and ranks fourth in the world. Its military spending rose from $44.2 billion in 2006 to $87.1 billion in 2015. In 2007, Saudi defence spending amounted to 8.5% of the GDP, while in 2016 it rose to 10.4% (although as a result of the decline in oil prices, there was a 30% decrease in terms of actual money spent compared to 2015). Half of Saudi Arabia’s weapons imports come from the United States, while 27% come from the UK.

Although the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has not been a particularly active player in regional conflicts (with the recent exception of Yemen), its economic prosperity allows for greater financial capital to be devoted to defence and security. The UAE is the second largest spender in the Middle East and ranks 14th in the world, with an annual military expenditure of $22.8 billion. Although certainly affected by the decline in oil prices in 2014, the Emirates saw its arms imports rising by 63% between 2007-2011 and 2012-2016. The military expenditure of **Israel** increased by 19% between 2007 and 2016, reaching an annual average of $18 billion. Support from the US continues to be crucial in strengthening Israeli military capabilities. In 2016, Washington pledged a total of $38 billion in military aid to Tel Aviv over the period 2018-2028. In addition, the US provides Israel with sophisticated military equipment that would not be transferred to any other of its allies in the region. Together with its own highly developed defence industry, this allows Israel to maintain its conventional military superiority over any combination of regional adversaries.

**Turkey** continues to improve its military capabilities because of its regional and broader ambitions, its involvement in the Syrian conflict and its location in an unstable neighbourhood. Although most of its military procurement comes from foreign manufacturers, Turkey has invested heavily in its domestic defence industry over the years. This investment is now beginning to pay off as Turkey is increasingly able to cover part of its needs (including the construction of a light aircraft carrier, frigates/corvettes, attack helicopters and main battle tanks), but also to export to other countries. In the period 2012-2016, Turkey was the sixth largest arms importer in the world, increasing its purchases by 42% in comparison to the period 2007-2011.

**Iran** has been gradually building up its military capabilities through the acquisition of weaponry, mainly from Russia, China and North Korea, but also by increasing its domestic production. The Iranian military is considered capable of conducting limited, short-duration offensive actions beyond Iran’s borders, but is currently incapable of sustaining large-scale operations. It is yet unclear as to what extent its extensive involvement in Syria and accumulated combat experience has benefited the Iranian armed forces. However, contrary to many other countries in the region, Iran saw a decrease in its defence expenditure by 7.3% between 2007 and 2016. This was mainly due to the economic sanctions imposed by the international community. The continuation of those sanctions as a result of the American withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will function as an important constraint for Iran’s efforts to increase its defence spending.

**Egypt** has, for various reasons, lost part of its regional influence but remains an important player in the eastern Mediterranean and the Arab world. Predominantly preoccupied by domestic socio-political issues, and faced with economic problems and a growing terrorist threat, Egypt was forced to slightly decrease its defence spending after 2015 but has otherwise increased the budget for internal security purposes. It continues to receive US military assistance worth approximately $1.5 billion annually.

The military capabilities of two other important regional players, **Iraq** and **Syria**, have been visibly weakened in comparison to the past. Iraq has re-

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### TABLE 1

**Military Expenditure in Selected Countries in the Middle East and North Africa (2007-2016)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Military Expenditure ($b.)</th>
<th>Change (%)</th>
<th>Military Expenditure as a share of GDP (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>-4.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>-3.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: (-) stands for not available.*

Purchased advanced weapons from major powers has long been considered as a way of buying a degree of protection and a relative commitment to their security.

**Acquisition of Advanced Weapon Systems**

The increased defence expenditures of several countries in the region, especially some of the GCC states, have also been used for the acquisition of advanced weapon systems. The US has been the main supplier, accounting for approximately 50% of the total arms transfers in the region (Munich Security Report, 2018, p. 45), with the UK and France also being major players. To provide some examples: Qatar has bought two Rafale and Eurofighter aircraft from France and the UK respectively, an air refuelling aircraft and long-range transport planes from the US, and has ordered two surveillance satellites; Turkey has acquired an AEW&C aircraft and has agreed to buy S-400 air defence systems from Russia and F-35 fighter aircraft from the US (although the latter order may be in jeopardy); Iran has also purchased four S-300 air defence systems from Russia; Egypt has bought two Mistral-type amphibious assault landing ships that France refused to deliver to Russia, along with one submarine from Germany; Saudi Arabia has reportedly agreed with the US on a mammoth procurement deal worth $110 billion and has also signed a contract to buy 72 Eurofighter aircraft from the UK; in the meantime, Israel plans to use US economic assistance for long-term procurement aimed at preserving its military superiority in the region up to 2030; and, finally Russia has transferred S-300 air defence systems to Syria.

**The Proliferation of Ballistic and Cruise Missiles**

During the past few years there has been no increase in the number of states with missile systems, nor any major qualitative change in the region. While several missile programmes certainly constitute a cause for concern and could develop into significant threats for regional security, the ballistic missile threat is in general confined, with a rather limited impact (unless non-conventional warheads are used). Qualitative change has been slow as most missiles in the arsenals of proliferating countries continue to be Frogs, Scuds or Scud derivatives; a reality that is not expected to change for several years. As for the capabilities of specific countries, in addition to Scud-Bs and Scud-Cs, Iran now has an unknown number of Shahab-3 missiles, developed with North Korean assistance, with a range of up to 2,000 km. Israel still has the most advanced missile programme in the region, with the Jericho systems that have a range of over 2,000 km and could probably develop a missile with a range of 5,000 km.

**Conclusions**

According to international relations theory, the combination of rather alarmist threat assessments and high defence expenditures may lead to a typical security dilemma situation, which may result in an arms race between various combinations of possible regional adversaries. However, although regional insecurity and threat perceptions have certainly contributed to increased defence expenditures and advanced weapons acquisition, the latter does not seem to have significantly affected the regional balance of power or threat perceptions of various regional actors. For example, the conventional military...

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3 Many of the actions taken in order to increase state security – such as weapons procurement and the development of new military technologies – will necessarily decrease the security of other states. The result may be a security spiral, in which two (or more) states are tied in an arms race: each state responds to increases in weapons procurement and defence expenditure by other states with further arms purchases and military spending. That situation may lead to heightened tension and even war in the long run.
reach of Iran has not been significantly strengthened, although its asymmetrical warfare capabilities remain a cause for concern. Israel’s most active enemies are still non-state actors (Hezbollah and Hamas), against whom current Israeli military capabilities have not been terribly effective because of the asymmetrical nature of the conflict. The acquisition of even more sophisticated equipment by Israel would not change that.

Conventional weapons have so far not been directly used against another major regional power, with the exception perhaps of Israeli air attacks against Syrian forces and assumed Iranian targets in Syria. Air and land military power has also been used against insurgents and guerrilla forces (ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, opposition forces in Syria, Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon). Among the users of such weapons are Russia, the US, members of the coalition against ISIS, and some regional powers (Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE). There will continue to be strategic uncertainty in the region for the foreseeable future and further increases in arms procurement and defence expenditures cannot be ruled out for sure. The region’s heaviest defence spenders, the GCC countries, will continue to rely on US protection from any possible Iranian threat to their territorial integrity. Purchasing advanced weapons from major powers has long been considered as a way of buying a degree of protection and a relative commitment to their security; for some regimes it is also a way of staying on good terms with those countries. Exporters also tend to exert gentle pressure on buyers, exaggerating possible threats and offering diplomatic support and security guarantees. Furthermore, Iran’s nuclear programme will continue to be an important issue in the regional and global international security agenda and, as a result of the Trump Administration’s policy choices, the issue may be re-opened in the near future. As a consequence of the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen, together with the significant transfer of conventional weapons by a number of third parties, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons will affect not only the countries involved, but also adjacent regions. Finally, the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf’s lack of a regional security architecture – in the form of regional security organizations, formal or informal discussion fora, arms control agreements and confidence-building measures – will continue to hinder tension reduction, conflict management and conflict resolution efforts.

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EU Cybersecurity Capacity Building in the Mediterranean and the Middle East

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Cyberthreats on the Rise

The 2008 Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy included “cybersecurity” for the first time among the priorities of the EU's external action, stating that: "modern economies are heavily reliant on critical infrastructure including transport, communication and power supplies, but also the Internet." If the EU Strategy for a Secure Information Society, adopted two years before, already addressed "cybercrime," the proliferation of cyber-attacks “against private or government IT systems” gave the spread of cyber-capabilities a “new dimension, as a potential new economic, political and military weapon.”1

An EU Cybersecurity Strategy was adopted in 20132 followed, in 2016, by a first EU “Directive on Security of Network and Information Systems,” known as the “NIS Directive,”3 which harmonized the EU Member States’ legislations. The EU thus created a political and legal framework for tackling this issue. As explained by Elaine Fahey, the EU Council put forward the concept of “cybercrime,” alongside “cybersecurity,” to also focus on the “regulatory process” for achieving “cyber resilience,” and in order to link the EU’s strategy with the Council of Europe’s “Budapest Convention” (n° 185) on “cybercrime.”4

The external dimension of this internal strategy developed almost simultaneously. At the security level, international cooperation is conducted with NATO allies, neighbours and partners,5 notably in terms of joint exercises and training.6 In 2017, the EU also had “cyber dialogues” with the US, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and India.7

In 2018-19, the EU’s approach in the Mediterranean in terms of cybersecurity has mainly been based on the priorities adopted in 2015 for the mid-term review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which reinforced its security dimension, reflecting the priorities of the EU’s 2016 Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS).8 The adoption in 2018 of the “EU Cybersecurity Act” is another important step, of specific interest for some Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs).

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6 NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue was initiated in 1994 and currently involves seven non-NATO countries of the Mediterranean region: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_60021.htm?
The External Impact of the Development of the EU’s Cybercapacities

As mentioned in the 2016 EUGS, at the internal level the EU increases its focus on cyber security “equipping the EU and assisting Member States in protecting themselves against cyber threats while maintaining an open, free and safe cyberspace.”

The EU is now developing a “Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox” designed to respond to attacks through sanctions, international cooperation, dialogue, capacity building, joint investigations, etc.

The December 2018 Cybersecurity Act first reinforced the mandate of the EU Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA), the “EU Agency for Cybersecurity,” to better support Member States in tackling cybersecurity threats and attacks, while contributing to the development of a “culture of NIS in society.” Secondly, it created an “EU framework for cybersecurity certification” for “products, processes and services” that will be “valid throughout the EU.” It is, therefore, internal market legislation, meaning that the Commission, which is in charge of the digital single market initiative, will promote cooperation among Member States and is also responsible for “research and industrial collaboration” and “certification of digital products and services to ensure safe use.” This is therefore important for MPCs like Tunisia or Morocco, which may reach Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements. The possibility that ENISA offers for MPCs to participate in EU programmes and agencies, with conditions and on a case-by-case basis, is also worth highlighting.

Also of importance in terms of defence, is that the 2017 first Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), concerning common security and defence policy, included, as of March 2018, projects related to “Cyber Threats,” an “Incident Response Information Sharing Platform,” “Cyber Rapid Response Teams” and “Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security.”

Reinforcing the EU’s “Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox”

At the external level, the 2016 EUGS stressed the need for the EU to enhance its cybersecurity cooperation with “core partners such as the US and NATO” and to develop a “common cyber security culture.” The reference to the US and NATO is of crucial importance given the “collective defence” assistance clause of the Washington Treaty. In this regard, NATO’s “very first Cyber Defence Policy” was adopted in 2008. Eight years later, an EU-NATO Joint declaration emphasized the need to help “neighbours and partners” to build a “defence and security capacity” and foster their “resilience” in the “East and South.”


Furthermore, the EU is now developing a “Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox” designed to respond to attacks through sanctions, international cooperation, dialogue, capacity building, joint investigations, etc. In June 2017, the EU Council stressed that all the EU’s “diplomatic efforts should aim, as a matter of priority, to promote security and stability in cyber-

“EU Cyber Capacity Building guidelines” are to be developed for “better political guidance and prioritization of EU efforts in assisting the third countries.” Indeed, some Mediterranean partners lack proper cyber defence capabilities and their infrastructures are vulnerable

— ensuring that cybersecurity “does not become a pretext for market protection and the limitation of fundamental rights and freedoms, including the freedom of expression and access to information”;

— “modernizing EU export controls, including the introduction of export controls on critical cybersecurity technologies that could cause human rights violations or be misused against the EU’s own security, and stepping up dialogues with third countries to promote global convergence and responsible behaviour in this area.”

This last priority is of specific interest for relationships between some Member States and MPCs.20

The EU’s Cybersecurity Capacity Building in the Mediterranean and the Middle East

The 2017 Joint Communication included in its key actions, supporting “third countries’ ability to address cyberthreats.” It is clearly stated that the priorities for capacity-building will be the “EU’s neighbourhood and developing countries experiencing fast growing connectivity and rapid development of threats.” In this regard, a dedicated “EU Cyber Capacity Building Network should be set up, bringing together the EEAS, Member States’ cyber authorities, EU agencies, Commission services, academia and civil society.” Moreover; “EU Cyber Capacity Building guidelines” are to be developed for “better political guidance and prioritization of EU efforts in assisting the third countries.” Indeed, some Mediterranean partners lack proper cyber defence capabilities and their infrastructures are vulnerable. As an example of the growing cyberthreats, we could recall a cyberattack called “Triton,” named after a malware. The latter was developed to “manipulate Schneider Electric’s Triconex Safety Instrumented System (SIS) control systems - emergency shutdown systems - and was discovered on the network of a critical infrastructure operator in the Middle East.” Specialized reports pointed out that the


“group of pirates behind Triton - suspected of links with Russia - remains active.”

It is therefore no surprise that, among the seven main priority areas devoted to security in the November 2015 Joint Communication on the mid-term review of the ENP, “fighting cybercrime” is in a good position. That also means that, beyond cybersecurity, a focus on legislation approximation or at least regulatory convergence is included in cooperation with ENP partners.

Cyberthreats are like environmental issues: they do not take into consideration political borders, as they are by nature transnational and transregional.

On a security level, new programmes and actions have also been launched. The 2018 report on Euro-Jordanian relations stressed, for example, that the EU programme on the fight against violent extremism had been finalized, and that several projects had been implemented in the framework of sectors like “crisis management,” or “capacity building of public security.” Projects like the “EU/MENA Counter-Terrorism Training Partnership 2 (CEPOL CT 2)” and the old Euromed Justice (“ICSP CT Mena ENI EUROMED Justice IV”) and Police programmes were mentioned together with “CyberSouth” (“Cooperation on cybercrime in the Southern Neighbourhood”), which is a joint project of the EU and the Council of Europe aimed at strengthening “legislation and institutional capacities on cybercrime and electronic evidence” in the Southern Neighbourhood, “in line with human rights and rule of law requirements.” The “initial priority areas” are: Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, and the project focuses on “legislation; specialized services and interagency, as well as public/private cooperation; judicial training; international cooperation” and “strategic priorities on cybercrime and electronic evidence.”

Another example is that the EU and Lebanon have developed an “Action Plan to enhance the cybersecurity capabilities of internal security forces.” This is part of a “Regional Development Agenda” titled “CT MENA Counter-Terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa” (2017-2020). It is aimed at developing “criminal justice capacity” to counter terrorism “across intelligence, law enforcement and criminal justice components under the rule of law.” This is achieved through institutional capacity, “coordination and cooperation” and expertise. Nine members of the Arab League are currently involved.

Conclusion

Cyberthreats are like environmental issues: they do not take into consideration political borders, as they are by nature transnational and transregional. As stated during the preparation of a cyber exercise for European defence ministers in 2017: “As the cybersphere doesn’t discriminate, the number of potential targets is equivalent to the number of systems and their access points used.”

Cybersecurity is becoming a major sector for cooperation, not only in

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22 The other six being: Security sector reform; Tackling terrorism and preventing radicalization; Disrupting organized crime; Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation; Common Security and Defence Policy; and Crisis management and response. Joint Communication: Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Brussels, 18 November 2015, JOIN (2015) 50 final.
26 See: http://ct-morse.eu/projects/.
27 Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.
Cybersecurity is becoming a major sector for cooperation, not only in financial or trade terms, but also as an indicator of the depth of the political/security relation and trust between partners. In the Mediterranean it is already a major issue, as demonstrated by the electronic war being waged in Syria. As underlined by Edwin Grohe, the “cyber element of the Syrian civil war has had a more important role than one might have expected,” and we “will observe a constant cyber ‘arms race’ in which nation-states try to increase their capabilities of cyber-attack, exploitation and espionage, as well as their cybersecurity capability to defend against those very same operations.”

Although approximating legislation on cybercrime at the pan-euro level is indispensable, it is currently not sufficient. Given the rise of cyberthreats, there is a need for a “Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Cybersecurity Strategy” (or “PEMCS”), not only for the public sector and critical infrastructures, but also to help economic operators facing growing challenges in terms of cyberthreats. Research and technological tools are also of crucial importance.

The adoption, in 2018, of the EU Cybersecurity Act is of specific interest for the MPCs as it also includes an article 42 related to “Cooperation with third countries and international organizations,” which states that ENISA “may establish working arrangements with the authorities of third countries and international organizations.” Even if these arrangements “shall not create legal obligations incumbent on the Union and its Member States,” it is an opportunity not to be missed by some Mediterranean Partner Countries.

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32 In this regard, a “public-private partnership for cybersecurity industrial research and innovation” between the EU, represented by the European Commission and the European Cyber Security Organization (ECSO) association was concluded a few years ago. See the European Commission’s decision of 5 July 2016 on the signing of a contractual arrangement on a public-private partnership for cybersecurity industrial research and innovation between the European Union, represented by the Commission, and the stakeholder organization, Brussels, 5 July 2016, C(2016) 4400 final.
Women’s Economic Empowerment: An Overview for the MENA Region

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What is Women’s Economic Empowerment?

Women’s Economic empowerment is the ability of women to contribute to and benefit from economic growth so that the value of their contributions is recognized and their dignity respected. This, in turn, will enable them to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits resulting from said growth. Accordingly, Economic empowerment increases women’s access to economic resources and opportunities, including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information (OECD, 2019).

Why Bother with Women’s Economic Empowerment?

Feminist scholars see women’s empowerment as an important goal in itself; while, instrumentalists see it as a tool for achieving other development goals related to the health and wellbeing of empowered women, their children and their households, as well as overall economic growth and other societal benefits (Nazier and Ramadan, 2018). The evidence shows that women’s control over income has a multiplier effect on their families, their community and the nation as a whole in decreasing poverty, improving the health of women and welfare of all (e.g. Burges, 2007; Buvnic et al, 2008; Ferrant, 2010; Gowan et al, 2005; World Bank, 2013). Women’s disempowerment does not only reflect negatively on development and welfare but also incurs a greater risk of armed conflict (Blumberg, 2016).

The idea that women’s empowerment plays an important role in economic development has long been evidenced in the literature. Several studies have confirmed that lower or weak female labour force participation hinders economic growth, and that enhancing women’s empowerment has significant economic benefits, in addition to promoting gender equality (Dandan and Marques, 2017).

Accordingly, at the global level, women’s empowerment has been stressed as a key objective for development policies and programmes, as evidenced by the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of promoting gender equality and empowering women, and the fifth Sustainable Development Goal, with a similar content (Nazier and Ramadan, 2018).

MENA and Women’s Economic Empowerment: The MENA Paradox

Similarly, women’s empowerment has been a concern in MENA countries during the past 30 years. This was further intensified by the Arab Spring, after which concerns rose over women’s roles inside their own households, in the public sphere and in economic life (Nazier and Ramadan, 2018).

MENA countries have been aware of the importance of education in general and, more specifically, for empowering women. It was, therefore, included as a fundamental part of their development strategies. Accordingly, enrolments at different levels of education have considerably improved over the past few decades. At primary school level, for example, enrolment reached 100% in most MENA countries (Farzaneh and Moghadam, 2003).
Although the gender gap in education has been reversed for many MENA countries, this improvement has not translated into a narrowing of the gap in the labour market. Recent data illustrates that the MENA region continues to rank lowest overall in the world on measures of women’s economic participation and opportunities (World Economic Forum, 2012). The gap between men and women’s unemployment rates is particularly wide in the region when compared with the rest of the world (Mcloughlin, 2013). The region is characterized by the world’s lowest female labour force participation rate, with only 21% (Nazier and Ramadan, 2018) of women in the region economically active. The corresponding numbers for South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, for example, are approximately 40 and 60 percent, respectively. Jim Yong Kim, the former President of the World Bank, stated that women’s low economic participation in the MENA Region has led to income losses amounting to 27 percent of the region’s potential GDP (Abbott, 2017).

In sum, investments in human capital, increased levels of female educational attainment and delayed age of marriage have not translated into increases in women’s participation in labour markets in the region. This situation is known as the “MENA paradox” (World Bank, 2012).

In this context, this article will overview women’s economic empowerment in the MENA region. It aims to contribute to available knowledge through: first, providing an overview of women’s economic empowerment in the region in selected labour markets; second, following the evolution of those indicators over time; and third, providing a guide to a regional strategy for women’s economic empowerment, by identifying specific areas where gender inequalities persist, and hence where policy interventions are needed (World Bank, 2018).

**Trends of Women’s Economic Empowerment in MENA: Evidence of the MENA Paradox**

In a nutshell, statistics for the MENA countries suggest that improvements in women’s health, lower fertility rates and improved educational outcomes have not translated into an increase in women’s economic empowerment. The gender gap in labour market outcomes remains large. However, MENA economies are not homogenous and variation does exist between them (Abbott, 2017).
Data shows that developments in health and education indicators in the region are satisfactory. Average life expectancy from birth increased from 58.9 years in 1980 to 72.9 years, in 2014. This was higher than the world average of 71.5 in 2014 (Dandan and Marques, 2017).

Similarly, in recent decades, the region has made notable improvements in raising the educational levels of its citizens. The average literacy rate in the region increased at a faster rate than in any other region in the world, reaching 79.2 percent points in 2015, up from 57.8 percent in 1990 (WDI).

Chart 11 shows that during the period from 1990 to 2015, the improvement in the adult female literacy rate in MENA countries has been greater than that of adult men in the region, as well as in the rest of the world.

Moreover, Chart 12 shows great improvement in enrolment ratios in secondary education for both men and women in MENA with a higher rate for women. The rates for both sexes are higher than the world average. The rate for women has improved from 48.02 percent in 1990 to 76.9 percent in 2015, compared to 64.18 and 82.06 percent for men.

Generally, improvement in education is believed to reflect positively on women’s labour market outcomes. However, data shows that this is not the case for MENA countries.

Chart 14, shows great variations within MENA countries in terms of female participation, and the extent to which it has changed from 2000 to 2018. Israel and Gulf countries reported the highest rates in 2018, while Yemen and Syria reported the lowest rates. However, it is worth noting that actual rates may be substantially higher as many women work in the informal sector. Qatar, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates witnessed the most substantial increases in their female labour participation rates between 2000 and 2018, while Syria and Yemen have recorded a decline in their female participation rate, which is expected due to the conflicts they are currently facing.

Not only are women in MENA much less likely to be economically active than men, but even when they are active they are much more likely to be unemployed than men. Chart 15 shows that the overall unemployment rate in MENA is higher than the world average.
for both men and women. However, women in MENA had far higher unemployment rates than both men in MENA and women worldwide. Unemployment rates for women in MENA decreased slightly from 18.08% in 1991 to 17.98% in 2018, compared to a higher decrease for men’s rates from 10.7% to 7.93%, and to an increase from 5.64% to 5.92% for worldwide female unemployment rates during the same period. Chart 16 shows noticeable variations in female unemployment rates among MENA countries, with countries experiencing conflict (Palestine, Syria, Yemen and Libya) recording the highest rates in 2018.
According to Chart 17, the female employment-to-population ratio tells the same story: it is stagnant and below the average worldwide and for men in the region. The ratio of female employment to total female population aged 15 years and above was only 14.32 percent in 1991, and improved slightly to 16.9 percent in 2018, compared to 68.9 percent and 67.9 percent for men of the same age group during the same period.

Chart 18 demonstrates that MENA’s women work mainly in the service sector, followed by agriculture and then industry. Almost two thirds of women worked in the service sector in 2018, compared to less than 50 percent in 1995. MENA, like other regions of the world, witnessed a decline in women’s employment in agriculture from 30.4 percent of total female employment in 1991, to 23.4 percent in 2018. Women’s employment in the industry sector accounts for a minor proportion of all female employment in MENA. Moreover, this proportion declined significantly from 20.27 percent in 1991 to 15.16 percent in 2018.
On the other hand, men in MENA work mainly in the service sector, followed by the industry sector. Moreover, their employment in both the service and industry sectors increased between 1991 and 2018, while it decreased for agriculture during the same time period.

Chart 19 shows that, despite the fact that vulnerable employment in the MENA region for both men and women is less than the world average, the gap between men and women is higher in MENA. In 2018, 30.98% of women were in vulnerable employment, compared to 24.95% for men, while the average ratio
worldwide was almost equal for men (42.5%) and women (42.7%).

Chart 20 shows that in the MENA region, women are underrepresented in management positions, with Egypt reporting the lowest share of women in total employment in senior and middle management positions - 7.11%, while Palestine reported the highest share at 19.28%.

Chart 21 shows that the share of female employers from total women employed is less than for men in both MENA and worldwide. However, the gap between men and women is persistently higher in the MENA region. Yet, it is worth noting that the women’s share in the MENA region is within the female average worldwide.

Formulating appropriate employment legislation is a prerequisite to ensuring that women are able to compete equally with men and to promote gender equality. However, data for five MENA countries for which information is available show that legal protection for women in employment is negligible, with the exception of Morocco (Table 2). Only two rights are ensured in the five countries: entitlement to paid maternity leave and nursing breaks for nursing mothers. None of these countries give parents the right to request part-time/flexible working hours. In addition,
these legal rights, by default, only apply for, and hence protect, women working in the formal sector, leaving those working in the informal sector and as dependent family workers (vulnerable employment) with no protection.

### Root Causes of the MENA Paradox

The MENA paradox has been explained as the result of a complex mix of interrelated socioeconomic, cultural, individual, structural and institutional factors, which interact both at the macro and micro levels. They can be summarized as follows (Mcloughlin, 2013; Markle, 2013; Dandan and Marques, 2017 and World Bank, 2018):

- **Restrictions on access to quality education**: although access to education has risen, significant barriers to girls’ educational attainment, particularly regarding quality education, remain.
- **Household work and the care economy**: norms and traditions put women in the region under the double burden of household duties, responsibility for the care of children and the elderly and market work. Coupled with the often-limited availability of childcare, this can prevent women from pursuing formal employment.
- **Impediments to working in the private sector after marriage**: the private sector is considered incompatible with women’s household responsi-
Bibliography, and so women often withdraw from work in the private sector after marriage.

- Norms and social context towards gender roles: culture and norms in MENA societies dictate that a woman’s role is in the home. Women can also suffer discrimination in the workforce because of such cultural norms. Culture and norms also dictate which type of work is appropriate for women, which is reflected in the concentration of women in a small number of sectors.

- Discriminatory labour laws and practices: in most MENA countries, laws and regulations are biased against women. For example, in many cases, labour laws forbid women from working in jobs believed to be dangerous, difficult, or harmful to women's health or morals. Again, those laws are reinforced by cultural norms, yet they prevent women from participating in substantial sectors of the economy. In addition, in many cases maternity leave is often inadequate, and may discourage firms from hiring women when the employer (not the State) has to bear the cost.

- Weak implementation of laws to protect women’s rights: although laws in some cases treat both genders equally, customary practices may prevent women from exercising their legal rights and from doing business. For example, inheritance laws that leave property and collateral to men make it difficult for women to obtain loans to start businesses. Even if the inheritance laws offer equal rights to women, they are violated by customary practices. Similarly, labour laws that give equal rights to women are often violated, unimplemented or unclear.

- Limited labour market mobility: the concentration of women’s work in a small number of sectors is considered to be underpinned by cultural norms about what type of work is appropriate for them. In turn, limited labour market mobility contributes to women’s high levels of unemployment. Moreover, lack of safe, reliable transportation and fears of public harassment is a significant constraint on women’s economic participation.

- Limited access to capital and finance: one main obstacle that women entrepreneurs face in MENA is accessing credit, due to the prevailing conventional lending policies, the absence of collateral, or distrust between bankers and female entrepreneurs.

- Limited access to information, networks and markets: other obstacles that female entrepreneurs in MENA face include inadequate knowledge required to set up collaborations, and a lack of access to technology, support and information regarding business opportunities.

Formulating appropriate employment legislation is a prerequisite to ensuring that women are able to compete equally with men and to promote gender equality.

The Cure: What Needs to be Done?

Achieving women’s economic empowerment in the MENA region is infeasible without the adoption of gender responsive policies. In this regard, recommendations from the literature reviewed for this article can be grouped into four main points:

First: Construct and enforce a supportive legal and regulatory framework: Reforming the legal and regulatory framework is a must to increase women's legal access to property, control over assets, incentives to grow businesses, free mobility, ensure their safety in the workplace and relax restrictive regulations on their employment (World Bank, 2012 and Markle, 2013). This must be accompanied by the enforcement of those legal provisions, such as those that support childcare and part-time work.

Social policy reforms are also needed so that women are clearly recognized and compensated for their domestic care responsibilities, and thereby able to participate more in the formal economy. Moreover, the formalization of employment is an essential step to increase social protection coverage for women (Sholkamy, 2011 and Sieverding, 2011).

Second: Improve women’s access to financial resources: Policies aimed at women’s financial inclusion are also a key enabler for women’s economic empowerment. Evidence shows that microfinance has been a powerful tool to empower women. Women frequently face difficulties when applying for bank
loans. Domestic reforms, therefore, aimed at developing financial institutions’ capacities to better serve women, through training and capacity development programmes (IFC 2011), together with programmes that provide training for entrepreneurship, mentorship, financial literacy and financial inclusion, would enable women to have more control over financial resources (Markle, 2013).

Third: Encourage and enable married women to enter into the private sector workforce: Women prefer public sector jobs, which are considered family friendly in terms of working and hiring conditions and benefits. However, with the decrease in available opportunities for public sector jobs, the private sector should compensate and play a more central role in hiring women. For this to happen, violence-free working environments, safe public spaces and free women’s labour market mobility are prerequisites, in addition to tackling the existing gender biases within the private sector (World Bank, 2018).

Fourth: Transform and change attitudes towards gender roles: Place greater emphasis on changing attitudes towards women and the gender labour division, for both men and women, with a particular focus on younger men (Chamlou et al., 2011). Education is a fundamental tool in this regard. If children accept the idea at a young age that women and men are equal, they will be more likely to change their society in the future. This entails reforming outdated education systems and gender-biased teaching methods (ESCWA, 2012 and Markle, 2013). In addition, raising awareness through advocacy and communication campaigns is another key tool in promoting gender equality and transforming social norms and behaviours towards equal gender roles (World Bank, 2018).

References


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Inequality in Arab States

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The following questions are important to address in any discussion on inequality, whether in Arab states or elsewhere: Should we be concerned about social and economic inequalities? What forms of inequality matter the most and why? How has the development process impacted these forms of inequalities? Finally, what can be done to reduce them? This chapter begins with a brief conceptual framework, reflecting on the first two questions from a regional perspective. Sections 2 and 3 address the third question. Section 4 provides some concluding remarks and policy considerations.

Conceptual Framework

The first question may seem absurd from an egalitarian perspective, but it is still a valid one, particularly if, as evidence suggests, there is a wage-led pattern of economic growth in Arab countries. Hence, even if we set aside equity considerations (and there is no reason we should), then a redistribution of income to workers in the lowest quintiles will result in both higher growth per capita and more rapid poverty reduction. Complementing this argument, empirical work from the IMF (Berg and Ostry, 2017) indicates that a low level of inequality may be essential to produce long and stable growth spells. In short, most economists would agree there is a causal relation between inequality and growth, though the nature of this relation may not be perfectly understood and the direction of causality may differ depending on the theoretical framework. Likewise, country experiences in the context of health and education repeatedly informs us that progress in social indicators at the aggregate level is influenced not only by the quantity of public expenditure but also by its spatial and sectoral distribution. Hence, the case for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is one and the same as that for reducing social and economic inequalities.

Turning to the second question, which forms of inequality are more important and why? A common view is to focus on inequality in income or expenditure or wealth. Indeed, the literature on outcome inequality in the region is already well established in the money-metric domain. Based on the World Bank (2015), the conventional wisdom is that inequality in expenditure is generally low and was in decline between 1990 and 2013. There is however a serious flaw with the conventional wisdom in that it does not tally with the story coming from national accounts. Many of the countries with a reported moderate level of Gini (such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria before 2010 and Morocco) record large and rising discrepancies in average expenditure between household expenditure surveys and household final consumption expenditures from national accounts. This suggests that inequality may be much higher and rising if we factor in the expenditure of the richest 1% in these countries (who are typically excluded from these surveys).

1 This section draws upon a recent blogpost by Abu-Ismail, Khalid and Ramadan, Racha. “Time to rethink inequality in Arab states” The Forum. ERF Policy Portal. ERF July 03, 2018.
Given the many limitations of cross-country money-metric poverty and inequality analysis, recently there has been a growing appeal for the use of multidimensional inequality, based on the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen’s capability approach. According to this approach, poverty can be viewed as the inability (or lack of capability) to enjoy the basic rights and freedoms of life. Our approach to inequality is heavily influenced by this school of thought. This means that in response to the second question, our analysis in the report would give an equal importance to the non-income dimensions of health and education as to income inequality.

But whether money metric or multidimensional, the main question is to decide on which of the two main forms of inequality should be prioritized: inequality in outcomes or in opportunities? And why? Recently, most academic analysis of inequality are focused on inequality in opportunities. This attention is well justified. Inequality in outcomes (such as inequality in distribution of income, wealth, infant mortality, etc) does not account for individual responsibility for such outcomes, and recently there has been a growing consensus that societies seeking social and economic justice or equity in living standards should promote equality of opportunity by compensating the inequality arising from “circumstances” beyond the individual control, while at the same time, letting individuals bear the consequences of actions or “effort” for which they can be held responsible. Moreover, both kinds of inequality are correlated, as the living standards where the individual was born may affect their future outcome (Assad et al, 2017).

However, as noted by Atkinson (2015), the best way to reduce inequality of opportunity is to address inequality of outcomes. Furthermore, a comprehensive region-wide picture on inequality of opportunity is still not clear. Therefore, this article focuses mainly on outcome inequalities.

As for the third question; inequality between whom, i.e., inter-group inequality between selected social, economic, spatial and demographic groups (rich and poor, men and women, rural and urban, educated and non-educated, etc.), it is essential to understand the underlying political economy challenges facing the region, particularly after the Arab Spring. In this brief chapter, we will focus mainly on the inequalities between rich and poor given the space limitations and given the central role of wealth and economic class differences in determining economic growth and political stability outcomes (ESCWA, 2015). Clearly this does not provide a full narrative of inequality in the region, but it nonetheless yields a crucial one.

### Inequalities between Arab States

Overall, the Arab region has witnessed considerable human capital gains over the past two decades as captured by the health and education components of the HDI. The average life expectancy in the Arab region increased from 64 in 1990 to roughly 72 years in 2017. The mean years of schooling also considerably rose from 3.1 years in 1990 to almost seven years in 2017. The rate of progress in the HDI would be even more spectacular if we add income and use 1970 as a base year. However, as shown below, significant between-country inequalities underlie these average region-wide achievements.

The Arab region has witnessed considerable human capital gains over the past two decades as captured by the health and education components of the HDI.

The Arab region is highly heterogeneous in terms of income per capita. Qatar, which has the highest HDI ranking among Arab countries, has a GNI per capita of around 117,000$ (in 2011 PPP), nearly 80 times that of Comoros. The region is also conventionally thought of as richer than it is humanly developed. The average GNI per capita for the five Gulf Cooperation Countries with a very high HDI score.

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(above 0.8) is significantly higher than that of the OECD, but life expectancy in the latter is 10 years higher. However, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Morocco, the four countries which belong to the medium HDI category (score of 0.55-0.7) have a GNI per capita that is close to the average for developing countries, but have scored better education and health outcomes, despite the conditions of occupation, political instability and conflict conditions affecting some of these countries. The stylized fact that the region is richer than it is humanly developed does not apply therefore, if the resource-rich and very high-income group of GCC states are excluded. The remaining 15 states have health and education outcomes close to other developing regions with the same income per capita.

Charts 22A-22C clearly show that the Arab region had significant health and education gains, notwithstanding the slowdown in the rate of progress since 2010. However, average income per capita growth remained sluggish over the period 1990-2017, though there were significant sub-regional variations: in medium human development countries it doubled over the period, while it declined from $4,170 in 2010 to $2,835 in 2017 in low human development countries. This is unsurprising given the latter group consists of conflict-affected countries such as Syria, Yemen and Sudan, where protracted violence appears to be wiping away years of development gains, also evident in the decreasing trend in years of schooling for the low human development group since 2013.

**Inequalities within Arab States**

Overall, the Arab region has high levels of sub-national inequalities in human development, especially in education and income. The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) accounts for these within-country distributions of health, education and income among the population and “discounts” the dimensions of the HDI depending on the level of inequality. Factoring in these inequalities, the Arab region loses 25.1% of its HDI value in 2017 (slipping from 0.70 to 0.52). This adjustment from HDI to IHDI is one of the highest average losses globally, which places the Arab states just behind sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in terms of inequality. Inequality in education accounts for the largest share of this slip. Country-level data shows that inequality in education is higher in the LDCs where the index exceeds 40%. Charts 24A-24C plot the annual change in life expectancy, education and income indices and their respective inequality results over the period 2010-2017. As shown, with a few exceptions for the least developed countries (LDCs) and conflict-affected countries, the majority of the Arab countries had both positive average annual growth rates and decreasing
wealth inequalities in those two indicators. However, inequality reduction was more pronounced in health relative to education. The picture is different if we consider income levels. Incomes measured in terms of GNI per capita have been generally stagnant since 2010 and inequality has increased for the majority of countries (Chart 24C). Besides, inequality would further soar if we consider the gaps between GNI per capita and average household income. In many countries in the Arab region there are weak linkages between aggregate growth and the growth in household income, and thus increases in national income are often not transmitted to higher household income.

The question then arises: Where or to whom is this income allocated? To answer this question, we must look beyond the conventional measures of inequality such as the Gini coefficient or similar measures (e.g. Atkinson) derived from household surveys, as they largely fail to capture total income distribution, in particular among the top decile. Alternatively, the World Inequality Report database relies additionally on national income and wealth accounts, fiscal data from taxes on income and some other sources. It reports that the Middle East ranks first in income inequality with 61% of pre-tax national income being captured by the top 10% of earners (World Inequality Report, 2018).

Concluding remarks

There are two main conclusions. Firstly, differences between countries in levels and progress rates of human development achievement are quite significant, especially in education and income. Gaps widened after 2010 with reversals in levels of education and income per capita for the Low Human Development group due to the impact of conflict. The evidence is pointing towards a growing divergence in human development achievements between countries and growing income inequalities both within and between Arab countries. This is why the UN-ESCWA and the Economic Research Forum (2019, forthcoming) are embarking on a major study to examine these inequalities of outcomes in more depth, and, more importantly, to relate them to inequality of opportunities. Secondly, the deficit between social development inequality outcomes, as reflected by reductions in inequality in mean years of schooling and life expectancy...
Human capital gains were not reflected in higher incomes per capita for most countries. A major reason for this is the crippled mechanism through which the national income is channelled to households.

These findings certainly raise the need to rethink mainstream inequality narratives. The problem is with real, and not only perceived, inequality as some studies have pointed out (World Bank, 2015). Policy solutions must, therefore, address a tenuous growth-inequality nexus which has serious repercussions on political stability and future development prospects in the Arab region. As evident in the deceleration of HDI progress since the 1990s, and more so since 2010, Arab economies are unable to deliver on growth or inequality reduction, due mainly to their inability to generate decent employment (ESCWA, 2015). Current economic policies thus fall short in meeting the aspirations of an increasingly educated youth and middle class. This calls for a fundamental rethinking of fiscal policies and their underlying economic governance systems.

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Innovation in the MENA Region

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“Innovation is critically important in contemporary economies. A key driver of the improvement in consumers’ living standards is the growth and success of firms, and the wealth of nations. Investment in research and development (R&D) is essential for firms and nations to produce innovations and compete for the future” (Tellis et al. 2008). Innovation contributes to a strong economy through job creation, income generation and long-term economic growth (Hausman & Johnston, 2014). As a result, acquiring the capacity to innovate now lies in the core of policies and strategies of both developed and developing countries (Bizri, 2017). Innovation is increasingly focused on developing economies, supporting competitiveness and economic growth (Terzic, 2017), and enabling them to catch-up with and grow in a global economy (Naude et al. 2011).

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is experiencing huge economic and political transformations under the pressure of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.1 But, there is a potential for greater and better growth, and for new opportunities among youth to transform their communities. The revolutions in the Arab world have sparked “a flow of entrepreneurial energy and an increased sense of empowerment among the youth, translating into an array of social entrepreneurial ventures tackling cultural activities, health, agriculture, water and sanitation, and women’s empowerment” (Jamali and Lanteri, 2015).

In addition, the MENA region benefits from its geographical location, with access to large markets in Europe and Asia, young societies with improving levels of education,2 and the high-speed transformation into knowledge economies in certain countries, like the United Arab Emirates (UAE Ministry of Economy, 2018), Qatar (Faghih and Sarfaraz, 2014), and Israel (Rosenberg, 2018). A recent report by the World Bank confirmed that MENA countries have the potential to leapfrog into the digital economy, thanks to, for example, a cohort of well-educated young people with the ability to adapt quickly to new digital and mobile technologies (World Bank, 2018).

The Global Innovation Index: MENA Countries’ Scores and Ranking

The Global Innovation Index (GII) is an annual ranking of countries around the world based on their characteristics and performance in innovation (Dutta et al. 2018). It is one of the most comprehensive surveys for drawing international comparisons in innovation landscapes, and is developed by Cornell University, the European Institute of Business Administration and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). GII 2018 includes detail metrics for 126 countries (around 91% of the world’s population). It includes four main measures: the overall GII, the Input and Output Sub-Indices, and the Innovation Efficiency Ratio. However, the overall GII is the average of the Input and Output Sub-Indices (Dutta et al. 2018).

In the overall GII Index, MENA countries lag behind North America, Europe, South East Asia, and East

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2 Ibid.
Asia and Oceania. Moreover, many of the Arab countries have displayed downward trends in the GII since 2011. Chart 25 below provides a list for 15 MENA countries for which GII, innovation input and output, and the innovation efficiency ratio indices were available in the GII 2018 Report. Regarding the GII index, we find that Israel and the Gulf countries (United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (KSA)) fall above the median value for the entire world economies. Only one Arab country (UAE) ranks within the first 50 countries worldwide in the GII 2018, while two countries (UAE and Qatar) were in the GII 2017, and three countries (UAE, Qatar, and KSA) in the GII 2016. This shows a decrease in innovation performance in the Arab countries, mainly for the oil economies in the Gulf region. Iran leads the MENA countries as regards the innovation efficiency ratio, followed by Israel, Kuwait, Egypt and Jordan. This reflects these countries’ efficient exploitation of innovation inputs. However, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia (KSA) lead the MENA countries as regards innovation input, but they perform lower than other MENA countries regarding innovation efficiency, which reflects low innovation output capabilities.

In the overall GII Index, MENA countries lag behind North America, Europe, South East Asia, and East Asia and Oceania. Moreover, many of the Arab countries have displayed downward trends in the GII since 2011.

Charts 26 & 27 below show low to medium innovation performance for the Middle East and North Africa (MNA) region at firm level. For example, only 35.8% of firms introduced process innovation in 2013, in comparison with 66.6% in Africa (AFR), 59.6% in South Asia (SAR) and 39.2% in East Asia and Pacific (EAP) (developing countries only). As regards product innovation, MNA lies in the middle, somewhere between the fastest growing region in Africa and South Asia³ and the slowest growing countries of Europe and Central Asia (ECA)⁴ (only developing countries). With only ECA lagging behind, the MENA region has one of the lowest R&D expenditures (See chart 28). Only 15.2% of firms in the MENA region spend on

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³ South Asia holds on to its top spot as the world’s fastest growing region, with growth set to step up to 7.0 percent in 2019, then 7.1 percent in 2020 and 2021.

⁴ Economic growth in Europe and Central Asia slowed to 3.1% in 2018, and is projected to decline to 2.1% in 2019, amid slowing global growth and uncertain prospects.
CHART 26  Percentage of Firms’ Process Innovation by Region in 2013

AFR  EAP  ECA  MNA  SAR

Source: Data from the latest Enterprise Survey, World Bank Group database.

CHART 27  Percentage of Firms’ Product Innovations by Region in 2013

AFR  EAP  ECA  MNA  SAR

Source: Data from the latest Enterprise Survey, World Bank Group database.

CHART 28  Percentage of Firms’ Expenditure Spent on R&D by Region in 2013

AFR  EAP  ECA  MNA  SAR

Source: Data from the latest Enterprise Survey, World Bank Group database.
R&D in comparison with 27.4% in SAR and 25.3% in Africa. Firms in MENA countries have different R&D expenditure, with better performance in North African countries like Tunisia (20.3% of firms spend on R&D) and Morocco (18.4%). Chart 29 below indicates that Egypt and Palestine had the lowest R&D expenditure in 2013 - 6.5% and 11.1% respectively. This might be explained by Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories, which weakens investment and the business sector in Palestine.

**The Challenges for Developing Innovation in the Middle East**

There is a big concern in many of the MENA countries about the weaknesses of innovation mainly due to the quality of their innovation systems, the absence of sound policy instruments, the lack of appropriate economic structures, the poor education systems and growing unemployment among youth graduates (the gap between the education system and labour market needs) (World Bank, 2018; ESCWA, 2017). The improvements to human capital have not translated into fast economic growth. Meanwhile, MENA governments fail to encourage and, in some cases, actively discourage innovation (World Bank, 2018). Job creation in the MENA region is harmed by the failure of many countries to adopt new technologies. Here are the most important challenges for developing innovation in the MENA region:

*Little support from the government for innovation, science, and technology*

Government is the cornerstone in any innovation plan. It plays a key role in spending on R&D and knowledge creation, promotion of innovation and technological progress, creating the legal framework for protecting innovation, designing policy programmes to support innovation, driving and adopting emerging technologies, and paving the way to a knowledge-based economy. The governments in the MENA region are being asked to adopt a more proactive role in promoting R&D and technological innovation; adjust to fast-changing global trends in a techno-economic system driven by digitalization and the ICT revolution; establish market-driven competition; and allocate more resources to knowledge generation and the transition to a knowledge-based economy.

*Weak institutional framework*

The GII 2018 report shows that the institutional framework in the MENA region is one of the main obstacles to innovation. With the exception of UAE and Qatar, most of the MENA countries are situated

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**CHART 29** Percentage of Establishments that Spend on R&D in the MENA Region

Source: Data from the latest Enterprise Survey, World Bank Group database.
at the bottom of the GII 2018 report indices (e.g. Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Iran). This might be explained by the deterioration of the political environment and high political instability following the Arab Spring in 2011. Also, the regulatory environment and its quality is still very weak, and many of the MENA countries still lack a regulatory framework for intellectual property rights and innovation. Many of the resource-rich Arab countries (Qatar, KSA, Oman and Kuwait) still exhibit relative shortcomings in market sophistication, business sophistication and the difficulty of resolving insolvency. For example, governments in the MENA region are focused on the protection of incumbents in the telecommunications and banking sector, however, the excessive and outdated regulations impede the accessibility of new actors to the market (World Bank, 2018).

The GII 2018 report shows that the institutional framework in the MENA region is one of the main obstacles to innovation, most of the MENA countries are situated at the bottom of the GII 2018 report indices

Low investment in knowledge-intensive services and knowledge creation

Based on the GII 2018, except for Israel and UAE, most of the MENA countries are far below the global trends as regards employment in knowledge-intensive services and gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) by businesses. This reflects the weak capacity of firms in the MENA region to absorb knowledge and new technologies.

Fragmentation in the innovation system

Innovation systems in most of the MENA countries are criticized as being disorganized, disjointed and fragmented, i.e. too many players, too much competition coupled with weak coordination, replication of ideas, weak connections between the private sector, public sector, and academia, etc. The GII 2018 reveals weak university-industry collaboration for innovation and weak linkages between research and knowledge production and businesses, which negatively affects the core of the innovation process in the MENA region. UNCTAD has noted a low performance of national innovation systems in many of the Arab MENA countries (Gonzalez-Sanz, 2015).

Innovation inputs not translated into innovation output

However, many of the rich MENA countries like Qatar, KSA, UAE and Iran operate with a view to innovation input (investment in human capital, ICT infrastructure, etc.) and are situated above the global average and trends, but have weak performance in many of the indicators of innovation output, like knowledge creation, patents, scientific and technical publications, knowledge diffusion and creative outputs.

Individual Initiatives for Innovation in the MENA Region

In the last 10 years, and in order to cope with global growth in innovation and technology, many of the MENA countries have developed individual initiatives or policies to promote innovation and the knowledge economy.

Egypt

Since 2011, Egypt has entered a new path of socioeconomic development, which upgraded the role of youth in social development. A new approach is, therefore, necessary to create new policies that will enable innovation to support the creation of shared social and economic values. In order to create an enabling environment for scientific research, innovation and technology, Egypt’s Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research developed in 2015 the National Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2015–2030. The main vision here was to create an innovation system which establishes links

between the education system, R&D and economic sectors in order to translate research outcomes into new innovations.

Morocco

Following regional (MENA region) and global trends, in the late 1990s, Morocco has introduced its National Innovation System (NIS). The main objective was to achieve economic development driven by innovation and scientific research (Hamidi and Benabdelljalil, 2013). The main actors of the NIS are (Hamidi and Benabdelljalil, 2013): (1) the Permanent Inter-ministerial Committee for Scientific Research and Technological Development (PICSRTD), which consists of 24 diverse government officials chaired by the Prime Minister), (2) the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Professional Training (MHESRPT), (3) the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and New Technologies (MCINT), (4) the Hassan II Academy of Science and Technology (HIIAST), (5) the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research (NCSTR), and (6) universities, research centres and technical centres.

A series of debates with experts, the business community and civil society has been organized by the High Commission for Planning in Morocco in order to raise the Morocco 2030 Prospective.6 Also, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and New Technologies launched the Morocco Innovation Initiative in 2009, which aims to spread the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, increase the competitiveness of the Moroccan economy, and drive R&D at Moroccan universities (ESCWA, 2017).

Tunisia

Policy makers in Tunisia recognized early on the role of science, technology and innovation. A comprehensive framework has therefore been developed over the past three decades to support innovation, develop specific programmes that link science, R&D and economic development, and create a new culture of entrepreneurship (Chaabouni and Bouzaiane, 2018). From an institutional perspective, Tunisia has launched several institutions to support the national policy for innovation and scientific research, like the Secretary of State for Scientific Research and Technology (SERST) in 1991, the Higher Council for Scientific Research and Technology in 1992, the Grant for Investments in R&D (PIRD) in 1995, and the “National Programme for Technology Parks” and the “National Research and Innovation Programme” in 2003 (Chaabouni, 2008).

Jordan

As part of Jordan’s efforts to promote an innovation-based economy, in 2013 the Higher Council for Science and Technology prepared the National Innovation Strategy 2013-2017 with the support of the World Bank and the Korean Development Institute.7 The main objectives are to disseminate the culture of innovation and R&D, enhance specialized human resources and generate a business environment. The National Innovation Strategy was followed by the National Information and Communications Technology Strategy 2013-2017.8

Palestine

Due to the massive socioeconomic burden of Israeli occupation, innovation is yet to figure strongly in economic and development strategies in Palestine. The innovation system in Palestine is criticized as being disorganized, disjointed and fragmented, i.e. too many players, too much competition coupled with weak coordination, replication of ideas, weak connections between the private sector, public sector, and academia (Morrar, 2019). However, in the last decades, Palestinians have invested heavily in human capital through education and career professionalism, which has contributed to knowledge creation, technological development and the promotion of innovation. Following the creation of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994, some of the research institutions assumed a governmental status, which enhanced public awareness regarding the funda-

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mental role of science and technology in the development of the Palestinian economy:

— Palestine Academy for Science and Technology (PALST)
  This is an autonomous, public, not-for-profit organization established in 1997 and reconfirmed in 2004 by Presidential decree.9
— The Higher Council for Innovation & Excellence (HCIE).10
  The PNA recently established this Council, which is supposed to regulate innovation in the Palestinian territory and provide technical and financial support for creative and innovative ideas. Its activity has so far been mainly limited to advocacy.
— The Scientific Research Council
  In 2013, the Ministry of Higher Education established the scientific research council chaired by the Education Minister, who is joined by scientific research deans from four Palestinian universities and five members from the private sector and NGOs.11

Saudi Arabia

In 2002, the Saudi Council of Ministries launched the National Policy for Science, Technology and Innovation with the ambitious goal of generating a knowledge-based economy in the country. In 2016, Saudi Arabia launched “Vision 2030,” which aims to build a non-oil economy, which is competitive and dynamic. Innovation, entrepreneurship and advanced technologies are at the core of Vision 2030.

Conclusion

This work assesses the current status of innovation in the MENA region using data from the GII 2018 and the World Bank Enterprise Survey. It also discusses the individual initiatives of a group of MENA countries and the main challenges which hamper the role of innovation in socioeconomic development.

Many of the MENA countries have launched their own initiatives to promote science, technology and innovation, but they still lag behind North America, Europe, South East Asia and East Asia and Oceania in many of the innovation pillars. The innovation performance trend for the MENA region shows a decrease in innovation performance, which is clear from the shrinking number of MENA countries listed in the first 50 countries worldwide in the GII 2018. Innovation systems in many of the MENA regions suffer from many challenges like low government support for innovation, science and technology, weak institutional frameworks, weak investment in knowledge-intensive services and knowledge creation, and the fragmentation of innovation systems. There is a need to formulate innovation policies for MENA countries that are built on a common vision for the whole region, and which address legal, economic and social issues based on individual and regional perspectives. Furthermore, it is important to take into account global knowledge and technology when developing innovation policies.

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10 Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence www.hcie.ps/.


Trade Networks in the MENA Region

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Introduction

Forecasts for economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) stand at between a modest 1.5 and 3.5 percent for the period 2019-2021 (World Bank, 2019). This growth is also likely to be heterogeneous, with some laggards and a few emerging growth stars (Arezki et al., 2019). Growth is traditionally linked to trade: countries more integrated in the international production network tend to grow more. In the case of MENA countries, some of them are oil producers and export mainly raw materials, others (namely Morocco and Tunisia) have a stronger manufacturing industry. The most important trading partner for MENA countries, especially for the Maghreb, is the EU. Gross exports to the eurozone in 2016 were around 26% of GDP for Tunisia, and 16% for Morocco. If the region must develop, opportunities cannot rely solely on exports of either raw materials or final goods. MENA countries and their firms may find ways to develop a constructive integration into global value chains to spur specialization, positive spillovers and, eventually, growth (Del Prete, Giovannetti & Marvasi, 2017). Whether or not global value chains offer opportunities depends on several factors, including positioning relative to competitors and trade partners, product specialization, geographic characteristics, productivity and labour costs, as well as institutions and specific policies aimed at facilitating the international flow of goods, people and ideas. All these aspects are relevant, yet policies are necessarily contingent on understanding the economic situation. In what follows, we investigate trade patterns from the point of view of international fragmentation of production. We address the following questions: What are the global value chain relationships of countries within the MENA region and between the region and the rest of the world? And, given that trade configuration, which countries are more likely to benefit? We describe the present situation concentrating on the trade of intermediate goods in the MENA region and assess the specialization of the different countries, as well as their position in the production network to assess their potential to develop.

The Intermediate Trade Network of the MENA Region

Let us consider two main networks: the first examines trade within the MENA countries, and the second, trade between the MENA region and trade partners outside the region. To obtain a comprehensive view of trade in intermediate goods, we make use of the Eora global multi-regional input-output tables. The advantage of using input-output data lies in the possibility of using the international inter-sectoral exchanges of intermediate goods, which accurately measure the production linkages between countries and sectors.¹ In what follows we present a country-level analysis for

¹ Relative to similar sources, such as WIOD and TiVA, the Eora database includes a larger number of countries, most of which are of direct interest here.
the year 2015 (the last available at the time of writing). There are 26 sectors encompassing goods and services (see the appendix). Analysing all sectors together, i.e. both goods and services, affords us a broad picture. However, global value chains involve many inter-sectoral linkages. Since in the MENA region there are many resource-abundant countries, for which trade in primary goods is still very relevant, after a general analysis, we single out the intermediate trade network for the manufacturing sectors. To this end, we consider trade from manufacturing sectors towards all use sectors.

**Overall Trade in Goods and Services**

The value of overall intermediate trade (sum of imports and exports) of MENA countries is very heterogeneous across countries. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran and Israel are the top traders, with a value of over $100 billion; while the smaller traders account for a fraction of that value, with countries such as Yemen and Bahrain trading less than $10 billion. Among the top traders, only Iran is a net exporter of intermediate goods, i.e. has a positive normalized intermediate trade balance (see Table 3). Kuwait, Qatar and Libya are net exporting countries, with a normalized intermediate trade balance of above 50%. Lebanon, Jordan and Tunisia are net importing countries, all with a negative balance of above 18%. Looking at the composition of intermediate trade, top intra-MENA traders are Jordan, Oman and Lebanon, for which the exchanges with MENA partners account for more than 20% of all intermediate goods. The most outward-oriented countries, in contrast, are Israel, Algeria and Morocco, for which more than 98% of intermediate trade involves non-MENA countries.

Yet, MENA countries are heterogeneous in terms of their intermediate export and import shares with other MENA countries. Some countries mostly operate as suppliers within the MENA region (intra-MENA exporters), while others are buyers (intra-MENA importers). Lebanon exports almost 60% of its intermediates towards the MENA region; Jordan and Bahrain’s intermediate exports are also relatively concentrated towards the region. In contrast, Algeria, Libya and Israel’s intermediate exports are almost completely oriented to outside the region. On the import side, Oman, Iraq and Qatar source intermediate goods from the region at a relatively higher rate than other countries. A clearer picture emerges if we also compare the intra and extra-MENA trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
<th>Normalized Trade Balances and Intra and Extra-regional Trade - Overall Trade in Goods and Services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normalized intermediate trade balance (%)</td>
<td>Weight of intra-MENA on intermediate trade (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intra-MENA</td>
<td>Extra-MENA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>-45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>-5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>62.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>-90.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>23.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>-79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>58.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>32.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>-22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>-17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>-67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>32.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Produced by the authors using the Eora dataset.
balances. Interestingly, we see that some countries operate as buyers from the MENA region, but as suppliers to the rest of the world, and vice versa. Those countries seem to operate as hubs of inward or outward connections between the region and the rest of the world.

**MENA countries are heterogeneous in terms of their intermediate export and import shares with other MENA countries**

In Chart 30, countries in the top-right quadrant are exporters of intermediate goods both towards the region and outside, in general acting as net suppliers. No country lies in the bottom-left corner: i.e. there are no net importers of intermediates both from inside and outside the region. Countries in the top-left quadrant tend to import from the region while exporting to the rest of the world, while countries in the bottom-right quadrant import from the rest of the world and export to the other MENA countries.

The above evidence suggests an underlying network structure in which different countries play very differentiated roles, with some of them serving as important gates connecting the region with the rest of the world. We can see this more clearly if we take a network approach to investigating trade in intermediates.

Chart 31 displays the overall intermediate trade network of MENA countries. In the chart, each country is a node (MENA countries highlighted), the spokes are proportional to trade, the arrows indicate the direction of the trade flow, and more connected countries tend to occupy central positions. The largest traders – namely Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran – are very central. The US and Germany are also very central and have a role in connecting some MENA countries. For instance, Algeria is clearly an extra-MENA supplier of intermediates and is connected to other MENA countries only through third countries, namely the US, Belgium and Spain, thus being an indirect supplier of intermediate goods.

Outward linkages of the region are more clearly observed if we consider the aggregate MENA region, as in Chart 32. The main partners are China, the US, Germany, France, South Korea, Japan and Italy. The region is a supplier of intermediates to many third
countries, especially to South Korea, Japan and the US. Intermediate trade is mostly balanced with China, France and Italy, while the region imports from Germany, the UK and Switzerland.

Chart 33 shows the intra-MENA intermediate trade network. The graph confirms the centrality of the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Out of the 20 countries considered, 15 are represented in the graph (which excludes flows of below 0.5% of total trade), showing that most countries are well integrated inside the region, and only a few (e.g. Israel and Algeria, which are among the larger traders in the region) do not exploit the geographical proximity, and are therefore relatively isolated. Saudi Arabia and Jordan have the highest number of linkages (number of import and export trade partners, i.e. indegree + outdegree), being connected with all the other MENA countries. They are also the two most central countries of the network, together with Iran, Oman, Qatar and Tunisia, in terms of number of linkages (i.e. ignoring the traded values or, equivalently, considering the unweighted structure of the network).

Some of these countries, despite being well integrated inside the region, present very low traded values, which reduces their importance in the production chain. For instance, Jordan is very well connected and central, but its flows are relatively small.

Table 4 reports the (weighted) centrality indexes, providing a more detailed description of the role of each country within the region. The PageRank measures the number of times a given country is encountered when moving within the network: Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran are the most central countries. There is a probability of randomly encountering one of these three countries of between 27% (unweighted) and 43% (weighted). Hubs and authorities are recursive connected measures. Hubs represent countries who export to many important destinations, while authorities represent countries that import from many impor-
tant sources. These measures are more sophisticated than outdegree and indegree, but the intuition is similar. The UAE is by far the most important hub in the region and the one with the largest (weighted) outdegree. Authorities are less concentrated: Iran, Oman and Saudi Arabia are the main ones; while the UAE is not a particularly important authority despite having a high indegree. Finally, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are the most central countries in terms of betweenness, a measure that indicates the frequency with which the shortest path between two countries passes through a given country.

**Trade in Manufacturing**

We will now focus on manufacturing trade only, i.e. intermediate export from manufacturing sectors towards all sectors of importing countries. Specifically,
the definition used here considers international exports of manufacturing industries towards all sectors of importing countries. This definition keeps track of actual standard international flows of manufacturing intermediate products and corresponds to the way in which customs data are recorded. Manufacturing represents about 46% of all the MENA countries’ trade in intermediates (Table 5). The manufacturing share for import (63%) is almost twice that for export (33%), indicating that the region is a net importer of processed intermediates. This is confirmed if we look at the normalized trade balances. The trade balance for goods and sectors is positive, while the balance for manufacturing alone is negative. This means that the region is a net exporter of non-manufacturing intermediates (i.e. primary goods and services) and a net importer of intermediate products.

### Table 5: Manufacturing and Overall Trade of the MENA Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Manufacturing</th>
<th>All sectors</th>
<th>Share (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate trade ($bn)</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate export ($bn)</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate import ($bn)</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normalized trade balance (%)</td>
<td>-19.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Produced by the authors using the Eora dataset.

While the region is a net importer of intermediate manufacturing goods, some countries have a positive trade balance regarding either intra-MENA or extra-MENA trade, or both (Table 6). Egypt, for instance imports from outside the region, but exports towards other MENA countries. Morocco, however, has a positive trade balance with respect to both areas, but its intra-MENA surplus is much larger. Kuwait, Bahrain and Morocco are the only countries with a positive trade balance outside the region, all other countries import intermediates. In contrast, many countries are net regional exporters. The intra and extra-MENA normalized trade balances are visualized in Chart 34. While for goods and sectors the correlation between the regional intermediate trade balances is negative, there is a positive correlation for manufacturing. Exporting countries tend to export manufactured intermediates both inside and outside the region, and the same holds for imports. A few countries, however, import from outside the region and export towards other MENA countries, while, no country does the opposite. The change in correlation observed for manufacturing intermediate products, as compared to overall intermediate trade in goods and services, is mainly due to the exclusion of primary resources, which are mostly outward-oriented. The extra-MENA trade balances, in fact, change significantly, while the intra-MENA balances are much more stable. Focusing on manufacturing improves the extra-regional trade balance for intra-MENA exporters (upward shift) and worsens it for intra-MENA importers (downward shift). Intra-MENA exporters of goods and services (positive intra-regional trade balance) tend to have relatively developed manufacturing sectors and to import some non-manufacturing intermediates from the rest of the world. If we do not account for the non-manufacturing products, mostly imports, then the extra-regional trade balance must improve. Similarly, resource abundant countries, while their industry needs to import manufactured goods, also tend to sell large amounts of primary inputs outside the region, which gives rise to a positive extra-regional trade balance. Excluding non-manufacturing intermediates, mostly exports of primary goods, reduces the extra-regional trade balance, which becomes negative.

The manufacturing intermediate trade network that emerges does not change much relative to the intermediate overall trade in goods and services as regards the network’s main country nodes, namely Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran and Israel (see Chart 35). However, three things stand out: first, the direction of the trade flows is in many cases reversed; second, the role of France in the network is now much more evident; third, some manufacturing-oriented countries, such as Morocco and Tunisia, gain importance and are now included in the network (which only shows the main flows for clarity’s sake). Take, for instance, Algeria. Overall, it is a net exporter to France, the US, Belgium and Spain, but if we look exclusively at manufacturing, we observe that it imports from France and Saudi Arabia to export to Brazil. The link between Algeria and France is through non-manufacturing intermediates and is France’s only important link in overall intermediate trade with the region. But, in terms of manufacturing only, France is much more central and has many export links that include Algeria, Israel, Tunisia and Morocco, the latter further exporting to Singapore.
The above network represents individual countries and their main bilateral flows. A different picture is obtained by taking the aggregate MENA region and its manufacturing links with other countries (Chart 36).

For instance, it can be noted that, relative to overall intermediate trade, Italy becomes part of the network as an exporter of manufactured goods; Thailand, switches from importer to exporter, and several other...
countries strengthen their role as exporters, including China, India, South Korea, Germany and others. The intra-MENA network of intermediate trade, on the other hand, does not change much when we focus on manufacturing products only. The main traders are the same and the structure and direction of the flows remain similar (see Chart 37). One notable change is Israel, which, in general, is relatively less integrated within the region regarding overall trade but cannot be excluded from the manufacturing trade network. The similarity of the intra-regional overall trade and manufacturing networks confirms the evidence obtained from trade balances.

Table 7 shows the intra-regional centrality measures for the manufacturing network. Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE are the most central countries according to the PageRank index. On the export side, the UAE is the most important country within the region (Hub), while on the import side we have Iran, Oman and Saudi Arabia (Authorities). This is also confirmed by the outdegree and indegree. In terms of betweenness the most central countries are Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

**Conclusions**

We have examined the trade opportunities of MENA countries, focusing on their position in the network of world trade in intermediate goods and services, as well as in manufacturing intermediate products. We have taken a network perspective not usually considered in standard trade analysis and investigated the global production linkages of the different MENA countries highlighting the heterogeneity in their degree of centrality within the intermediate trade networks.
Some countries operate as regional buyers and extra-regional suppliers, while others do the opposite, operating as extra-regional buyers and regional suppliers. Many countries, thus, seem to operate as hubs of inward or outward connections of the region with the rest of the world. Inward hubs (i.e., net import from outside the region and net export to other MENA countries) include Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Tunisia and the UAE. This applies to both intermediate goods and services and to intermediate manufacturing products. Outward hubs (i.e., net import from other MENA countries and net export to the rest of the world) include, unsurprisingly, six oil-rich countries: Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Oman and Qatar. Excluding services and primary inputs, we see that these six oil-rich countries import
intermediate manufacturing products both from inside and outside the region.

Among the MENA countries, there are no outward hubs of intermediate manufacturing products. The only countries with a positive trade balance outside the region are Kuwait, Bahrain and Morocco; all these countries are also exporters to other MENA countries. Focusing on intermediate manufacturing products, the role of France as a supplier of intermediate products for further processing stands out, for instance for Morocco and Tunisia (also geographically close). In particular, Morocco, whose involvement in global value chains is renowned, occupies an interesting position: it is a net manufacturing exporter, but it imports intermediates from France; and its additional exports towards Singapore represent a non-negligible link of the trade network. However, Morocco does not occupy a very central position in the intra-regional trade network: its outward orientation does not seem to have significant effects on other MENA countries.

In contrast, the UAE and Saudi Arabia are very central in the MENA intermediate trade network and may possibly induce significant spillovers in the region, but they have a very different role. The UAE represents an inward hub, therefore what matters is its capacity to supply intermediate manufacturing products to other MENA countries. Saudi Arabia, instead, is a net importer and its role as regional buyer of intermediate manufacturing products is relevant. A deeper integration of these countries in global value chains is thus likely to bring about further effects on third countries as well.

This has important consequences since it helps to assess the potentiality of different countries to enter the international production networks. We believe that MENA countries have important unexploited opportunities.

Appendix: Sector classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector classification in Eora26</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mining and Quarrying</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Beverages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Textiles and Wearing Apparel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood and Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metal Products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electrical and Machinery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport Equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, Gas and Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels and Restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post and Telecommunications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Intermediation and Business Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, Health and Other Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-export &amp; Re-import</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


The Idea of Balkan Regional Economic Integration

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Regional economic integration in the Balkans is not a new idea, but it has received new attention in recent years with the “Berlin Process” and the renewed engagement of the European Union with the six Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The paper will first recall the historical background and previous initiatives and then describe the recent relaunch of regional economic integration in the Western Balkans to end with a few concluding remarks.

Regional Economic Integration in the Balkans: Historical Background

The objective of regional economic cooperation and integration in southeast Europe has been pursued by the European Union for over two decades. The disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in mid-1991 was accompanied by extreme political and economic instability. In addition to military conflicts – in Slovenia (1991), Croatia (1991-1992) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995) –, the SFRY successor states registered a sharp drop in GDP, foreign trade implosion and hyperinflation world records in the early 1990s (Uvalic, 2010).

As a response to these events, the European Commission announced its Regional Approach for the Western Balkans in 1996, intended to promote economic reconstruction, democracy and regional cooperation. In 1997, regional cooperation and respect for international obligations were added to the list of conditions that the Western Balkan countries have to fulfill in order to intensify their relations with the European Union (in addition to the standard Copenhagen accession criteria formulated in 1993). At that time, however, the political conditions prevented any meaningful regional cooperation. On the contrary, there were further conflicts in the region – the NATO intervention in Serbia/Kosovo in 1999 and the civil war in Macedonia in 2001. Despite instability, some trade links had been preserved among the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Uvalic, 2001).

The long-term EU strategy for the Western Balkans launched after the end of the Kosovo conflict in 1999 – the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) – again rests on regional cooperation among the Balkan countries as a fundamental condition for achieving stability and economic recovery. The Western Balkan countries have to demonstrate a willingness to cooperate with neighbouring countries in order to benefit from the various components of the SAP: financial assistance, trade liberalization, technical assistance, contractual relations through the signing of Stabilization and Association Agreements, prospects of EU membership.

A number of regional projects were initiated soon after, under the umbrella of the EU-led Stability Pact for southeast Europe. A Memorandum of Understanding on trade liberalization was endorsed by the foreign trade ministers of eight southeast European countries¹ in June 2001 in Brussels, leading to the signing

¹ The initiative included five Western Balkans countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (consisting of Serbia with Kosovo and Montenegro) and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (today North Macedonia) – as well as Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova. After the separation of Montenegro from Serbia in 2006 and Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence in 2008, the agreements signed by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were transformed into separate agreements.
of bilateral free trade agreements that envisaged the progressive elimination of all trade barriers. In order to harmonize trade regulations, these bilateral free trade agreements were transformed into a multilateral agreement in 2006 – the Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 (CEFTA 2006). These agreements enabled the full liberalization of trade in both industrial and agricultural products.

Nevertheless, there are still a number of barriers that impede stronger economic integration in the Western Balkans. Physical barriers to trade derive from long waiting hours for trucks on border crossings due to burdensome bureaucratic procedures. Fiscal barriers derive from different fiscal norms: in order to attract FDI, governments have been competing by lowering taxes and offering various incentives to foreign investors. Technical barriers consist of different sanitary and phytosanitary standards, norms regarding pharmaceuticals, food origin labelling criteria or labour legislation.

Although the Western Balkans are today strongly (and primarily) integrated with the EU, the regional market remains relatively important, especially as an export destination (Uvalic, 2019). The shares of the Western Balkans Six’s (WB6) intra-regional exports in 2016 ranged from 12% for Macedonia, 14% for Albania, 15% for Bosnia and Herzegovina and 18% for Serbia, to as much as 43% for Montenegro and 47% for Kosovo. The shares of WB6 intra-regional imports are much lower: 4% for Serbia, 7% for Albania, 10% for Macedonia, 13% for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 27% for Kosovo and 29% for Montenegro. Although for these countries the regional market is considered a “second-best” solution, it has been a welcome destination in cases of limited competitiveness in EU markets.

Current Initiatives for Balkan Countries’ Economic Integration

While the Balkan states’ objective of regional economic integration has long been on the agenda, it has acquired renewed attention during the past decade. The global financial crisis has brought structural weaknesses of the Western Balkan economies to the surface: low external competitiveness, inflexible labour markets, strong deindustrialization and low levels of economic development – only Montenegro is presently at 45% of the EU28 average GDP per capita. Since late 2008, the Western Balkans have experienced an abrupt fall in foreign capital inflows – i.e. foreign direct investment, workers’ remittances, foreign bank loans – and export demand, which led to double and triple-dip recessions and rising unemployment. Economic recovery over the past decade has been sluggish. In addition, the EU-Western Balkans integration process has been extremely slow. Although all Western Balkan countries have by now signed Stabilization and Association Agreements with the EU, only one country, Croatia, has been able to join it, in 2013. The lack of a clear perspective of EU enlargement for the Western Balkans has diminished the incentives for domestic reforms, contributing to backsliding in important areas of reform.

The global financial crisis has brought structural weaknesses of the Western Balkan economies to the surface

These are some of the reasons behind the recent EU re-engagement with the Western Balkans region, which started to emerge with the German-led intergovernmental initiative known as the “Berlin process” (Die Bundestag, 2014). Launched in 2014, this initiative is meant to provide a platform for some EU members and Western Balkan leaders to discuss unresolved issues and promote new initiatives, particularly regarding regional cooperation and connectivity. There have been five Summits of EU and Western Balkan leaders: in Berlin (2014), Vienna (2015), Paris (2016), Trieste (2017) and London.

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2 The original CEFTA agreement was signed in 1992 by the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary and was later extended to the other central eastern European countries. Countries that joined the EU – e.g. Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, and Croatia in 2013 – are no longer parties to the CEFTA 2006, as they have adopted the EU’s external trade policy.

3 This grouping is made up of the six countries mentioned in the introduction of this article: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.
Particularly important was the Trieste Summit held on 12 July 2017, which led to the adoption of the consolidated Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA) in the WB6 (Regional Cooperation Council, 2017).

The MAP REA rests on four main areas of regional economic cooperation among the Western Balkan countries: trade, investment, labour mobility and digital integration. The free flow of goods, services, capital and highly skilled labour ought to make the region more attractive for investment and trade and accelerate convergence with the EU. The initiative is coordinated by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), an international organization in charge of regional initiatives in southeast Europe. The RCC has the responsibility, together with the WB6, to implement the objectives of the MAP REA in the areas of investment, labour mobility and digital integration, while the trade component has been assigned to the CEFTA Secretariat. The MAP REA objectives build on the commitments agreed within CEFTA and other regional initiatives, and are based on EU rules, as reflected in the Stabilization and Association Agreements. A number of regional projects have already been implemented in the area of infrastructure (transport, energy, environment) with the support of the Western Balkan Investment Framework, which, since 2009, provides technical assistance for mobilizing financial resources from international institutions for strategic investments in the Balkans. In addition, the RCC adopted the 2020 South East Europe Strategy, mirroring the Europe 2020 Strategy for a Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth. This sets concrete objectives and targets to be realized by southeast European countries by 2020.

Along the lines traced out by the “Berlin Process,” the European Commission presented a new strategy for the Western Balkans on 6 February 2018 (European Commission, 2018). The EU Strategy plans to enhance sectoral cooperation with the region, targeting transport and energy connectivity, a digital agenda, socio-economic development, rule of law, security and migration, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations. These objectives are fully aligned with the Western Balkan countries’ Economic Reform Programmes, as the key mid-term programming documents requested by the European Commission since 2016. In this way, the MAP REA has been directly embedded within the EU accession process. The strategy also indicates the year 2025 as a potential date for Montenegro and Serbia’s EU membership, the two countries that are already deeply into EU accession negotiations. Albania and North Macedonia may open EU negotiations in June 2019, while Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are lagging behind in the EU integration process (see Bonomi, 2019).

Further steps were taken at a high-level Summit held in Sofia in May 2018, where the leaders of the EU and the Western Balkans met for the first time in 15 years. The Summit reconfirmed the priorities of the MAP REA and announced the launch of a Digital Agenda, including a roadmap to facilitate lowering the cost of roaming and the provision of substantial technical assistance for the identification of potential digital investments. Although it is too early to evaluate the results of these recent initiatives, some progress has been made (see Regional Cooperation Council, 2018). Within CEFTA 2006, the Additional Protocol 5 on Trade Facilitation, which deals with the simplification of customs formalities and clearance procedures, has been adopted by all countries and has entered into force in three of them (North Macedonia, Moldova and Montenegro). An agreement has been reached to launch negotiations on a trade dispute settlement mechanism. However, little progress has been achieved regarding the Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services. Next, the Regional Investment Reform Agenda has been adopted and is being translated into national action plans, in order to promote the Western Balkans region as a unique investment destination. Priority sectors will be identified that represent added value opportunities for the development of regional value chains. Regarding labour mobility, the EU and the WB6 have completed the technical preparations for opening negotiations on the Mutual Recognition Agreement of Professional Qualifications for Doctors of Medicine, Dentists and Architects. In the area of digital in-

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4 The Regional Cooperation Council is the successor of the Stability Pact for southeast Europe. It was established in February 2008 in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in order to enable “regional ownership,” and the implementation of all regional projects by Western Balkan countries themselves.

5 This article was finished in April 2019.
integration, Western Balkan countries have progressed in the transposition of the “EU acquis” in the area of electronic communications and information society and have advanced in harmonizing regional roaming policies. The Digital Summit organized in April 2018 in Skopje reaffirmed the countries’ commitment to work on digital integration.

While these initial results suggest a certain determination to carry forward the MAP REA agenda, unresolved political issues risk undermining its implementation.

While these initial results suggest a certain determination to carry forward the MAP REA agenda, unresolved political issues risk undermining its implementation. Kosovo’s politically motivated decision to impose a 100% tariff on all goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2018,\(^6\) represents a breach of Kosovo’s obligations endorsed within CEFTA 2006, thereby reversing long-term efforts and concrete results achieved from trade liberalization among the Western Balkan countries.

**Concluding Remarks**

Regional economic integration among the Western Balkan countries could have a number of beneficial effects, which are well known in economic theory: it could stimulate growth, competition, FDI and long-term development, thereby increasing their competitiveness and accelerating convergence with more developed countries. The WB6 are already a free trade area, but they could become a more integrated regional market by removing many non-tariff barriers on the free flow of goods, services, capital and labour. Creating a more integrated Regional Economic Area is not an alternative to the Western Balkans’ integration with the European Union, but ought to facilitate their smoother integration with the EU economy once they become full members. As such, it is a welcome initiative.

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\(^6\) The decision essentially reflects Kosovo’s protest regarding Serbia’s non-recognition of Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence.
North Africa More African than Ever: Maghreb Countries towards ECOWAS

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Poorva Karkare
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Maghreb Countries Look South

Though North Africa has long been seen as separate from the rest of the continent, recent years have brought growing rhetoric around the engagement of Maghreb countries with sub-Saharan Africa. This appears to follow rising trade and investment flows, improved transport connections as well as greater political cooperation. Though these economic ties are not new, as this note discusses, levels remain low and thus have the potential to grow. It may be this along with the desire to re-engage politically that is driving recent discourses on engaging with the rest of Africa.

The sense that North African engagement with sub-Saharan Africa is rising rests on the request by Maghreb countries to join regional economic communities (RECs) in sub-Saharan Africa: Morocco has formally requested membership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Tunisia joined the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and has ECOWAS “observer” status. Though partly a response to the ineffectiveness of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), classified by some as a “zombie” organization,1 and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD),2 both African Union-recognized RECs covering the North African countries – the overtures towards ECOWAS and COMESA seem to also reflect changing political interests as well as greater opportunities for trade and economic cooperation. In fact, the moves may be seen as efforts to politically cement the economic ties that already exist, particularly looking at West Africa.

Links to West Africa

The ECOWAS region includes 335 million people, or a third of the total sub-Saharan African population, and has a combined GDP of $700 billion (as of 2014). The region is an increasingly important market for North African goods and services. As Charts 38 and 39 below show, exports from Maghreb countries to ECOWAS increased almost ten-fold between 2000 and 2017, from less than $200 million to over $1.8 billion, with a particular rise in Moroccan goods entering the market. Imports from ECOWAS to the Maghreb, on the other hand, have also increased, though more slowly. Nonetheless, Maghreb countries’ trade with ECOWAS is still a small share of their overall trade, and the values involved are much lower than for their trade with the European Union.

There is therefore potential to further increase trade relations and economic cooperation between these regions. The low levels of intra-regional trade in the Maghreb (only three percent, compared to 10 percent in ECOWAS) are said to cost each country an estimated 2.5% of GDP annually3 and 220,000 job opportunities. Closer ties within and between African

2 Please consult the interactive map by ECDPM, based on previous work on regional integration, for an overview of African countries’ membership to different regional blocs https://ecdpm.org/dossiers/political-institutional-dynamics-regional-organisations-africa/.
RECs, especially ECOWAS could potentially bring economic benefits for these countries. Apart from economic interests, security imperatives in the Sahel also contribute to the growing interest in ECOWAS and West Africa more broadly. The threat of terrorism in the region has propelled further political cooperation from North Africa to deal with this crisis. Algeria especially has played a more prominent role than others in this regard.

**Chart 38**  
Exports to ECOWAS

**Chart 39**  
Imports from ECOWAS

Source: ITC Trademap.
Apart from economic interests, security imperatives in the Sahel also contribute to the growing interest in ECOWAS and West Africa.

Each to His Own... but Building on Past Relations

Up until recently, Maghreb countries have mainly relied on national strategies to pursue their interests in sub-Saharan Africa, each finding their own niche. Morocco has seen the most dramatic changes to its relations with the rest of Africa in the past few years. After leaving the AU for 33 years, the country was readmitted in 2017. It then applied to join ECOWAS. Moroccan exports to ECOWAS have grown at almost 15 percent a year for almost two decades, with the bloc accounting for 35 percent of Morocco’s total exports to sub-Saharan Africa. On average, half the goods entering ECOWAS from North Africa are Moroccan. The country has also made significant investments in infrastructure through its public enterprises. For instance, there are now weekly shipping links to 37 ports in 21 countries in the region. Casablanca is a regional air transport hub where Royal Air Maroc has 170 flights to 30 destinations. Itisalat al-Maghreb, the country’s largest telecom company, generated 43 percent of its turnover from its West African subsidiaries. Its interests are not limited to only infrastructure however – Attijariwafa, the country’s largest (public) bank has 443 branches in the region. Private sector companies also have a sizeable presence in industries, ranging from foodstuffs to machinery and chemical goods. According to African Development Bank estimates, some 85 percent of Morocco’s outward foreign direct investment (FDI) goes to sub-Saharan Africa, in sectors like banking, insurance, infrastructure and telecommunications. FDI to ECOWAS countries specifically amounted to US$153 million in 2015. As King Mohammed of Morocco said on the eve of rejoining the AU, the country’s links with Africa “[...] have remained strong and African sister nations have always been able to rely on us.”

Tunisia’s engagements in ECOWAS have been very different compared to Algeria’s. Its private sector played a crucial role in forging relations with the region, which, in turn, have shaped the country’s approach as it looks for new markets. These private interests have created enough momentum so that the Tunisian government is now looking to invest in transport links and increasing the presence of its banks in the region. The country is a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) since 2018, and in 2017 attained observer status in ECOWAS. Even so, trade with the ECOWAS region remains smaller than that of Morocco or Egypt. Mauritania was part of ECOWAS before leaving in 1999. It is said that the country viewed the regional bloc’s move to turn itself into a customs and monetary union as affecting their economic sovereignty. That may be changing, with Mauritania signing an association agreement with ECOWAS in 2017. Integration with West Africa is expected to bolster trade flows along the country’s Road of Hope (Route de l’Espoir), a coastal highway for Moroccan trade with Senegal, whose east–west road links the capital, Nouakchott, to Mali and Burkina Faso. It wants to

10 Ibíd.
cut down the costs of trading with its neighbours and crack down on illegal trading and smuggling. Moreover, the Mauritanian diaspora plays a significant role in the trading economy in many sub-Saharan African, especially ECOWAS, countries.

Though Algeria is yet to approach the RECs, part of the increasing interest in sub-Saharan Africa is also reflected in the Maghreb countries’ roles at the African Union. Algeria prides itself on the vital role it has historically played in pan-African issues, not least supporting liberation movements. The country remains one of the largest contributors to the AU, alongside Egypt and Morocco and has played an important role in peace and security, building on its own experience in counter-terrorism during its civil war in the 1990s. The country has consistently held the position of Commissioner of Peace and Security at the AU since its creation in 2002 and hosts the African Police Organization (AFRIPOL), as well as the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT). It has also had bilateral engagements with several countries, though it remains reluctant to engage militarily abroad. While it has a rich history of political cooperation in the region through continental institutions, Algeria’s trade relations do not match this dynamism. The uncertainty around current electoral events and protests may have an impact on the future of this peace and security role traditionally assumed by Algeria.

This interest to engage more with sub-Saharan Africa is not constrained to the Maghreb but also other North African countries, notably Egypt. After experiencing a lull under Hosni Mubarak, Egypt is becoming increasingly proactive in African affairs, not least as it assumes the chairmanship of the African Union’s (AU) Assembly of Heads of State. There was a clear message of intent from President Sisi “to bring Africa closer together, both politically and economically” at the Africa Forum in 2018, which was hosted by Egypt. Membership of COMESA allows the Egyptian private sector to explore further opportunities on the continent. However, West Africa is also of increasing interest, especially given the significant peace and security concerns of combatting extremism and terrorism. Trade relations with the region have also been evolving; while exports account for some 20 percent of the total entering the ECOWAS market from North African countries, imports from the region have been low except the significant jump in fuel imports, especially from Nigeria, since 2015.

There has been strong pushback to Morocco’s application to ECOWAS by Nigeria, because it is argued that Morocco’s admission would damage Nigeria’s manufacturing sector

Economic Realities or Political Demand?

There has been strong pushback to Morocco’s application to ECOWAS by Nigeria, which accounts for 75 percent of ECOWAS GDP. It is argued that Morocco’s admission would damage Nigeria’s manufacturing sector and lead to higher unemployment and poverty. There are also concerns that Nigeria’s influence and leadership in the region could be jeopardized with Morocco’s entry.

13 Algeria provided financial and military support to several liberation movements around Africa. www.iol.co.za/the-star/pics-algeria-the-fulcrum-of-revolutions-2095360.
15 DE GROOT et al, op cit.
16 Algeria is not part of the G5 which it sees as an ad-hoc structure created by France and the EU (De Groot et al. 2019)
18 BERS, Bruce and ABDERRAHIM, Tasnim, op. cit.
19 According to the impact report analysing the political, security and economic effects of Morocco joining the group, Nigeria’s economic dominance would decline from 78 percent of ECOWAS GDP to 67 percent, with Morocco accounting for 15 percent of the region’s GDP. https://es.scribd.com/document/367443857/Etude-d-Impact-Sur-Les-Implications-de-l-Adhesion-Du-Maroc-a-La-Cedeao#download &from_embed.
While North African countries increasingly appear to be looking south, this is perhaps only an attempt to render pre-existing political ties and growing economic relations explicit.

Even though Morocco’s financial contribution to the bloc will offset the losses in customs duties,²⁰ fears are expressed that Morocco’s Association Agreement with the EU could mean a flooding of the regional market with European goods, undermining domestic industries. Moreover, there are issues of compatibility between Morocco’s bilateral agreement with the EU and ECOWAS rules, casting doubt on Morocco’s ability to comply with both at the same time. Applying tariffs in line with the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) would also take away its goal of becoming a hub for global production, logistics and trade.²¹ In general though, North African countries do not see an apparent contradiction in their pursuit of greater economic integration with ECOWAS and beyond, while honouring bilateral trade deals with the EU.²²

In conclusion, while North African countries increasingly appear to be looking south, this is perhaps only an attempt to render pre-existing political ties and growing economic relations explicit. But, the possibility of formalizing these into regional memberships is far from certain, particularly while political change continues to play out in the region. Between post-revolution dynamics and on-going political change, all Maghreb countries are currently facing domestic political challenges that, ultimately, will take priority over engagement abroad. In the end, it may be a long-term game, while the interest from the rest of the continent in engaging with the Maghreb must also be taken into account.

²¹ E.g. having a US company move part of its production to Morocco so it can export to ECOWAS duty-free.
²² DE GROOT et al, op cit.
Climate Change in the MENA Region: Environmental Risks, Socioeconomic Effects and Policy Challenges for the Future

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The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has always been dependent on agriculture and climatic conditions since the dawn of civilization. The agricultural sector of what was once the Fertile Crescent is still crucially important and is the largest employer in many Arab countries (Waha et al., 2017). However, existing climatic and demographic trends cast serious doubts on its capacity to sustain the local population and economy in the future. On the one hand, climate change is likely to reduce water discharge, which is already dramatically low, by an additional 15-45% by the end of the century (Waha et al., 2017). This will have severe effects on agriculture, 70% of which is rain-fed (Selvaraju, 2013). On the other hand, the population in the region is expected to double by 2070 (Waha et al., 2017). The combined effect of these two trends may be twofold: (i) it may increase the import dependence on food, which is already high for several crops, making the whole region vulnerable to global price shocks; and (ii) it may cause/reinforce migration within and from the poor countries in the area, migration being one of the oldest defensive activities to protect against extreme weather events and agricultural productivity loss.

These consequences can obviously differ across MENA countries according to the income levels in each. Indeed, the MENA region is very heterogeneous in terms of economic and social conditions. We focus the present analysis on low- and middle-income (LMI) countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, West Bank and Gaza) which are particularly vulnerable to the direct and indirect effects of global warming, due to a lower ability to adapt and adjust to complex environmental changes. Compared to countries such as Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Malta, in LMI countries in the area, institutional and socioeconomic factors (e.g. political instability, poor governance, low financial capitals and factor mobility etc.) pose stronger limits to adaptive capacity building. Despite this focus, the brief snapshot we provide is not negligible. The population in LMI countries (about 444 million people in 2017) represents a large share of the total population in the MENA region, accounting for 85 percent of the total population and 95 percent of the rural population, that is, of dwellers whose livelihoods are overall more reliant on environmental resources and services.

This article investigates the observed and expected effects of climate change in the MENA region, devoting particular attention to its consequences for the agricultural sector and food (in)security. We deliberately restrict our attention to just one of the many dimensions of climate change: the direct impact that the climate-agriculture nexus has on the poorest sectors of the population. These are the poorest of the poor who have no means to defend themselves from the consequences of climate change, except to migrate and thereby escape unsustainable life conditions.
climate conditions, extremely high temperatures, limited groundwater and rainfall and scarce agricultural and arable land. Due to the combination of water and precipitation scarcity, high population growth and geographic concentration of the population, this is the most water-stressed area in the world. Climate change has already been observed in the region and is expected to accelerate and intensify in the near future, amplifying those stressors already at play. Evidence collected by the IPCC (Niang et al. 2014) indeed confirms an overall warming process, both in terms of annual and seasonal average temperatures, number of days with heat waves and the drop in precipitation in recent decades in North Africa (although with some geographical variations), which cannot be explained by natural variability. The region is also predicted to experience future drying trends and temperatures increasing at a faster rate than the global land average, not only in terms of annual and seasonal average, but also in terms of heat waves. In other words, this region, which plays host to extensive semi-arid and desert areas, is becoming drier, exposed to peaks of extremely high temperatures and to water crises and chronic shortages. The consequences are likely to be severe, not only for economic activities but also for health or even human life. According to a recent study (Ahmadalipour and Moradkhani, 2018), even if global warming is limited to 2 °C, the heat-stress mortality risk for people aged over 65 is estimated to increase by three to seven times by 2100.

MENA countries are also particularly vulnerable to sea level rise due to climate change. About seven percent of the total population lives in areas where elevation is less than five metres above sea level and a large share of economic activities, major urban centres, agriculture and population is concentrated in coastal areas which are exposed to increasing risks of flooding, inundation, land erosion and salinization. The effect of sea level rise could be extremely disruptive for climate-sensitive activities, from tourism to agriculture and fishing, especially in the Mediterranean and Red Sea sub-regions, characterized by rich biodiversity and tourism attractiveness. A comparative study on 84 coastal developing countries, for instance, estimated that about 24 percent of MENA’s coastal GDP and 20 percent of its coastal urban extent is exposed to sea level rise and storm surges, namely, around twice as much compared to the same indicators measured worldwide (Dasgupta et al., 2011). Low-lying coastal areas are particularly at risk. The World Bank estimates that the sea level rise could affect 43 port cities in the region, including Alexandria which could experience devastating effects, with more than 2 million people displaced in the case of a 0.5-metre rise,¹ in line with the IPCC’s global estimated rise by the end of the 21st century.

From Agriculture and Food Security to Migration and Social Stability

Collateral and associated effects of climate change are particularly relevant for the agricultural sector, especially in semi-arid or coastal areas. They include reductions in crop productivity, salinization, desertification, exposure to flooding, increased water shortage, inadequate provision of water and crop residuals for livestock production, as well as worsening working conditions or a limited ability to work on outdoor tasks.

Moreover, present and future impacts of climate change represent additional pressures and risk factors for an agricultural sector which is already hemmed between:

— growing demand: in 2017, the annual population growth rate was 1.7 percent, the second highest rate in the world after sub-Saharan Africa (WDI, accessed in April 2019),
— decline in resource bases: wind and water erosion and unsustainable farming practices cause land degradation and salinity in rain-fed and irrigated farmland, respectively. More than half of the LMI MENA countries use groundwater at rates exceeding renewable internal freshwater resources (OECD/FAO, 2018).
— and strict constraints to supply expansion: only five percent of total land is arable and arable land per person is about 0.13 hectares (WDI, accessed in April 2019).

¹ World Bank. “Adaptation to climate change in the Middle East and North Africa region.” http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01418/WEB/0__C-152.HTM.
In the MENA region more than 61 percent of the population live in urban areas, with the employment share of the service sector at above 50 percent. Even focusing on LMI countries, the area includes major oil producers such as Algeria, Iran, Iraq and Libya. In this context, how relevant is the agriculture-development nexus?

In the MENA region, the agricultural sector produces less than 10 percent of total value added, but it accounts for 22 percent of total employment, a share that increases to 31 percent among women. In addition, about 70 percent of the poor live in rural areas (Nin-Pratt et al., 2018). Therefore, agriculture, albeit not the “leading” sector, is certainly strategic for development outcomes of weaker and poorer population groups, namely women, small farmers and agricultural workers. The role of agriculture is also crucial for environmental sustainability, food security, socio-political stability and migration.

Environmental sustainability. According to FAO data, in the Near East and North Africa, the agricultural sector accounts for approximately 85 percent of total available freshwater uses. In a context in which climate change intensifies water scarcity, any successful adaptation strategy needs to involve agricultural activities.

Food security. Food production requires land and water, two factors that are very scarce in the region. In the absence of appropriate and sustainable adaptation in farming practices, climate changes may seriously compromise the domestic resource base for food production. Other climate change effects on food security may be indirect. The region is a net food importer, meaning that food security also pivots on its ability to obtain access to food through international markets. In 2013, domestic agricultural production covered 65% of domestic agricultural consumption (with strong variations within the region, from 16% in the Palestinian Authority to 85% in Sudan and Iran). Limited domestic food production does not translate into food insecurity in high-income countries in the area. They can rely on large budgetary resources to cushion possible food price shocks, and they largely invest in acquisitions of farmland (and implicitly in the associated freshwater resources) abroad. These defensive strategies, however, may not be affordable for LMI countries. Therefore, to the extent that extreme and unstable climate events and conditions affect global food prices, they represent an additional exogenous risk factor for the food security of this group of countries.

Inclusive growth and socio-political stability. Food security is not the only dimension at stake. Climate change effects on agriculture and freshwater can interact with other critical factors in the region, such as the rural-urban divide and social or political instability. The region is characterized by high rates of unemployment, especially among the young, rapid urbanization, and a relatively large urban/rural gap in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Iran, Mauritania and Morocco. There is an overall consensus in the literature on structural change that productivity in the agricultural sector is one of the key factors for prosperity and an inclusive process of economic transformation. MENA countries are no exception. Indeed, according to a recent report by IFPRI and FAO on the region (Nin-Pratt et al., 2018), “sluggish growth in agriculture pushes migration from rural areas to the cities” (p. 9). In combination with the weak expansion of labour-intensive sectors and fast population growth, this has resulted in high unemployment and incomplete structural transformation. The adverse impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity can only aggravate this problem. Some observers (cf. Smith and Krampe, 2019) argue that in some countries, such as Sudan and Syria, protracted droughts and the resulting economic difficulties contributed to political instability. There is no consensus on whether climate change exacerbates conflicts, but this hypothesis can certainly not be automatically dismissed.

Migration. The climate change effects on agriculture are intertwined with another key trend in MENA countries, namely, migration. According to IOM (2019), the region accounts for 14 percent of the global international migrant stock and, in 2016, for 41 percent (over 16 million) of the global population of Internally Displaced Persons. Both temporary displacement due to flood and storm events and migration in response to slow-onset processes are likely to increase. This trend concerns not only internal movements, but also international immigration and emigration to outside the region. Finally, climate changes in sub-Saharan countries represent additional pull factors for migration to MENA as a destination or transit region. A recent study (Defrance et al., 2017), for instance, estimates that between tens and hundreds of millions of people could be forced to leave the Sahel by the end of this century because of agricul-
Concluding Remarks

The MENA region shows remarkable differences in economic terms across countries. However, all MENA countries share a common threat, which is that they are all highly vulnerable to climate change. The latter heavily affects agricultural productivity and food security in the whole area, but countries react differently in the MENA region based on their income level: high-income countries can afford self-protective activities, which are often energy-intensive and sometimes lead to further environmental damage, while LMI countries are mainly compelled to opt for migration and the overexploitation of water and land. Looking at the policy implications for migration, one of the central topics currently under debate in Europe, we can certainly conclude that the policies aimed at "closing the borders" are not only ethically questionable, but also shortsighted. Walls and/or port restrictions are unlikely to be able to prevent people from fleeing the unsustainable consequences of climate change any more than they can stop people from trying to escape conflicts. In both cases, migration can be a matter of survival. At the same time, global warming poses multiple and alarming social and economic challenges at national and regional levels. Concerns over climate change should inform all areas of public policy, starting with agricultural and development strategies. From this perspective, the scope of domestic policies, international cooperation and assistance for mitigation and adaptation goes beyond pure environmental protection. All these measures should instead be conceived as the ingredients of broader development strategies, from migration management and social stability to lowering poverty and inequality. Building bridges rather than walls across countries is a more sensitive approach to the climate change threat, which may harm people and countries differently, but does not grant immunity to anyone.

References

Perspectives of Container Shipping in the Western Mediterranean

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This article outlines a number of strategic reflections on the role of container shipping management in promoting regional integration and the global positioning of the western Mediterranean. These reflections hope to demonstrate the importance of implementing cooperation and collaboration strategies and policies in the area of maritime transport between ports and stakeholders from countries of the western Mediterranean to contribute to the economic development and integration of the region, its positioning in global flows and transport sustainability. To this end, this article presents the main trends in container shipping on a global scale and its impact on the western Mediterranean space, enabling a series of reflections to be formulated on future perspectives and strategies for container shipping in the region.

Global Trends in Container Shipping: Towards the Creation of Economies of Scale

In recent decades, container shipping worldwide has undergone a series of transformations as a result of both maritime and terrestrial stakeholders seeking bigger economies of scale. Particularly following the crisis in 2008, these transformations have led to the consolidation of a number of trends which began in previous years.\(^1\) Firstly, of note is the process of the horizontal integration of carriers, which has resulted in the creation of three major shipping alliances (M2, Ocean Alliance and THE Alliance). These three alliances control most of the world’s container routes and flows, and, more specifically, account for 72.3% of the world’s container shipping capacity (UNCTAD, 2017).

Secondly, the formation of these alliances has favoured the introduction into the main transoceanic routes of a fleet of ships with capacities of between 12,000 and 21,000 TEUs. The use of these mega-ships has required the routes and services offered by carriers to be reorganized in light of reductions in the number of stops, their frequency and the ports they service. At the same time, the practice of transferring containers between ships has taken on particular relevance, whether to service secondary ports through lower capacity ships (feeder services) or to cover different stages of the transoceanic routes with other bigger ships.

Thirdly, it should be underscored that the restructuring that has taken place at sea has necessarily had its consequences on land and on the agents that operate there. The reduction in stops and frequency has favoured a process of concentrating flows in a limited number of ports. These, in turn, have to be able to deal with strong spikes in demand, which affect service flexibility and adaptability, and respond to the need for new investments to adapt to the new requirements in container shipping. Prolific investment in new infrastructure has led, on occasion and in a context of competition between ports, to the generation of over-capacities in port infrastructure (ECA, 2016). Finally,

\(^1\) This process has been analysed in great depth by the academic literature, but has also been studied by international organizations and entities with an approach more closely focused on defining strategies aimed at counteracting the negative effects of these trends. See OECD/ITF, 2015 and OECD/ITF, 2018 for examples of the latter.
it should be noted that these land- and sea-based transformations have led to an imbalance that favours shipping lines when it comes to negotiating with ports, a result of the oligopoly in container shipping services established by the carriers. The participation of shipping companies in the operation of port terminals or terrestrial logistics services, in a process of vertical integration, has worsened the situation.

The reduction in stops and frequency has favoured a process of concentrating flows in a limited number of ports

Container Shipping in the Western Mediterranean

The aforementioned trends have been studied on both a global scale and for the Mediterranean itself (Arvis et al, 2019). However, there currently lacks a specific study of the impact on regional traffic, such as the flows between the countries of southern Europe and the Maghreb. Understanding container flows in the western Mediterranean and, specifically, the flows between the European and Maghrebi countries of this space, requires a knowledge of how foreign trade has evolved in the area. In this regard, it is worth noting that there has been a decrease in the relative importance of commercial and container flows between the two shores of the Mediterranean, as compared to the evolution of these flows with other spaces. The conclusion here is that there currently exists a trend which is the opposite of regional integration.

From the late nineties up until 2008, trade between the countries of the North and South of the GTMO 5+52 experienced a marked upward trend, both in volume and economic value. However, after the crisis, there was a downturn in this trend and, after several years of sharp fluctuations, in 2017, flows were significantly lower than their peak in 2008. This evolution of the foreign trade patterns between the countries of the two shores of the western Mediterranean has meant that since the beginning of the economic crisis, trade integration between these countries has fallen. This decline can be seen in the relative importance of the value of the foreign trade of the European countries members of the GTMO 5+5 with the Maghreb, which dropped from 4%3 in 2008 to 2.9%. This diminished relative importance of flows between the countries of the western Mediterranean is also reflected in container trade. Between 2008 and 2017, the flow of containers between the two shores of the Mediterranean increased, although not as much as was registered for the whole of the European Union. This resulted in the European ports of the western Mediterranean reducing their quota for total container flows between the EU and the Maghreb, which fell from 82.3% in 2008, to 68.4% in 2017. The conclusion can be drawn, therefore, that, considering the evolution in foreign trade and container flows, the western Mediterranean space is adopting a growing role in global flows, to the detriment of greater Euro-Mediterranean integration.

However, this apparent loss of importance of European ports in the western Mediterranean should be considered in light of the lack of a detailed measure of container flows, since it is not currently possible to distinguish transit flows from the existing statistics, which do not strictly reflect Euro-Mediterranean cargo trade. In addition, an increase can be detected in the participation of ro-ro flows and “Other gen-

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2 The GTMO 5+5 is the Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean, comprising Algeria, Spain, France, Italy, Libya, Morocco, Malta, Mauritania, Portugal and Tunisia.

3 All statistical data has been processed by CETMO using the Eurostat databases.
general cargo in Mediterranean ports as compared with the total for the European Union. All of this casts a doubt over the decline in the role of European ports of the GTMO 5+5 in the Maghreb’s general cargo flows overall, which is ascertained based on an initial analysis of the existing statistical data. There is, therefore, a clear need to further study how container flows are defined and understood.

With these ideas in mind, and as a first step in attempting to improve knowledge on organizing container shipping flows, CETMO has created a descriptive database for the container port terminals in the countries of the GTMO 5+5. This database includes information on both the terminals’ physical parameters and management structure. The analysis of this database contributes to transferring and quantifying the global trends of maritime industry outlined above in the western Mediterranean, and allows the patterns of the existing flows in this space to be described in greater detail.

The western Mediterranean space is adopting a growing role in global flows, to the detriment of greater Euro-Mediterranean integration.

If we look at the distribution of container terminals in the western Mediterranean (Map 2), two differences can be observed between the ports of the GTMO 5+5 countries: on the one hand, it can be observed

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4 In 2017, ro-ro and other general cargo flows, which often serve as alternatives to containers, accounted for 39.1% of the general cargo traded between the European Union and the Maghreb. Between 2008 and 2017, the participation of the western Mediterranean ports in ro-ro and other general cargo flows, as compared with the total flows between the European Union and the Maghreb, increased from 71.6% to 77.3%.

5 These include the ports on the Atlantic coast of these countries. The terminals in Libya have not been analysed.
**CHART 40**  
Distribution of the Terminals’ Surface in the Main GTMO 5+5 Ports

**CHART 41**  
Relationship between the Number of Cranes and the Surface of Container Terminals in GTMO 5+5 Countries

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Produced by CETMO.
that the larger terminals are concentrated in a limited number of ports. Out of a total of 48 ports with container terminals, the 21 with over 40 hectares used for container terminals concentrate 80% of the total surface area of this type of terminal in the countries of the western Mediterranean. The six ports with over 150 ha concentrate 47% of the total surface area of the terminals. It should be highlighted that there are just three ports with over 40 ha in the Maghreb (Chart 40), which ties in with the second differential factor: the marked difference between the European and Maghrebi ports: while many European ports have more than one large terminal, those of the Maghreb mostly have a single terminal with a very limited surface area. It should be noted that the surface area of the container terminal relates to its facilities, such as the number of cranes, and therefore with the capacity to efficiently accommodate large ships (Chart 41).

The different kinds of operators owning shares in the terminals opens another relevant factor in defining container terminals (Map 3). Two of the big shipping alliances (2M and Ocean Alliance) are shareholders in 32 container terminals of the countries of the GTMO 5+5, which account for 58% of the total surface area. This presence is especially notable in the larger terminals: the alliances are present in 18 of the 24 terminals with over 400 ha and account for 76% of the surface area of this group of terminals. Again there is a clear difference between the two shores of the Mediterranean. While the large alliances are present in a large number of the terminals in European countries, in the Maghreb, these alliances are only present in two ports in Morocco (Chart 42).

It can be observed that there is a tendency for the large terminals to be concentrated in a limited number of ports (mainly Valencia, Barcelona, Marseille, Genova, Gioia Tauro and Algeciras). It is this limited group of ports that has the capacity to manage transoceanic flows, acting as major redistribution centres on a regional and intercontinental scale, while a large number of smaller ports, like those of the Maghreb, have to rely on feeder services to guarantee their container flows. Tanger Med is the only port in the Maghreb which, because of the technical capacity of its terminals and its shareholding structure, is comparable to the main roadsteads of the European countries of the GTMO 5+5. Thus a pattern of container flows between the two shores of the western Mediterranean can be established, conditioned by the transit function of transoceanic flows towards the countries of the Maghreb. This function can be performed by a very limited number of ports which have the capacity to handle the kind of ships that operate along the major transoceanic routes and the transfer of containers to other lower-capacity vessels. Thus, in 2008, the five main ports on the European shore of the western Mediterranean (Valencia, Barcelona, Algeciras, Gioia Tauro and Marseille) concentrated 74% of the overall flows, a figure that rose to 85% in 2016. It is, therefore, not surprising that the rigidity imposed by the organization of the transoceanic routes (lower number of stops, decreased frequency, congestion spikes) ends up affecting the organization of the maritime services between the European and Maghrebi ports, and, consequently, the organization of the flows linked to imports and exports between the countries of the western Mediterranean.

The marked difference between the European and Maghrebi ports: while many European ports have more than one large terminal, those of the Maghreb mostly have a single terminal with a very limited surface area

This quantitative description enables an outline of the effects that the process of vertical and horizontal integration in the container shipping industry has had on container flows in the western Mediterranean.

Future Perspectives of Container Terminals and Flows in the Western Mediterranean

The perspectives of container shipping in the western Mediterranean, bearing in mind the existing container terminal projects, on the one hand reveal a trend that supports the current model, with the creation or expansion of major infrastructure in the main ports (the fourth big terminal in the port of Valencia, Cala Bettolo in Genova or the expansion of Isla Verde in Algeciras or BEST in Barcelona, among others). However, on the other hand, the distribution
The structure of the terminals in the western Mediterranean will be substantially modified with the construction of new port infrastructure in the Maghreb (expansion of Tanger Med, the new ports of Nador West Med in Morocco and Cherchell in Algeria, the effective start of operations at Djén Djén or, in the longer term, the port of Enfidha in Tunisia). This new distribution of terminals will, undoubtedly, affect the present organization of container flows, based on the function of redistributing transoceanic flows towards the Maghreb performed by the main ports on the European side. The need to perform this function in the European ports will disappear in the future, as soon as the ships that operate along the transoceanic routes are able to access and be serviced in the ports of the Maghreb.

The expansion of the number and surface area of terminals in the western Mediterranean brings attention to a set of challenges already being contemplated by the current management of the maritime industry, which include the possible generation of overcapacity in a context of increasing competition between ports. But above all, we should be questioning how this new infrastructure and organization of maritime container shipping can contribute to Euro-Mediterranean integration, the positioning of the western Mediterranean region in the global economy and the formation of more sustainable transport chains.

**Conclusions: Challenges of Container Shipping in the Western Mediterranean**

As indicated at the beginning of this article, the process of the maritime industry’s vertical and horizontal integration of container flows has meant that structuring these flows has been heavily conditioned by transoceanic flows, which has had an unequal impact on maritime industry stakeholders and regional flows. The reversion of these trends in favour of an organization of flows that implies more balanced profit-sharing among stakeholders and spaces is considered to be a necessity. Along these lines, a series of recommendations have already been for-
mulated by certain international bodies. These recommendations (ITF, 2018) include the reform of the legal structures that regulate competition, improvements in the processes for evaluating port projects and setting port charges, as well as the establishment of port policies that allow a more coherent hierarchization and specialization of ports and their functions. These recommendations need to be agreed upon and applied on a regional scale and, therefore, based on collaboration between countries and port authorities. While these proposals for action are generic, there is a clear need to adapt to regional realities and characteristics.

With the aim of adapting the recommendations to the context of the western Mediterranean, four specific aspects of this space are proposed below that should determine the aforementioned adaptation: the regulatory framework, the organization and structuring of flows, environmental policies and technological and knowledge challenges. Firstly, the different legal structures and existing regulations in the Mediterranean region should be considered. National structures are still largely determinant of port policies and regulatory frameworks, sometimes hampering collaboration between ports, even within each country. Therefore, and as a way of overcoming said limitations and in favour of common policies, the different structures, fora and organizations that promote Euro-Mediterranean collaboration take on particular importance. So too do the policies that can be adopted by the European Union, such as the Trans-European Transport Network and its expansion to countries of the Maghreb, which will have a direct impact on European countries of the Mediterranean.

National structures are still largely determinant of port policies and regulatory frameworks

Secondly, the different functions of the western Mediterranean in container flows should be considered, as well as the complementary function of ro-ro traffic in the flows between the two shores. Collaboration between port agents from the two shores must not overshadow the goal of inserting the Euro-Mediterranean space into transoceanic and transcontinental flows, where, in fact, today it is already established as an essential node in coordinating traffic. This role, together with that performed by ro-ro, should be given its due value, as it allows a recalibration of the negotiating balance between ports on the one hand, and major carriers and terminal operators on the other.
Today’s environmental challenges are especially linked to decarbonization processes, which, while affecting the maritime and port industry across the world, take on specific relevance in the western Mediterranean. The role of maritime flows must be considered in promoting more sustainable modes of transport between the two shores. This is, in fact, already happening with the implementation of the Motorways of the Sea project aimed at improving communication between the European countries of the GTMO 5+5. Here, once again, the role of ro-ro services has been of particular importance. On the other hand, any maritime policy will have to consider the recent proposal to create a Mediterranean shipping emissions control area. Lastly, in relation to the technological and knowledge aspects, on the one hand, we need to consider the challenge posed by the existing gap between the two shores, but also the opportunities that the transport digitalization process might offer the region. Overcoming the technological gap and the appropriate, shared use of information will be particularly relevant for generating knowledge on transport flows in the western Mediterranean, which today can be considered as limited, as previously indicated. This knowledge should, among other things, contribute to confirming or further studying some of the hypotheses outlined in this article and to the specific formulation of shared and regional policies and strategies.

As a final conclusion, the challenge of strengthening Euro-Mediterranean integration, the positioning of the region in the global economy and the development of far more sustainable transport cannot be considered separately from the need for collaborative strategies and policies between the different stakeholders in container shipping and in port management in countries of the western Mediterranean.

Bibliography


Russia’s Energy Politics and Its Relevance for the European Union

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Since Vladimir Putin has been in power in Moscow, oil and gas have been an integral part of Russia’s strategy to regain influence on the world stage. Mastering gas supplies to the European Union and thwarting EU diversification efforts have long been key components of this strategy. Other policy elements have gained importance over the years, such as setting foot in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region and catering for new customers such as China. In addition, in the medium term, the surge of the United States as a major liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplier to the EU will create a new challenge for Moscow.

Russia’s Multipronged “Energy Politics”

Energy politics have long been a central part of geopolitics and of Russia’s influence in the world. The Foreign Ministry stated in 2013 that Russia’s goal in the field of energy was to “strengthen its strategic partnership with major producers of energy resources while actively promoting dialogue with consumers and transit countries.”

This general objective translated into actions across all the sub-components of the energy market: covering both oil and gas; investing in production in the MENA region; building transit pipelines; mastering supplies to the EU; increasing supplies to Asia; and weighing on prices. Overall, Russia has continuously made energy politics an instrument of its foreign policy, against the background of the major share that energy products have in global trade.

In 2018, analysts at the Jamestown Foundation argued that Russia’s strategy pursues both a global power objective and a domestic economic objective: “an overarching goal is to maintain or expand its energy markets in neighbouring western Europe and China, two of the world’s largest oil and gas consumers. By doing so, Russia appears to believe it will stabilize its economy, maximize its budget revenues and continue to re-establish itself as a global power.”

The following sections document Russia’s international energy policy as a three-pronged affair, consisting in thwarting the EU’s diversification strategy, setting foot in the Middle East oil and gas sector and establishing itself as a major supplier of energy to China.

Thwarting the EU’s Diversification Strategy in General, and the Southern Gas Corridor in Particular

A major driver of the European Union’s diversification strategy was the cut-off of gas supplies via Ukraine in January 2006: in the midst of winter, Moscow had decided to stop using Ukraine as the major gateway for Russian gas exports to the EU. The cut-off was intended to prod Europe into forcing Ukraine to capitulate in the dispute. With this abrupt development, Europe felt Russia was engaging in energy blackmail, compelling it to take steps to reduce its dependence on oil and gas, both in the short term and

1 I am grateful to Ms. Manon Roehrig for her assistance in research linked to this article. This text was finalized in June 2019.


more importantly over the long haul. It began working on a security strategy, including the so-called “stress tests,” simulating two energy supply disruption scenarios for a period of one or six months (i.e. a complete halt of Russian gas imports to the EU, and a disruption of Russian gas imports through the Ukrainian transit route). As a result, the “European Energy Security Strategy” was adopted in 2014.

Russia has continuously made energy politics an instrument of its foreign policy

Yet, despite the existence of a network of pipelines from the Baltic Sea and Belarus, Ukraine remains an important transit country for Russian gas. In addition, keeping some Russian gas transiting through Ukraine is a way to maintain pressure on the Kiev leadership. In an April 2018 assessment, a European Parliament study stated that “transit states are expected to behave like clients of Moscow, particularly if they are not a member of the EU or NATO. These states are the most vulnerable to energy blackmail [...]. This policy of using energy exports to intimidate or bully is a demonstration of Russian realpolitik and reverberates across the European continent.”

The respective operators of Russia and Ukraine – Gazprom and Naftogaz – are still litigating about gas supplies and transit, as illustrated in a message posted by Naftogaz in POLITICO Europe magazine on 29 April.

A direct illustration of this situation is the contentious debate around the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline linking Russia directly with Germany by bypassing Ukraine. Russia has been able to play on internal Western divisions regarding Nord Stream 2, as it is supported by Germany but opposed by the United States and Poland, for whom the pipeline could “turn Germany into a captive of Russia.” In May, a bill was introduced in the US Senate with a view to sanctioning individuals and entities involved in Nord Stream 2, while Denmark asked Gazprom to reroute the pipeline due to environmental concerns.

Similarly, with the completion of a first phase of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline (supplying Turkey via a pipeline running under the Black Sea) and the active planning of second-phase extensions to central and southeastern Europe from the European part of its territory, Turkey is seen as playing a Russian game. This project is a vivid illustration of Moscow’s strategy to strengthen its position in supplying gas to the Balkans while reducing its reliance on the Ukrainian transit corridor. However, uncertainties persist as the Turkish Stream faces the same European reluctance as the aborted South Stream gas pipeline. From the European standpoint, the project is deemed to be in violation of the EU’s third energy package, aimed at increasing competition within gas markets. Despite this warning, Serbia, Bulgaria and Hungary received the project and its 30 billion cubic metres of Russian gas with open arms.

Beyond these ambitious projects, Russia is also penetrating the energy sector in the Western Balkans by investing in energy companies (the sole oil and gas company in Serbia, Nafta Industrija Srbike, is owned by Gazprom) and supporting energy projects (new storage capacity in Croatia, exploration and production in Romania, Gazprom-branded filling station in Bulgaria).

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Overall, Russia is pursuing the goal of making the expansion of the Southern Gas Corridor and the realization of proposed Trans-Caspian pipeline projects less commercially viable. In short, Moscow’s aim is to counter as much as possible the export of additional volumes of non-Russian natural gas to the European Union.

Setting Foot in MENA’s Oil and Gas Sector

As explained in the earlier article for Carnegie Europe already quoted above, Russia’s strategy is in no way limited to selling its gas on the European continent. On the complex and oft-changing chessboard of energy politics, Russia has shown a high degree of consistency as regards the Middle East and North Africa region. Instead of solely considering regional actors as competitors (which they indeed are, because some of the major oil and gas producers are located there), Moscow decided to undertake a policy of cooperation through a series of agreements and investment decisions.

In Egypt, Russia bought a 30 percent stake in the so-called Zohr field from the Italian energy group ENI in 2016 with the consent of the Italian government, with which Moscow has long enjoyed a close relationship. In addition, Rosatom operates a large nuclear power plant in El Dabba. Further afield, in just four years, Rosatom12 became the leading provider of nuclear energy in Africa.

Instead of solely considering regional actors as competitors, Moscow decided to undertake a policy of cooperation through a series of agreements and investment decisions

Similarly, underwater gas discoveries off Lebanon have attracted Russia’s interest, as NOVATEK bought a 20 percent stake in a venture where France’s TOTAL and Italy’s ENI have a 40 percent share each. Russia has also made moves to control both the oil and gas sector in Syria, despite the eight-year-old civil war. The actual effect of these recent manoeuvres will very much depend on the final political arrangement, since many of Syria’s oil and gas fields are located north and east of the Euphrates River, currently outside the control of regime forces.

In Iraq, Russia is involved in pipeline deals in the Kurdistan region through a number of oil and gas companies, although the actual exports would have to take place through Turkish territory or possibly even through Syria in the distant future.

In 2018, during the Russian Energy Week Conference, further cooperation with Libya was encouraged in the field of oil extraction, which resulted in the relaunching of energy projects from the Gaddafi era (energy joint ventures, exploration and production monitored by Rosneft). In the long run, this strategic presence could convert into leverage over European buyers by controlling part of Libya’s oil sector. In the current military conflict between the two competing forces, Moscow’s political support for Libya’s eastern leader, General Haftar, is anything but surprising, since the latter exerts control over an oil production of one million barrels a day in the country’s southeast and could even gain control of the Libyan end of the gas pipeline linking the country’s western coast with Italy.

In Algeria, Gazprom is conducting hydrocarbon explorations in the El Assel area, while Russia is also building power plants in Egypt.

There is only an apparent inconsistency in Russia’s policy toward a rapprochement with Middle East oil and gas producers and exporters. It is true that Saudi Arabia is the biggest oil producer and Qatar is Russia’s largest competitor for gas exports. But seen in a global perspective, energy politics is a core component of Russia’s actions: energy being a key component of domestic and foreign policy, Moscow indeed has a crucial interest in developing better relations with a region sitting on half the world’s oil and gas reserves and is its major competitor in supplying both Europe and Asia’s major markets.

Beyond the Middle East

Further afield, Russia is planning to sell gas to India and China, two potentially lucrative Asian customers. Future sales of Russian gas from Siberia to China via the “Power of Siberia” pipeline, for which agreements are in place and works are underway, will secure a place for Russia on the fast-developing Chinese market and provide a welcome income diversification. China’s imports of LNG will however develop rapidly too, reflecting a global trend in gas trade.

The EU is expanding its LNG infrastructure in order to diversify its gas imports in cooperation with the US, and is therefore setting up LNG terminals near the largest European markets

In addition, since 2017, Russia and OPEC have entered an agreement since 2018 to help stabilize oil markets and regulate production depending on market demand. During a bilateral meeting in the margins of the G20 Summit in Osaka on 29 June, 2019, Vladimir Putin and Mohamed Bin Salman agreed to extend the production cut for a period of six to nine months starting July. 1 July was precisely the date of the OPEC meeting and 2 July the date of the OPEC+ meeting. Together, Russia and Saudi Arabia are the largest oils producers in the world, and their Osaka agreement largely preempted the OPEC meeting discussions. This development is a typical indicator of Russia’s energy politics and of its willingness to weigh heavily on the world markets to its advantage.

The Global Factors

One of the important factors in world gas trade is the fast development of liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade, a sector in which the Trump Administration has great ambitions. Some experts have argued that LNG exports will translate into the end of gas pipelines. Others have argued that the development of LNG exports will result in an “uberization” of gas markets, meaning that the world gas markets will inevitably become more fluid, more controlled by market considerations rather than energy politics. In such a scenario, Moscow would have a weaker hand.

In practical terms, discussions have taken place between the EU and the US in order to plan for increased imports of US LNG in Europe. The United States is increasing its liquefaction capacity and simultaneously expanding its LNG export terminals. For its part, the EU is expanding its LNG infrastructure in order to diversify its gas imports in cooperation with the US, and is therefore setting up LNG terminals near the largest European markets. Recently, these developments have been sharply criticized by the CEO of Rosneft: “A number of commentators like to accuse Russia of using energy as a political tool […] but in disputably the reality today is that the United States uses energy as a political weapon on a mass scale. Sanctions, or even the threat of their imposition, have a destructive effect on the global energy market ecosystem.”

Another important factor is Russia’s economy, which is massively oil-based: as noted by the World Bank, oil and gas exports represented 59% of total exports by value in 2018. In 2018, the European Parliament argued that the lack of innovation in the energy sector had become more salient: Gazprom and Rosneft allocated, respectively, 0.095% and 0.02% of their

turnover to research and development in 2016. Thus Russia is dependent on Western partners for technology transfers, which is counterproductive as promising projects have had to be abandoned due to EU and US sanctions.

The absolute priority given to the energy sector versus an economic diversification policy can be seen as an additional risk because it results in “a one-dimensional economy which is based on what comes out of the ground rather than what comes out of people’s heads,” as William Burns\(^{21}\) recently put it.

Russia is dependent on Western partners for technology transfers, which is counterproductive as promising projects have had to be abandoned due to EU and US sanctions.

Diversifying Russia’s real economy rather than continuing the current heavy reliance on the energy industry would of course entail other types of challenges for the Kremlin, since the state institutions controlling the energy sector are far more powerful than the means to control the economy in general. A study published by the Carnegie Moscow Center\(^{22}\) illustrates this fact: “Achieving economic diversification in countries dependent on oil exports is a major challenge. […] The success or failure of a diversification strategy depends above all on the implementation of appropriate economic policies. But most governments are conservative: even amid falling oil prices, a government with access to natural resources generally manages to preserve the structure of the economy without experiencing any social upheaval.”

More generally, Russia’s energy politics will be challenged in different ways in the medium term: the global shift toward LNG as a means of trading gas worldwide; a requirement to modernize Russian infrastructures in order to maintain energy competitiveness; the sheer necessity to move away from a one-dimensional economy; and the need to turn to renewable energies.

Russia’s “energy politics” will likely remain a crucial component of the country’s presence on the world stage, but it will have to keep evolving in response to a fast-changing environment.


Before the online viral #MeToo campaign stormed the globe in October 2017, since 2011 there had been several influential social media campaigns championing women’s rights in the MENA region. With an estimated population of 258,356,867, 65% of MENA inhabitants had access to the Internet as of December 2018.¹ While women have less access to the Internet than men,² recent history shows this does not preclude women from advocating for their rights in a substantive manner, both online and offline. For example, Saudi Arabia’s 2011 #Women2Drive movement initiated an international social media campaign to pressure the Saudi monarchy into lifting the ban on female drivers.³ Also in 2011, after Egyptian activist Aalia Elmahdy published a nude self-portrait on her blog⁴ as a political statement about agency, morality and autonomy,⁵ women in Egypt participated in the #NudePhotoRevolutionary campaign. In solidarity with Elmahdy, Iranian women’s rights activist, Maryam Namazie, launched the Nude Photo Revolutionaries Calendar project, published on 8 March 2012.⁶ Other Iranian women rights activists used YouTube videos to show support for the calendar’s publication as well as to express their own protest against a repressive regime in Iran.⁷ In Morocco, the 2013 #RIPAmina campaign mobilized public pressure on the government resulting in the 2014 repeal of Penal Code Article 475, which allowed a rapist to escape prosecution if he married his victim.⁸ During 2014, women in Iran participated in the “My Stealthy Freedom” movement, in which they removed the chador in public places, photographed themselves, and then posted the photos on social media. The “My Stealthy Freedom” Facebook page, as of early 2019, had just over one million followers.⁹ The movement evolved into the #white-wednesdays campaign where Iranian women donned white headscarves and white articles of clothing, and then discarded them in public places. Photos and vid-

² GSMA ASSOCIATION, The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2018, February 2018. www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/GSMA_The_Mobile_Gender_Gap_Report_2018_32pp_WEBv7.pdf. Based on the findings of this report, in the MENA region there is a nine percent gap between men and women’s ownership of mobile phones. From this research it can be inferred that women have less access to the Internet than men.
⁷ MORADI, Reza. “Nude Photo Revolutionary Calendar,” 7 March 2012. Content contains nudity, only viewable with an adult user YouTube account. www.youtube.com/watch?v=OatFpqlEAsE.
eos posted to social media outlets raised the campaign’s international profile. In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 63 women’s rights organizations launched social media campaigns in 2016 lobbying house members to abolish Penal Code Article 308. In the summer of 2017, the Jordanian Parliament repealed the penal code provisions allowing rapists to escape punishment by marrying their victims. During the same year in Lebanon, #Abolish522, #Undress522, and viral videos featuring the message, “a white dress does not cover the rape,” catalyzed a critical mass that influenced the government to repeal Penal Code Article 522 (removing a guilty charge for marrying a rape victim).

Why #MeToo Resonates with Women of the MENA Region

#MeToo has evolved into a unique, intersectional feminist social media campaign, calling for the public sharing of sexual assault and harassment testimonies to illustrate the commonplace experience of sexual violence against women. It is “ultimately a plea for justice, not an enactment of it,” and demands a shift in cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality, practiced by all genders. It is a global effort to expose the day-to-day behaviour toward, and the ongoing mistreatment of women, and to place the burden of responsibility on the wrongdoers. Furthermore, #MeToo exposes how policy reforms extending political, civil and economic rights to women have not influenced negative socio-cultural behaviours toward women. A look at the MENA region provides an opportunity to examine this global realization.

In fact, at the political level, 2017 turned out to be a watershed year for the women’s rights agenda in parts of the region, with several hashtag campaigns attached to the efforts. On 26 September 2017, Saudi Arabia announced a royal declaration to end the ban on women drivers to go into effect in June 2018. In December 2017, amidst the #MeToo momentum, Egypt’s Parliament passed a law granting women equal inheritance rights to men. Amending a 1943 personal status law that permitted women only half the property inheritance of men, in this new version of the policy any individual who attempts to deny a woman her fair share of assets or property faces imprisonment and a fine. The Egyptian government views this policy as a potential game changer in the economic plight of Egyptian women.

In mid-October 2017, a poll published by the Thomson Reuter Foundation determined Cairo to be the most dangerous megacity for women, conditions having worsened since the 2011 uprising.

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Upon publication of the poll, the National Council for Women (NCW), the Egyptian government body set up to address the concerns and rights of women, protested the poll’s findings. The NCW cited President Al-Sisi’s declaration of 2017 as “the year of the Egyptian woman,” to support their refuting of the report. In an interview with BBC Arabic posted on YouTube, Sanaa El Sherif, a NCW representative, referred to a female governor and women deputies and generals in the army as proof of Egyptian women’s political and economic empowerment. From El Sherif’s vantage point, and others of her stature, women have made progress. But the El Sherifs of the region misunderstand, or refuse to acknowledge, what #MeToo has brought to the foreground of public discourse.

One of the most vivid examples illustrating the toxic system that #MeToo challenges also comes from Egypt. In October 2015, at a mall in Heliopolis, an eastern suburb of Cairo, a man sexually harassed Somaya Tarek Ebeid, who became known in Egyptian media as “the mall girl.” Ebeid chased down her assailter, Hany A., who then physically attacked her until security guards removed him. Captured on security cameras, Hany A. was arrested and imprisoned for two weeks, after which he was acquitted of sexual harassment charges. Shortly after posting the incident on Facebook, Ebeid was invited to tell her story on the Egyptian television show, “Sabaya El-Kheir,” hosted by Riham Said, a female television personality. Believing her appearance on the show would elevate the discussion on rampant sexual harassment in Egypt, Ebeid was blamed for the attack instead. Said illegally aired intimate pictures to “prove” Ebeid was at fault. In October 2017, Ebeid’s attacker waited for her outside a pharmacy, slashed her in the face with a sharp instrument, and then ran off.

A self-censoring culture based upon a shame and honour system inhibits members of MENA societies from challenging harmful social practices

Generally speaking, a self-censoring culture based upon a shame and honour system inhibits members of MENA societies from challenging harmful social practices. In Upper Egypt, for example, where the issue of inheritance injustice is particularly acute, social custom keeps women from demanding their inheritance rights, an important reminder that tradition isn’t transformed by legislative changes made in the capital. To expose one’s “personal misfortunes or inadequacies in public, or even in private,” violates the honour code. #MeToo provides a safe space for women and men in the region to begin overcoming this cultural taboo.

Furthermore, despite policy reform that extends rights to women, in some cases the day-to-day quality of life for many does not improve, or even worsens. In June 2018, the ban on female drivers was lifted in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, the system of male guardianship remains in place. Additionally, since mid-2018 there has been an acceleration of a crackdown on civil society, specifically the women’s movement, with the arrest of dozens of women and feminist human rights activists and others fleeing the country...
and seeking asylum. In fact, most of the 11 women on trial as of April 2019 were incarcerated weeks before the ban was lifted in 2018, sending a clear message that women’s rights are meted out at the pleasure of the King and are not to be used to challenge his authority. Moving to Tunisia, in November 2015, Amnesty International reported that the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women determined that almost 70 percent of Tunisian women have been physically or sexually abused in one form or another. While there have been major victories in legislation granting and expanding protections for female victims of violence, activists admit that only women living in large cities, like Tunis and Sousse, are aware of their new rights; and, as it took 30 years to achieve these goals, it may take another 30 years to really change the situation for women in the country.

MENA Hashtag Feminist Campaigns after #MeToo

Prior to 2017, feminist hashtag campaigns primarily focused on particular legislative reform agendas either directly (#Women2Drive, #Abolish522), or indirectly, through the narrative of a victim (#RIPAmna). After #MeToo, MENA social media campaigns do not offer solutions, such as policy changes, but rather expose a cultural grievance, similar to the 2011 #NudePhotoRevolutionary campaign, or an injustice, exposing the poor treatment of women. In doing so, these campaigns challenge the moral values of a collective identity in which women cannot talk about sexual violence and its intersection with women’s rights and gender equality without fear of a backlash from not only men, but also other women. The campaigns, true to the spirit of #MeToo, upend victim blaming, putting the onus where it should be – on the perpetrator –

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In 2018, the world came to know Yasmeen Mjalli, founder of #NotYourHabibti (Not Your Baby/Darling), confronting sexual harassment in Palestine. Mjalli and her followers use #NotYourHabibti to promote her clothing brand, BabyFist Denim, which produces denim jackets and t-shirts with anti-harassment slogans. BabyFist Denim expanded into an international community organization that seeks to foster “open and honest conversation and to challenge the oppressive gendered structures of society,” wherever they exist.

Organizers of the #GirlsofRevolution campaign used it and #whitewednesdays to ask for international support of their cause as women throughout Iran took to the streets to “gain their freedom” in March 2018.³⁹ #GirlsofRevolution started after Vida Movahed removed her headscarf at an anti-government demonstration on 27 December 2017, on Enghelab (Revolution) Street in Tehran. Also in March 2018, Movahed was given a 24-month prison sentence. In response, social media followers around the world started the #WhereIsShe campaign to raise public concern about Movahed’s case and whereabouts.⁴₀

Will #MeToo Move Us Forward?

For nearly a decade, women of the MENA region have employed hashtag campaigns to catalyze long-awaited policy reforms advancing women’s rights. In some cases, recent history shows that legislative victories in favour of women’s rights, bolstered by online efforts, are attainable. However, #MeToo found supporters in the region because these achievements have proven to be superficial and limited in both scope and reach.

The global #MeToo movement calls for change that is much more profound than women gaining access to economic opportunities or political participation. It seeks to diminish the influence of patriarchy on society, a system in which power is the right and privilege solely of males, and in which both women and men behave in ways that maintain the status quo. It is too soon to know if #MeToo, its call for a culture shift toward substantive gender equality, and its global support will push the women’s rights agenda forward at a rate faster than the efforts of the previous three waves of feminism. Only time will tell. In a region where the number of women’s rights groups has tripled since 1980, there will certainly be no lack of effort.⁴¹

References


The “Balkan Route” Three Years after Its Closure

Manos Moschopoulos
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Three years after the closure of the “Balkan route,” thousands of migrants still find themselves stranded in the countries of southeastern Europe without safe and legal pathways to protection in the wealthier northern and western EU Member States. Despite increased border enforcement policies, people continue to attempt perilous journeys to Greece and through the countries of the Western Balkans in search of a life with safety and dignity. Smuggling networks have, once again, taken advantage of the lack of legal alternatives for people who find themselves in dire conditions somewhere between the overcrowded reception camps on Greece’s islands and the EU’s external borders with Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The route’s closure, combined with the EU-Turkey deal, have led many politicians and commentators to consider the situation resolved, but the facts on the ground suggest that the need for sustainable policies which allow people access to effective protection in the countries of the European Union remains an urgent matter.

Arrivals to Greece after the EU-Turkey Deal

Soon after the “Balkan route” was closed, the joint statement which came to be known as the EU-Turkey deal was agreed and implemented in March 2016. Under the agreement’s terms, “all new irregular migrants” arriving by sea to Greece’s islands would be returned to Turkey. However, only 1,842 of the over 92,500 people who arrived by sea to the Greek islands since the deal’s implementation had been returned until mid-March 2019.1

Within the context of the deal, Greek authorities imposed restrictions on the movement of newly arrived migrants, limiting most of them to the islands of the Eastern Aegean while their asylum claims are examined. As a result, the five “hotspots,” or first reception centres, on Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos have been severely overcrowded in the years since. Despite efforts to relocate people to mainland accommodation sites, there are still 12,031 people living in facilities designed to host half that number. The most dramatic situation is in Samos where over 4,000 migrants are accommodated in and around a camp whose capacity is only 648 people.

Meanwhile, the number of people who crossed by land in Greece more than tripled in 2018, reaching a total of 18,014, according to UNHCR. This increase also reflects a larger number of Turkish nationals seeking asylum in Greece, with 4,834 applications in 2018 compared to 1,826 in 2017 and only 189 in 2016. As the EU-Turkey deal does not apply to those entering Greece by land, migrants who successfully negotiate the risky crossing through the Evros river are not subject to return under its provisions. In addition, an increasing number of migrants have been entering Greece from North Macedonia, some of whom are migrants who are able to reach Belgrade by air.

However, there is evidence that people have been unlawfully pushed back to Turkey. Greek media reported the case of a Syrian refugee who lived in Germany and travelled to the Evros region in 2016 to meet his brother. Despite his German travel documents, he was detained, forced onto inflatable boats and forced to cross the river to Turkey at night. Leading Greek civil society organizations have published a report\(^2\) detailing dozens of alleged incidents which took place in 2018. The Greek government has repeatedly denied reports of pushbacks.

**Migrants in Mainland Greece**

On mainland Greece, there was an estimated 57,750 recently arrived migrants in January 2019. After the end of the EU’s emergency relocation mechanism, under which 21,999 refugees were relocated to other EU Member States, most of those in Greece have no legal pathway to protection in other EU Member States, except for specific cases such as family reunification. A bilateral agreement between Portugal and Greece for the relocation of 1,000 refugees was reported in March 2019.

UNHCR data showed over 16,000 migrants accommodated in 25 camps in September 2018. These camps operate as open reception facilities and are mostly located in remote areas or near small towns, making access to public services and the asylum system difficult for those located inside. Half of these camps were reported to have issues with overcrowding and a lack of privacy, as the increase of arrivals from Greece’s land borders led to people being accommodated in tents and multiple families having to share the same space.

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The UNHCR has been operating ESTIA (Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation), an EU-funded programme which includes an accommodation scheme that hosted approximately 23,000 asylum seekers and newly recognized refugees in February 2019. In addition, in the same month 66,840 people received cash assistance from the ESTIA programme which ranges from 90 euros per month for a single person to 550 euros per month for families with seven or more members. Authorities’ plans to remove some inhabitants from these apartments, in particular those who have received refugee status more than 20 months ago, have caused controversy as there are concerns about their ability to sustain themselves, given the lack of proper integration support.

The situation in Greece since 2015 has been called “the most expensive humanitarian response in history”\(^3\) and EU emergency support funding has surpassed 643 million euros in the past three years. This funding has largely gone to UN agencies and international NGOs to provide emergency relief, with significantly fewer resources allocated to the integration of recently arrived migrants. The Greek Government announced a new Integration Strategy which was open for consultation in early 2019. Within that strategy, government ministries will run training programmes for 5,000 recently recognized refugees, who will work in agriculture and tourism.

Migrants in Greece are increasingly targeted by hate speech and racist violence. In the space of a few days in March 2019, Afghan unaccompanied minors hosted by an NGO in the northwestern town of Konitsa were beaten by a hooded gang with baseball bats, locals threw rocks at a facility and attacked twenty families living in an IOM-rented hotel in western Attica, and an interpreter working for the Greek Council for Refugees was stabbed in downtown Athens.

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There have also been several protests against migrant children going to schools around the country, most recently on the island of Samos where parents pulled their children out of classes in protest. Despite these, the UNHCR reports that 75% of children accommodated within ESTIA aged 5-14 are in school.

Transiting through the Closed “Balkan Route”: Croatia’s Borders

Despite the closure of the “Balkan route,” migrants who arrive to Greece and Bulgaria still attempt to reach northern and western Europe through the countries of the Western Balkans. In 2018, over 30,000 migrants entered Serbia, with an estimated 6,000 remaining in the country at the end of the year. While in Serbia, new arrivals have access to reception facilities and some assistance, however most migrants have no access to effective protection and remain outside Serbia’s asylum system. In 2018, 8,436 migrants expressed their intention to apply for asylum and 327 applications were lodged, with 11 people receiving refugee status, 13 subsidiary protection and 20 being rejected.

After Hungary constructed its border fence and created “transit zones,” effectively making it impossible for those in Serbia to legally cross the border and seek asylum in the European Union, most migrants in transit through the Balkans have attempted to continue their journey through Croatia instead. After the closure of the “Balkan route,” Croatian authorities have intensified their border controls and have been routinely pushing migrants back to Serbia. The crossing has become increasingly dangerous, as evidenced by the tragic story of Madina Hussiny.

In November 2017, six-year-old Madina was hit by a passing train after her family was ordered to walk on the railway tracks back to Serbia by Croatian border guards, according to her family’s testimony. Madina and her family had previously been in Serbia for almost a year, waiting in vain for safe passage into Hungary. According to Madina’s mother, the border guards refused assistance even while she was holding her daughter’s lifeless body, instead forcing the family back to Serbia once again. Médecins Sans Frontières have reported that other migrants have also been forced to walk on the same railway tracks by Croatian border guards.

Madina is just one of the increasing number of migrants who die while attempting to irregularly enter Croatia, a consequence of the lack of safe passage, resettlement or any other legal pathways to protection in EU Member States for anyone located in Serbia or the other countries of the Western Balkans. In August 2018, two migrants were killed in a landslide while sleeping in a forest. In February 2019, a migrant drowned in a river near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina after his group got lost looking for a bridge to cross on their way through Croatian territory.

After the closure of the “Balkan route,” Croatian authorities have intensified their border controls and have been routinely pushing migrants back to Serbia.

As Hungarian and Croatian controls at their borders with Serbia further intensified, there was a rapid increase in the number of migrant arrivals to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018. Over 22,000 people entered the country in 2018 compared to just 1,166 in 2017. There was an estimated 5,000-6,000 people remaining in the country at the end of 2018, most of whom were in the northwestern Una-Sana canton which borders Croatia. The local communities in the border towns of Bihac, where most migrants are still hosted, and Velika Kladusa have been supportive of those in transit and have expressed their solidarity by offering food, relief items and other support throughout the year. As 90% of the canton’s population are Bosniaks, the Islamophobia present in other areas of the Balkans is absent.

Suhret Fazlic, the mayor of Bihac who has led this compassionate response, attributed the locals’ attitude to their own experiences from being under siege during the war in the 1990s. This is also reflected in the project run by Women from Una, a local NGO which runs workshops where Bosnian women help migrant women in transit to deal with traumas of exile and separation through their own experience. However, as large numbers of migrants
There is credible evidence that a significant number of migrants who have unsuccessfully attempted to enter Croatia have physical injuries, broken mobile phones and other signs which suggest they have faced violent attacks during border crossing attempts.

Remain stranded in the area, there are signs that the local community may change its attitude towards the situation if no sustainable solution for their guests is provided.

Elsewhere in the country, these arrivals have been met with negative responses. In May 2018, government buses carrying 270 migrants to a camp near Mostar were blocked by the police of the majority-Croat Herzegovina-Neretva canton in the southwest of the country. The incident sparked a political argument and the blockade was described as “illegal and unconstitutional” by Bakir Izetbegovic, the then Bosniak chair of Bosnia’s tripartite presidency. Republika Srpska’s leader Milorad Dodik, who opposes the settlement of migrants in the country’s Serb-majority entity, suggested that there was a plot to increase the number of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the run-up to the October 2018 elections.

Border Violence Monitoring, a civil society watchdog organization, published a number of videos in December 2018 which it claimed were evidence of illegal pushbacks along Croatia’s border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia’s government denied this, suggesting that the border guards were lawfully protecting EU borders and that migrants were alleging the use of violence to strengthen their asylum claims. However, there is credible evidence that a significant number of migrants who have unsuccessfully attempted to enter Croatia have physical injuries, broken mobile phones and other signs which suggest they have faced violent attacks during border crossing attempts.

The situation at Croatia’s borders has implications for rule of law and civil society. The country’s Ombudsperson wrote in October 2018 that the Ministry of the Interior repeatedly refused to grant her access to databases, footage and documents to assist her investigation into alleged rights violations by border guards. Moreover, civil society organizations providing assistance to newly arrived migrants have faced physical attacks, accusations of unlawful activity by politicians and judicial proceedings. One NGO volunteer was convicted under an article prohibiting assistance to irregular migrants for monitoring an interaction between the police and Madina Hussiny’s family.

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The Mediterranean is being deserted. The sea rescue operations and public bodies are all leaving. So too are civil society organizations, which no longer have authorization to set sail or return with people they have rescued. All that is left are merchant ships, who have to decide for themselves, faced with the dilemma of turning a blind eye or meeting their obligation to rescue. And the latter might mean a change of course, following long days of waiting. There are also the coast guards from the southern Mediterranean countries, trained and funded by the European Union and its Member States. All this has happened in a matter of just a few years. If there is one thing that catches one’s attention, it is the speed with which these events take place, and our capacity to forget them. Who remembers who said what? How did we get here?

**Maritime Rescue**

The first ones to save lives in the Mediterranean were fishermen and merchant ship captains. Shortly after, the boats of the Italian coast guard arrived on the scene. Although their aim was security and border control, they could not overlook their obligation to save lives in the high seas. In 1997, for example, the Italian coast guard argued it would be impossible to return people to Tunisia in light of their obligation, in accordance with international maritime law, to come to the aid of migrants in trouble and take them to Italian shores. Since then, there has been an increase in the resources available to the coast guard. Although, essentially, the operations continued to focus on border control, saving lives was one of the priorities. Although yet to form part of the official discourse, this element was included in their regulations and it is what they did in practice.

On 3 October 2013, 366 people drowned before reaching the island of Lampedusa. The sinking of that ship was to change politics and policy. The then European Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström decried that this was not the Europe we want. The Italian government responded by launching Operation Mare Nostrum, which implied a substantial increase in the resources available for patrolling international waters in the Strait of Sicily. This was a quantitative rather than qualitative leap. What did substantially change was the public debate, whose focus shifted from fear of irregular immigration to the need to save lives. In addition, with Operation Mare Nostrum, the Italian authorities had the monopoly on rescues in the high seas, coordinating the operations and distributing arrivals to the different ports. Although it might seem paradoxical, this central role of the State allowed, and even encouraged, the entry of non-state actors. It was under the umbrella of Operation Mare Nostrum that the NGOs returned to the Mediterranean, this time without the fear of being accused of immigrant trafficking.

Operation Mare Nostrum lasted little over a year, from 18 October 2013 to 31 December 2014 and ended with a final tally of more than 170,000 rescued people. Despite attempts to Europeanize the operation, both politically and financially, the European Union was half-hearted in its involvement. The British government claimed that an Operation Mare Nostrum on a European level would produce a pull effect and encourage migrants to play with their lives. Although saving lives was still the main argument, it now served to justify a radically different policy, in other words, the end of rescue operations and even more control,
along with returns to countries like Libya and Turkey. In the knowledge that they were not going to be rescued or were going to be immediately returned, who would dare put their lives at risk? “Drown a migrant to save a migrant,” was how a British journalist from *The Telegraph* summed it up. The argument, then, was with more control and more returns, there would be fewer deaths. The humanitarian and securitization discourse went hand in hand (Andersson, 2014). The result was Operation Triton, involving far fewer rescues and focused, fundamentally, on border control.

**The Fight against Smugglers**

On 18 April 2015, a fishing boat with more than 800 people aboard capsized in the Strait of Sicily. 28 people survived and the rescue teams recovered 24 bodies. It was then that Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, recognized that ending Operation Mare Nostrum had been a mistake which came at a high cost in human lives (European Commission, April 2015). As a consequence, he announced that the budget would be tripled, reaching the same level as Operation Mare Nostrum. In his own words they would reestablish “something that we had lost along the way” and there would be “a return to normality.” Not only in terms of budget, but also intentions. Frontex would place rescue at the centre of its operations and would do so beyond the territorial space of the Member States, in international and even Libyan waters. But the more direct result of that fateful day in April was the launch of Operation Sophia, whose main goal was also “to save lives,” but this time not with a “search and rescue” modus operandi, but rather one of “fighting and combating smugglers” (Garelli y Tazzioli, 2018).

Made in the image of Operation Atalanta, whose goal was to put an end to piracy around the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean, Operation Sophia’s main aim was the identification, capture and destruction of trafficking boats. In just under two years, there was, therefore, a three-fold twist in the plot. First, protection was no longer guaranteed through rescue and landing on Italian coasts, but rather by preventing migrants from leaving the coasts of North Africa. Researchers Glenda Garelli and Martina Tazzioli (2018) have described it as “preventative rescue.” Second, the migrants were no longer the target, but rather the boats they were travelling in. Third, on a discursive level, the smugglers became the guilty parties. The argument was that by destroying the boats, migrants were saved from being dragged into a life of slavery. The more inhumane and savage the portrayal of the other side, i.e., the traffickers, the more humane and free of responsibility the European border appeared. The disconnection between humanitarianism and border securitization was thereby overcome once again: controlling the borders and fighting against traffickers was the best way to save lives.

This approach was strengthened with the Action Plan against migrant smuggling, which was launched in May 2015. The Plan justified the fight against the smugglers, not only as facilitators of irregular border crossings, but also as exploiters and abusers of migrants. “Smugglers treat migrants as goods, similar to the drugs and firearms that they traffic along the same routes,” reads the document. But the plot makes yet another twist: it is the scruples of the smugglers that essentially explains the deaths on the border. The words from the text leave no room for doubt: “To maximize their profits, smugglers often squeeze hundreds of migrants onto unseaworthy boats – including small inflatable boats or end-of-life cargo ships – or into trucks. Scores of migrants drown at sea, suffocate in containers or perish in deserts. Over 3,000 migrants are estimated to have lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea in 2014.” Just a few weeks after Jean-Claude Juncker’s *mea culpa*, the European Union seemed to longer be feeling responsible. Guilt was thereby transformed into condemnation, rescue into the fight against the smugglers, saving lives at

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sea into saving lives preventatively, by leaving migrants on land.

Protection was no longer guaranteed through rescue and landing on Italian coasts, but rather by preventing migrants from leaving the coasts of North Africa, on a discursive level, the smugglers became the guilty parties

Externalization and Criminalization of the Rescue

Since 2018 we have been witness to a dual process: the externalization of rescue operations to southern coast guards and the criminalization of the NGOs that are saving lives in the Mediterranean. The former relates to increasingly limited maritime rescue teams both in Italy and in Spain. Throughout 2018 and 2019, sea rescue on the southern Spanish border has been hit by severe budget cuts, a protracted search radar failure and personnel-related structural deficiencies on the rescue vessels. As rescue capacities of northern countries have diminished, so competences and resources of those of the South have increased. In 2018, once Libya recovered its SAR (Search and Rescue) region, its coast guard was given training and funding by the European Union and its Member States. Rescued from the South, the migrants are returned to the South. That is precisely the idea of externalizing the rescue efforts: to facilitate what a European vessel cannot do, in other words, return people to unsafe third countries.

In parallel, we have witnessed the progressive criminalization of the rescue NGOs. Firstly, they have been accused of “favouring illegal immigration” and “colluding with smugglers.” Then, the NGOs have also been persecuted for not collaborating with the Libyan coast guard. It matters little who is behind that coast guard or under what conditions the rescues are carried out. It is a question of competences and now the competences are theirs. With regard to Spain, the Open Arms rescue ship was prevented from leaving the port in Barcelona on technical grounds. With a public opinion overridingly in favour of “saving lives in the Mediterranean,” the Spanish government (the same that had welcomed the Aquarius a few months previous) opted for the technical-administrative channel, killing the issue without offering any reasons. In all cases, the aim is to expel the NGOs from the Mediterranean. As has been mentioned, the NGOs arrived with Operation Mare Nostrum to assist or work under the coordination of the Italian authorities. The progressive withdrawal of the Italian government first, and later the European Union, meant the NGOs gradually took over these increasingly vacant positions. While in 2015, they performed 14% of the rescues in the Mediterranean’s central route, in 2017 this percentage surpassed 40% (El País, 15 May 2018).

In 2019, there are hardly any NGOs left in the Mediterranean. The sea has been deserted. As we said at the beginning, all that are left are merchant ships and coast guards from the South.

Why?

Why has it been so deserted? The argument is the same as ever: the alleged pull effect of the rescue operations. The more rescue ships, the more immigrants and, consequently, more deaths. However, there is no evidence to show that if there are fewer rescues, there will be fewer immigrants and, therefore, fewer deaths. The figures, in fact, contradict the theory of the rescue operations’ “pull factor.” A group of researchers from the Forensic Architecture agency at the University of London has shown (Blaming the Rescuers, 2019) that the rescue operations, which have been gradually passed over to the hands of the NGOs, do not explain the increase in arrivals to the Italian coasts in 2016. This same study indicated, to the contrary, that the fight against smugglers has had an effect on the
practices and conditions of the crossings. It has made the vessels increasingly precarious, to the extent that migrant lives are at risk almost right from their departure. This leads us to a double contradiction. Firstly, with the pretext of saving lives, the conditions for migrants have become increasingly horrific and the border crossings increasingly expensive and dangerous. In 2017, although arrivals were reduced, there was a proportional 75% increase in the number of deaths at sea (Petrillo and Bagnoli, 2018). Secondly, given the increasingly precarious conditions of the crossing, the obligation to rescue has become something even more pressing and unavoidable. If the rescue operations do not have a pull effect, how can the reduction in arrivals be explained? According to the IOM, in 2016 there were 390,432 arrivals, in 2017 186,768 and in 2018 144,166 (IOM, 2018).

The reason for this is that border policy is not actually enacted in the Mediterranean, but beyond this, in the origin and transit countries. That is where the European countries escape from the control of their own citizenry and their own laws. That is where there is no dispute and no legal responsibility. That is where the chance to continue northwards is really thwarted. Because the impunity with which these countries act makes migration control all the more effective. And because it is easier to prevent them from leaving than from arriving. As was said already at the special meeting of the European Council in 2015: at the end of the day, the aim is “to prevent potential migrants getting to the shore of the Mediterranean” (European Council, 2015).

There is no evidence to show that if there are fewer rescues, there will be fewer immigrants and, therefore, fewer deaths.

References


Exporting Their Religious Doctrines? The Cases of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Morocco

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Islam in Europe has undeniably become a central social, cultural, legal and political issue. However, it is approached from many different angles in the public sphere. One of the most burning questions may have to do with the role played by certain predominantly Muslim states through their possible strategies for Muslims in Europe, in particular, their supposed desire to export very specific doctrinal conceptions of Islam in the context of a presumed proselytism and quest for political and diplomatic levers.

This article looks at how three different countries (Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Morocco) have, for many years, been developing a genuine religious policy targeting Muslims in the West, especially in Europe, and the reasons why. In deciding that all or some Europeans of Muslim heritage should no longer fall beyond the normally national scope of Saudi, Turkish or Moroccan public policy in the sphere of religion, these countries have sought to expand their social and diplomatic influence by appearing, depending on the circumstances, to be able to meet the doctrinal and religious needs of Muslim communities in Europe, beginning with some of their own diasporas.

In this regard, three highly distinct logics and strategies can be identified if we wish to analyse exactly how each of these countries has used the doctrinal resource to position itself as a key player in the global field of Islam. Through decades of exporting Salafist theses for the premeditated purpose of achieving hegemony over globalized Islam, Saudi Arabia has taken a global view, whereby the issue of Muslims living in Europe is a matter of preaching, rather than a quest for objective diplomatic influence. In contrast, Turkey and Morocco stand out primarily for their actions vis-à-vis their diasporas in countries such as France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Spain. Here, the aim is to find potential political intermediaries, usually at the local level (management of places of worship and communities of Moroccan or Turkish origin), but also to hold important positions at the national level within the bodies that are supposed to represent Islam in the upper echelons of each country of emigration.

However, from a doctrinal and symbolic standpoint, Morocco and Turkey clearly differ in terms of the religious content that they produce. Whilst the former seeks to occupy the space of religious moderation, the latter, under the effect of those currently in power, pursues a more militant agenda of defence of the Muslim identity.

A Networked and Globalized Islam: The Case of Salafism with a Focus on Saudi Arabia

If the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is today a nerve centre for the spread of Islam in the world, it is chiefly due to the nature of the country’s prevailing social contract and its considerable financial resources since the second half of the 20th century. As a result of the alliance between the Al Saud and Al Sheikh families – the former presiding over the country’s fate through the religious fervour provided by the latter – the monarchy has, since the 1960s, deployed a foreign policy based partly on promoting “orthodoxy” in the global Islamic arena in a context of “Arab Cold War” (hostility towards “progressive” regimes, including Nasserism), alliance with the US (since the Quincy Agreement of February 1945) and, later, rivalry with Iran (since the “Islamic Revolution” in 1979).
The predominance of Salafism in Europe since the 1990s is thus largely the result of the two-level Saudi preaching apparatus. The first level is organically and formally linked to the leadership. Made up of the Council of Senior Scholars and the Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta, it deals with the main religious matters for the State and society. Given the title of “Minister,” the Council’s members are consulted on the major issues (as diverse as they may be) affecting not only the monarchy’s policy, but also events involving Muslims around the world. At the same time, Saudi Arabia’s importance as a country for education provides another network for spreading Salafism. The resources and prestige of the universities of Mecca and Medina explain why many religious leaders (imams) have studied there and, in so doing, participated in the globalization of this Islamic offer.

Whilst it is difficult to speak of a classical diplomacy aimed at proselytism, it is possible to identify a Saudi soft power linked to Salafism, whose prestige is real for some European Muslims.

European followers are thus members of a genuine “epistemic community,”\(^1\) which is part of a networked, non-pyramidal logic. The basis for this is a feeling of initiation and of being part of a privileged group, one with a stock of purity related to the mastery of “orthodox” Islamic norms and reasoning. This group is today further backed by a rich and powerful state that many European Salafists dream of emigrating to (al-Hijrah) to protect themselves from the sources of moral “corruption” stemming from an “infidel” society. Therefore, the initial symbolic influence that Saudi Arabia has today amongst “puritan” religious communities is, first and foremost, the result of the audience that benefits from the preaching networks originating in the Gulf. Whilst it is difficult to speak of a classical diplomacy aimed at proselytism, it is possible to identify a Saudi soft power linked to Salafism, whose prestige is real for some European Muslims. Salafism, which is mostly quietist, is made up of a blend of objective strategies of mental and social rupture with the predominantly non-Muslim and even Muslim environment, but also of more equivocal practices (cultural, economic, etc.) through which the Salafists embrace and reject certain codes of modernity (appetite for entrepreneurship, disdain for political affairs, moral discrediting of anything that is not Islamic, etc.).

Morocco and the Export of “Maliki Moderation”

The Kingdom of Morocco is characterized by a conscious strategy of differentiation through moderation. Emphasizing its Maliki heritage (the historically predominant Sunni school in Northern Africa), by making consensus a cardinal value of Islamic ethics, as well as its Arab, Berber, Jewish and Andalusian heritage, Morocco, by sending imams and signing formal agreements with European countries, especially France, explicitly highlights its distance from “extremism.” Seeking to position itself as the hub for the spreading of an Islam at once traditional and modern, one presented by the most senior officials (beginning with the King) as the surest factor to fight terrorism and the appeal of jihadism, Morocco is actually targeting two very specific groups.

The first is its own diaspora, over which it seeks to exert increasing religious control, whether in the historical countries of emigration (France, Belgium, Germany, etc.) or more recent ones (Spain, Italy, etc.). In keeping with its consular management of the Muslim faith in numerous European countries, allowing for both a security approach and a hoped-for consolidation of allegiances between the Makhzen and its overseas nationals, since the early 2000s, the kingdom has invested heavily in bodies representing Islam, as witnessed by the creation and support for structures linked to it (the Rally of Muslims in France or the National Federation of Muslims of France within the framework of the French Council of the Muslim Faith in France, officially set up in 2003).

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The second group consists of the European states themselves, in which emigrants and their descend- 
ant are encouraged to take on positions of respon-
sibility, in order to strengthen Morocco’s channels of influence with European countries. Above all, insofar as it presents Moroccan Islam as rooted in tolerance and multiple traditions, this is a real emerging area of foreign policy: religious moderation (as opposed to the Gulf states, accused by some Western countries of promoting extremism). Amongst the many examples of this foreign policy, Morocco has provided training for imams for many years in order both to consolidate its control over its diaspora and to position itself as an ally of European countries against radical and violent movements. By way of example, on 20 September 2015, French Foreign Minister Lau-
rent Fabius and his Moroccan counterpart, Ahmed 
Toufik, signed an agreement to train 50 French imams at the Mohammed VI Institute, founded in March of the same year. The two officials claimed they sought “to encourage a middle-ground Islam,” “entirely root-
ed in the values of the Republic and secularism.”

Morocco has provided training for imams for many years in order both to consolidate its control over its diaspora and to position itself as an ally of European countries against radical and violent movements

Turkey and the Synthesis of Islamism and Diasporic Diplomacy

Turkey, another important Muslim country in the Med-
iterranean region, millions of whose citizens have settled in the European Union (Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, etc.) in recent decades, has positioned itself differently, especially since the arrival to power of a movement born of political Islam. Whilst the issues of dialogue between civilizations and the fight against extremism have been present and tackled since 2003, the issue of the defence of the Muslim identity (especially when it is depicted as being under attack) is central. This partly explains the increasingly active role of Turkish official religious insti-
tutions (Diyenet, etc.) in the management of Europe’s Turkish communities. Here, too, in the name of a di-a.

asporic diplomacy, but also of a broader, often more radical discourse of defence of all Muslims, Turkey projects the image of a country able to speak to Eu-
ropean states as an equal. These two dimensions (the assumption of community management and a self-interested pan-Islamism) are the basis for a Turk-

ish policy on Islam synonymous with activism in the representative bodies of this religion in European countries (as can be seen, for instance, in Germany in the Central Council of Muslims in Germany) and religious pride. The funding of large mosques, the call not to be ashamed of one’s religion, the fight against Islamophobia or even the need to have children because they are the future of Europe have thus all been recurring themes in President Erdogan’s dis-
course for several years. The Turkish State hopes to receive the dividends of a more accepted Islamic consciousness in its diplomatic dialogue with Euro-

pean countries. Aiming to be the godfather of Mus-

lim Europeans, the Turkish government promotes a more doctrinally militant and less complex Islam that can both attract religious profiles in search of religious heralds and cause more or less serious friction with its European neighbours.

The assumption of community management and a self-interested pan-Islamism are the basis for a Turkish policy on Islam synonymous with activism in the representative bodies of this religion in European countries
Tourism Trends in the MENA Region

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Deserts, harsh climates and unique ethno-religious heritages characterize the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MENA’s cultural and natural geographies make it one of the most dynamic tourism regions in the Mediterranean Basin. It is home to extreme natural environments and ageless living and built heritage. These assets together create a region with unmistakable tourism appeal. MENA is simultaneously blessed with rich resources that appeal to a wide range of tourist types and beset with problems that challenge not only tourism development. Under the broader concepts of geopolitics, heritage diversity, environmental hardships and emerging opportunities, this contribution briefly examines some of the opportunities and challenges that influence tourism in the region.

Geopolitics

Perhaps the most notable tourism-related feature in MENA is the volatile security landscape, which affects tourism growth and development more than any other force. Current and recent wars have essentially halted international tourism in several countries, although limited domestic tourism continues to function in them, as do the activities of a small number of extreme adventurers looking to visit active war zones. International embargoes against Iran have diminished international arrivals there. The diplomatic crisis (2017-present) between Qatar and several other MENA countries has reduced intraregional tourism considerably, and deliberate terror attacks against tourist targets in Egypt and Tunisia immediately rendered those countries unsafe to visit. Likewise, the Arab Spring (2010-2011) resulted in the overthrow of governments in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen, ongoing conflicts in Libya, Syria and Yemen, and public protests in nearly every other country in the region, some of which resulted in major government, legal and policy changes (Timothy, 2019).

Some countries have adopted extensive tourism recovery efforts to re-elevate tourism for economic development. Lebanon has had to recover from its 1975-1990 civil war, although the ongoing conflict in Syria continues to influence Lebanon’s image abroad. Syria’s civil war has also affected tourism in neighbouring Jordan and Turkey owing to fears of a spillover. In response to tourist-targeted terror attacks, Tunisia and Egypt have taken major strides in recovery marketing to rebrand themselves as recuperated destinations that are now safe to visit.

Besides deterring would-be tourists, conflicts have resulted in other tourism-related outcomes. For example, the Middle East wars, particularly those in Iraq and Syria, have been especially destructive to the region’s cultural heritage. Many ancient monuments were intentionally targeted by extremists for their destruction. Museums and historic sites have been extensively looted and artifacts sold illicitly to fund warfare. Many other sites have been devastated as non-targeted casualties of war. Many ancient heritage scapes of the Middle East have been destroyed beyond repair, costing not only important historical records but also the future livelihoods of people who had previously depended on tourism.

Another outcome of Middle East conflicts is the development of unusual types of tourism. Adventure-some tourists visiting active war zones, mentioned earlier, is one example. This occurs in Iraq, Syria and
Afghanistan regularly. Another tourism type is referred to as “solidarity tourism.” The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while causing periodic downturns in international arrivals, has stimulated a travel phenomenon known as “solidarity tourism,” although this is not endemic to this region. This involves people traveling to the “Holy Land” either to support the cause of Israel or the cause of Palestine. Large numbers of Christians visit Palestinians in the West Bank to demonstrate solidarity and empathy for their plight under Israeli occupation. Other evangelical Christian groups, usually from Europe and North America, are passionate supporters of Israel and its position in the conflict (Ron & Timothy, 2019).

Some countries have adopted extensive tourism recovery efforts to re-elevate tourism for economic development. Tunisia and Egypt have taken major strides in recovery marketing to rebrand themselves as recuperated destinations that are now safe to visit.

Heritage Diversity

More than any other asset, cultural heritage is the nucleus of tourism in MENA. The region is rich in intangible and living culture, ancient ruins and monuments, large urban areas, colonial architecture and rural communities, all of which have become synonymous with tourism. Despite its history of dissonance and contestation, the colonial legacy of the region has mixed British, French, Ottoman, Spanish and even Italian influences with Arab architectural, culinary, administrative and celebratory traditions that have contributed to a unique cultural landscape that underscores much of MENA’s tourism.

The region is home to world-class ancient monuments and archaeological sites, many of which have been inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List and reflect the imprints of successive inter-millennial empires that have ruled North Africa and the Levant. Intangible heritage is an important part of the region’s tourism sector as well, particularly as manifested in faith, language, music, dance, handicraft traditions, nomadism, social networks and the instinctive “Arab hospitality,” which has become well-known throughout the world.

Owing to the region’s vast arid environments and lack of water resources, the majority of countries in MENA have highly urbanized populations. Cities have become centres for tourism, not only as gateways to individual nations through the massive development of mega-airports, but also as crucibles of commerce, business and leisure tourism. The ancient cities of MENA still exude an aura of mystique and “Oriental Otherness,” which appeals to many people’s senses of adventure and romanticism.

The most important form of heritage tourism for the region at large is religious tourism, or pilgrimage (Ron & Timothy, 2019). Pilgrimage is an ancient phenomenon that has existed in the Middle East and North Africa for millennia. As the hearth of the three Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism), the Middle East is a major destination for many of the world’s faithful.

Saudi Arabia is home to the Al-Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, the holiest site in the world for Muslims, where approximately 2.5 million congregate each year during the hajj pilgrimage to satisfy the demands of their religion. Other Muslim pilgrimages take place at Medina, Saudi Arabia and in Jerusalem at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Most Muslim pilgrims are not permitted to visit the Jerusalem site because it is controlled by Israel, and travel to Israel is forbidden for citizens of most MENA countries.

There are many other sites in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and in North Africa that are important Muslim pilgrimage attractions. Likewise, there are numerous sites in Israel, Palestine and a handful of other MENA countries that are, or could be, important destinations for Jewish travellers from Israel and from the wider Jewish diaspora. Although there are important Christian holy sites in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, the majority of Christian religious travel takes place in Israel, Palestine and Egypt, with Jordan and Turkey being important secondary destinations in the “Holy Land.” The potential for Christian religious heritage-based tourism in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon is enormous but underutilized because of ongoing conflict and insecurity (Ron & Timothy, 2019).
Environmental Challenges

While conflict is the biggest immediate challenge in MENA, environmental pressures are also critical. Some countries’ overdependence on oil and gas has created an unbalanced socio-economic environment leading to overdevelopment, especially in the Gulf states (Timothy, 2019). Climate change has many effects on the region. Since the mid-twentieth century, warmer days and nights, intensified heatwaves and increased dryness have been observed throughout MENA (Hall, 2019). The major implications for these changes include increased water scarcity, sea level rise, coral bleaching, algal blooms and extreme weather events.

Tourism is a water-intensive industry. Reductions in water resources are expected to increase competition and tension between tourism and other sectors.

Tourism is a water-intensive industry. Reductions in water resources are expected to increase competition and tension between tourism and other sectors. Importing and desalination is expensive but perhaps the only options for many countries who rely on tourism as an important economic sector. Rising seas are expected to continue affecting beach-based tourism and coastal areas, as well as built environments. Coral bleaching is a growing problem in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, with some estimates suggesting the disappearance of Red Sea coral within the next 30 years (Hall, 2019). Extreme events, such as heatwaves, floods and droughts also appear to be increasing in MENA, affecting not only tourism but everyday life for its citizens.

Emerging Opportunities and Patterns

Several countries in the Arabian Gulf, whose rentier economies have long relied on oil and natural gas revenue, now realize the need to diversify their economies beyond these finite natural resources. Some states have started turning to tourism as an alternative growth strategy, most notably the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and Bahrain (Stephenson & al-Hamarneh, 2017). While some countries in MENA (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) have been reluctant to focus on tourism as an economic development strategy, other countries have embraced it. Some states’ reluctance to welcome traditional tourists derives from the negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism, such as immoral behaviour and disrespect for local traditions. Nevertheless, several recent trends have emerged that differ from traditional tourism in the region but which reflect rapid modernization, a globalizing marketplace and the recognized need for a more diversified economic foundation.

The UAE, Qatar and Bahrain have engaged in hyper-development and capacious urbanization led by the construction of mega-malls, expansive housing estates and ultra-luxury apartment complexes. These three countries have focused their attention on high-end, luxury forms of tourism, including shopping, medical tourism, sport tourism, mega-events, MICE tourism (business tourism), and second home tourism. Part of these practices have included developing the most superlative attractions and structures with such descriptors as “the largest,” “the highest,” “the newest,” or “the only.” Part of this hyperreal transition has been the development of air transport hubs and international airlines that compete to be among the best air service providers, having the best routes and guaranteeing the best safety records. Qatar Airways, Etihad and Emirates are now rated among the world’s best airlines, and their hubs in Doha, Abu Dhabi and Dubai are among the most famous transit locations in the world. In addition to their transportation roles, these airports reflect the hyperreal development endemic to the region, including hotels, shopping centres, sports venues and other characteristics of the modern concept of “airport-cum-mega-mall” (Timothy, 2019).

In addition to air travel, the cruise sector has seen considerable growth in MENA in recent years. While several coastal countries in the region continue to eschew this sector, others have welcomed it. Cruise tourism in MENA takes place in four general regions: the Mediterranean coast, the Nile River, the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf. The Mediterranean has long been a popular cruise region, and ports in MENA states, such as Turkey, Israel and Morocco have been...
leading Mediterranean cruise destinations for many years. Tunisia and Egypt have more recently appeared on the Mediterranean cruise map. Nile River cruises are gaining popularity, especially with increasing numbers of ports in the south. Red Sea cruises include stops in several of Egypt’s coastal resorts and Aqaba, Jordan, from which land packages to Petra and sites in Israel are important. A limited number of cruises also call at the port of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In MENA, the cruise sector continues to see the most growth in the Arabian Gulf, with ports in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE and Oman receiving increased numbers of cruise ships in recent years.

The UAE, Qatar and Bahrain have focused their attention on high-end, luxury forms of tourism

Conclusion

MENA is a dynamic part of the Mediterranean region with unique physical and cultural characteristics. Many countries are salient tourist destinations, while others suffer from conflict-tainted images or environmental challenges that suppress their tourism potential. While some elect not to develop tourism, most now accept it as an eventuality. Cultural heritage lies at the traditional core of MENA’s tourism, although this has recently been augmented by hyper-urbanization, cruises, medical tourism, shopping, transit tourism, desert safaris and even snow skiing in Morocco, Algeria and Turkey. Despite its inherent political and ecological volatility, MENA has considerable tourism potential that remains largely unrealized, but which will become increasingly important in the years to come.

References


Cultural Dialogue in the Mediterranean Region

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My doctoral thesis defence in last century’s pre-digital era, marked the end of almost half a decade of leapfrogging between the four corners of the Mediterranean. Today, you can complete a digital thesis without leaving the comfort of your Wi-Fi zone. But, that practice of amassing photocopies and reports whilst out on the road, however outdated, slow, primitive and environmentally-unfriendly it may have been, somehow forced one to find a balance between the translation of what people wanted to appear in texts and what was inadvertently pulsating in the street. Equally, you could perceive the colours and smells of places; things that weren’t to be found in the books. In short, you experienced, first-hand, the “countryside and countrymen.” The conclusion I would like to reach is that the Europe and the Arab world of the 1980s, once you were in them, were much less different to each other than each of those past worlds differ from one another today. As this is the first idea I would like to highlight in this text, I will try to be a little more specific: Europe in the early eighties, pre-Erasmus and low-cost flights, was an expanding hive of old folk; happy for having left behind their old suspicions and distrust and expanding and gaining strength because of the clear perception that problems, from now on, would always come from outside. But it was a hive, as I said. With its separate compartments. The youth were yet to pull down the walls and reach today’s plain-to-see uniformity after decades of university exchanges, low-cost weekends away and clothing at bargain prices, all bearing the same labels.

Across the water, that Arab world in the eighties was still just that, the Arab world. The Arabness rhetoric was at its lowest ebb, although, at the time, no one knew anything about that. You could find Tunisians or Algerians in the eastern Arab universities. Iraqis in Cairo. Lebanese and Palestinians everywhere. All the Moroccan academics were trying to get published in the Lebanese magazines *Al-Adab* or *Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi*, whose issues were on sale on the streets of Tangier, Sfax or Algiers. In contrast, its youth still lacked today’s surprising uniformity; surprising after decades of border closures, distrust, unexpected wars in places where Arabness most prospered, such as Iraq and Syria. And I say today’s surprising uniformity, above all aesthetically speaking, because it does not come from personal exchange and contact, as it was with the aforementioned, equivalent situation in Europe. The wings were clipped of any kind of Arab exchange between people, and, instead, today’s uniformity stems from a costumbrist and social Islamization that has been emptied of any kind of reference to Arabness. The Arabs of the past, therefore, are no longer seen today as nationals of a country or Arabs in general, but as Muslim men and women. It has been widely stated that everything that is not tradition is plagiarism. The Arab world of the eighties and nineties ceased to follow the path it did in the sixties and seventies, instead deciding to inhabit the new replacement ideology of Islamism. This brought about a real change in cultural paradigm, plagiarized, very probably, from Iran’s revolutionary Islamic aesthetic and the no less revolutionary Wahhabi petro-Islam.

As Fernando Broncano reminds us, culture is how a society reproduces itself.\(^1\) Equally, it is not a natural

\(^1\) The author talks about “individual plasticity” in our relation with culture, as compared with the stereotype of the “collective slab of culture” (Broncano, 2007).
legacy, but rather the product of generational narration. To put it another way: a single generation is enough to put together a complete, cultural narrative of social belonging. In the case of the region in question, the Mediterranean, represented here by the complementary pairing of Europe and the Arab world, it could be said that in the two generations that separate the present day and that Europeanness / Arabness of the seventies, what has triumphed has not been the conviction of a common future (probably derived from a no more distant past), but rather the ancient and romantic model of culture, as a watertight compartment, visceral and non-rational. Created from a reservoir, not a sea. So, the second idea I would like to highlight here is that all Mediterranean cultural dialogue is today condemned to failure because of the exclusionary, communitarian narratives and reverberating monologues, which are a common plague to the North and South shores of the Mediterranean and a complete novelty to this generation.

The aforementioned pre-digital thesis went under the title *El Diálogo Euro-Árabe* (*The Euro-Arab Dialogue*), the story of the old institution known as the EAD (1973-1991) in which institutional Europe took its first steps towards a common foreign policy (one of the major milestones of the Venice Declaration in 1980) and in which the Arab League, to make it easy for Europe to sit down with it face to face, withdrew the identification of “Egypt” or “Palestine” (the crux of the issue) to present themselves as Arabs. What was interesting about the EAD was that it was prohibited to speak about what actually concerned Europe (oil) or what really made the Arabs sit up in their seats (Palestine), and yet enormous progress was made in both camps thanks to their speaking exclusively about how much the EAD could unite the two. No less interesting was that every time there was an awkward silence in the permanent dialogue, it was through references to history that they were able to get back on track; a debate, publication, university meeting on the Mediterranean’s shared Arab legacy, and especially that unusual European Arab space of Al-Andalus or Sicily. Quite a contrast to today’s essayism, which is apologetic, brotherly and draws on the most violent of histories.

So, let us focus on how much it characterized the biggest Euro-Arab bridge in history: little was put down in writing, only the positive was spoken about and troubles were not stirred up. Discord was accepted, as it was politely understood that dialogue did not mean fusion. Incidentally, I would also like to point out that if historical accounts (Euro-Arab, Mediterranean, Andalusian…) formed the narrative cushion on which everything rested in terms of the relations between these neighbours, what really put paid to the EAD was the continuous presence of Atlantic contamination (the excessively early Gymnich compromise, which allowed for North American interference) and its correlative political venom: the EAD died when the diplomatic mechanisms that had been expropriated were politicized and nationalized. Culture serves to level the political playing field, but mixing these two areas can be lethal.

All Mediterranean cultural dialogue is today condemned to failure because of the exclusionary, communitarian narratives and reverberating monologues, which are a common plague to the North and South shores of the Mediterranean.

The life of the Euro-Arab Dialogue and the causes of its failure are clear proof of two factors that have to be considered: firstly, how right Broncano was – we saw it – when he defined culture as the way in which society reproduces itself. Because the vision held of the Mediterranean culture has radically changed in a short space of time. Two generations have been focused exclusively on controversy, on the forging of a chain of identities. And this has been embedded in the exclusionary cultural narratives, no longer between Europe and the Arab world, but between the nations of Europe and Islam, the new actor disguised as the old one. The second factor, which stems from

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this, points at the fact that if we want to generate a Mediterranean culture of open societies, the key lies in the narrative we want to offer. If, generation after generation, we continue to reproduce the idea that our culture is that of my group and me, so far as it represents me today projected narratively into the past, then we will advance towards a scattered Mediterranean. If, however, we minimize the absurd tellurism of Mediterranean communitarianism (pernicious narrative blockade), we could compose a Mediterranean culture of the future that is operative and realistic. But let’s stop to take a look at that, because it is the third and central idea of these pages.

The Mediterranean is affected by the changing avatars specific to global geo-strategy (resources, populations) and those of more general geopolitics deriving from relevant natural factors, which range from the fusion of Atlantic-Mediterranean waters in Gibraltar, to Suez with the Red Sea and the no less complex connectivity with the Black Sea in Istanbul. Not to mention the tempestuous Great Sand Sea in the south. But, besides this, certain factors should also be considered which exclusively and directly affect Europe and the Arab world: that is, the geopolitics of history, that idea of culture as a natural resource (Peter; Dornhof & Arigita, 2013) which can be exploited, shared, reforested or, to the contrary, used up. In this concept of culture to which we have referred – again: generational narration in which a society reproduces itself -, it is clear that, seen from a global perspective, the 20th century did very little to compile a Mediterranean culture, while, on the other hand, it fell into a frenetic cultural compilation based on the most closed form of communitarianism.

Amos Oz, in this regard, considers who could have imagined that after the 20th century would come the 11th century again (Oz, 2012); a time of programmed, religious-based conflicts (unprecedented in the 20th century) and the current end-of-days cloning of an exclusionary model of identity, of which we were given warning in the Yugoslav Wars in the nineties, but which would only grow in size. “Captivated and spellbound by the mirages of communitarian ideologies” in its most reductionist sense (writes Georges Corm, 2006), the Mediterranean culture has been divided and compartmentalized into a kind of atypical cellular gemmation whose roots are sunk deep not only in European nationalisms – born, as we said, from the damaging, romantic notion of culture -, but which has been unexpectedly projected, transforming the conventional colonial divisions into self-fulfilling prophecies.

In today’s Mediterranean culture, in the generational narrative that we have decided to reproduce, there is no longer the right to equality but rather to difference. This is the sole basis for the identitarian definition on both shores and undoubtable colonial imprint, which in no way improved the (surely) more open millet system of the Ottoman Empire: it is common knowledge that the French High Commissioner in Lebanon (1936) left a legacy consisting of deep communitarian division, which not only could not be dissolved (although this was attempted) in the Taif Agreement of 1989 (Castaignède, 2014) after its bloody civil war, but rather was exported: as a general framework of reference, confessional, communitarian representation, would, some time later, serve to patent a similar division in civilian society after another war, that of Iraq, whose bizarre “modern” constitution suddenly Islamized parliamentary life and forced confessional groupings for any party that wished to rise to power. So, confessional parliaments on the one hand (with their tried and tested conflictivity and which hold back national and, by association, international development) and political Islamization on the other, are, ultimately, the oil slick spilt from an Arab space whose 20th century was completely removed from these developments, perceived, as of today, as tradition thanks to this logic of “culture as generational narration.”

I said at the beginning that the most credible, palpable and feelable Europe is not the Europe of treaties, but rather one of a certain population homogeneity which today is at risk of regression. However, and this serves by way of a conclusion: in the same way, the most credible Arab world would be that of a sustainable common culture (Al-Rodhan, 2009), which can link perfectly with Europe in a common Mediterranean culture. The mechanisms of that sustainable common Mediterranean culture are clearly evident: on the one hand, there are the horizontal ones; the return of exchanges of young people, workers, families, professionals between Arab countries who, today, have protected their borders and only mix with refugees.

And on the other hand, we have the vertical mechanisms: the narrative plot of a collective identity based on open societies and the right to equality, and not difference. The opposite option is the ghettoization
of the Mediterranean. In this respect the previously cited Amos Oz also has some timely reflections, as he explains how, around the social formation of the State of Israel, a strange myth has arisen about “Western” exclusivity, while most of its inhabitants come from a population redistribution of the Arab and Islamic world resulting from communitarian demands, given that thousands of Jews formed part of the old Arab, Turkish, Iranian etc. Mediterranean societies. There was no need for collective identification and today the coexistence of these people seems increasingly unlikely. And this is not to mention the similar ghettoization of the many Arab Christianities, in this oil slick of collectivization.

In today’s Mediterranean culture, in the generational narrative that we have decided to reproduce, there is no longer the right to equality but rather to difference. This is the sole basis for the identitarian definition on both shores.

The reality is that if one wanders today through the streets of Jerusalem, Amman, Beirut, Alexandria, Tangier, Madrid, Paris or Brussels, there is the perception that the big cities of the Euro-Arab oval are perfectly prepared, socially speaking, for a cultural narrative of open citizenry. Their youth, for better or for worse, are increasingly homogenous, whether because of the profusion of Muslim veils and beards, hipsters with tracksuits and caps, tattoos, or the aforementioned trend of sporting the same clothing brands. Because they are the real fulfilment of what universal history has always been: the contagion of humanity in movement. The sociologist Alejandro Portes, winner of the Princess of Asturias Award for Social Sciences, speaks coherently of the social sustainability of populations that need each other mutually, which, naturally, tend towards fusing. Although it would be a different story if it were left to polemology to write out this Mediterranean culture. In that regard, the permeability of social media and the immediacy of fashions and tastes tend towards homogeneity because of the sum of the contributions. I thought about this whilst preparing these lines and listening to a song of Marc Anthony “Vivir mi vida”, the Spanish version of Cheb Khaled’s “C’est la vie.” And I thought about how, during the Gilets Jaunes protests in Paris, Les Saltimbanks composed the Arab-style anthem, “On lâche rien,” or TiBZ wrote the song “Nation” (claiming the Europeanness of those who came from the South), among a multitude of possible examples with a certain shared aesthetic of cultural fusion. At the end of the day, this is what marks a generation, in whose hands it is to decide if they want to write out a Mediterranean culture or one of sealed compartments.

References


Oz, Amos, How to Cure a Fanatic. London: Vintage, 2012. pág. 46


MAP A.1 | Multidimensional Poverty

Population in Multidimensional Poverty (%)
- More than 15%
- From 10% to 15%
- From 5% to 10%
- From 3% to 5%
- From 1% to 2%
- Less than 1%
- Data unavailable

Population Vulnerable to Multidimensional Poverty (%)
- Jordan
- FYROM
- Serbia
- Tunisia
- Bosnia …
- Montenegro
- Palestine
- Algeria
- Egypt
- Albania
- Syria
- Libya
- Morocco

Population living below income poverty line (%)

Population in severe multidimensional poverty (%)

Own Production. Source: UNDP.
MAP A.2a | Vote for Far-right Parties in the European Elections 2019

MAP A.3 | Gross Domestic Product in Mediterranean Countries (2017)

Gross Domestic Product per capita, current prices
(purchasing power parity; international dollars)

- More than 40,000
- From 35,000 to 40,000
- From 30,000 to 35,000
- From 25,000 to 30,000
- From 20,000 to 25,000
- From 15,000 to 20,000
- From 10,000 to 15,000
- Less than 10,000
- Data unavailable

Gross Domestic Product, current prices
(purchasing power parity; in billions of international dollars)

- More than 2,000
- From 1,000 to 2,000
- From 500 to 1,000
- From 250 to 500
- From 100 to 250
- From 50 to 100
- From 20 to 50
- Less than 20

Gross Domestic Product Based on Purchasing-power-parity (PPP)
Share from Mediterranean countries of world total

Source: IMF.
MAP A.4 | Government Debt in Mediterranean Countries (2017)

General Government Gross Debt
- More than 150%
- From 100% to 150%
- From 80% to 100%
- From 40% to 60%
- Less than 40%
- Data unavailable

General Government Net Lending Borrowing

Data unavailable

Source: IMF.
MAP A.5 | Labour force in Mediterranean Countries by Age and Sex, 2017

Evolution of Median Age of the Labour Force

- More than 45
- From 42.5 to 45
- From 37.5 to 40
- From 35 to 37.5
- Less than 35

Persons (age 15-65) Inside/Outside the Labour Force, by sex and age (%)

- Male Outside Labour Force
- Male Labour Force
- Female Outside Labour Force
- Female Labour Force

Own Production. Source: ILOStat, ILO modelled estimates.
MAP A.5 | Labour force in Mediterranean Countries by Age and Sex, 2017

Unemployed in Mediterranean Countries, by sex and age

North Mediterranean Countries 11.73 million
South and East Mediterranean Countries 12.28 million

Own Production. Source: ILOStat, ILO modelled estimates.
MAP A.6 | International Trade in Digitally-deliverable Services (2016-2017)

Percentage of Total Trade in Services

- More than 55%
- From 45% to 55%
- From 35% to 45%
- From 25% to 35%
- From 15% to 25%
- From 10% to 15%
- Less than 10%
- Data unavailable

US dollars at Current Prices in millions

- <200
- 2,000
- 6,000
- 30,000

Own Production. Source: UNCTAD.
MAP A.7 | Indian Trade with Mediterranean Countries (2017)

**Exports**

Indian Trade with Mediterranean Countries (in thousands of dollars) 2017

- More than 5,000,000
- From 3,000,000 to 5,000,000
- From 1,000,000 to 3,000,000
- From 750,000 to 1,000,000
- From 500,000 to 750,000
- Less than 20,000
- From 250,000 to 500,000
- From 100,000 to 250,000
- From 50,000 to 100,000
- Less than 20,000

**Imports**

Data unavailable

Source: UNCTAD.
MAP A.8 | Vaccination and Immunization in Mediterranean Countries (2018)

**Percentage of vaccinated children**

- BCG (Tuberculosis)
- DTP 3rd dose (Diphteria, Tetanus, Pertussis)
- HepB 3rd dose (Hepatitis B)
- Hib 3rd dose (Haemophilus influenzae)
- MCV 2nd dose (Measles)
- PCV 3rd dose (Streptococcus pneumoniae)
- RCV (Rubella)
- Pol 3rd dose (Poliomyelitis)

Source: UNICEF.
MAP A.9  | Suicide Rates in Mediterranean Countries 2000-2016

Total Suicide Rates, 2016 per 100,000 inhabitants
- More than 13
- From 10 to 13
- From 7 to 10
- From 5 to 7
- Less than 3

Suicide Rates 2000-2016, per gender and 100,000 inhabitants
- Male
- Female

Own Production. Source: WHO.
MAP A.10  | Food Supply in Mediterranean Countries (2013)

Food Supply (kcal/capita/day) by Type of Products

- More than 3,550 kcal/capita/day
- From 3,450 to 3,550 kcal/capita/day
- From 3,350 to 3,450 kcal/capita/day
- From 3,250 to 3,350 kcal/capita/day
- From 3,150 to 3,250 kcal/capita/day
- Less than 3,050 kcal/capita/day
- Data unavailable

Food Supply: Oilcrops Oil (kcal/capita/day) by type

- Olive Oil
- Soyabean Oil
- Sunflowerseed Oil
- Oilcrops Oil Other

Food Supply: Meat. Type of Meat that Provides more Kcal in each Country

- Bovine Meat
- Mutton & Goat Meat
- Pigmeat
- Poultry Meat

Source: FAO.
MAP A.10  | Food Supply in Mediterranean Countries (2013)

**Food Supply (kcal/capita/day)**

**Animal Products**
- Albania
- Algeria
- Bosnia and ... (Omitted for brevity)
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Egypt
- France
- Greece
- Israel
- Italy
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Malta
- Montenegro
- Morocco
- North Macedonia
- Portugal
- Serbia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Tunisia
- Turkey

**Vegetal Products**
- Meat
- Milk - Excluding Butter
- Eggs
- Animal fats
- Fish Seafood
- Alcoholic Beverages
- Cereals - Excluding Beer
- Fruits - Excluding Wine
- Vegetables
- Vegetable Oils & Oilcrops
- Sugar, Sweeteners & Sugar Crops
- Starchy Roots
- Other Vegetal Products

Source: FAO.
MAP A.11 | Fertility in Mediterranean Countries

MAP A.12 | Mollusc Production (Captures and aquaculture), 2017

Global Production

Production in the Mediterranean

Albania
Algeria
Croatia
Cyprus
Egypt
France
Greece
Italy
Israel
Lebanon
Libya
Malta
Montenegro
Morocco
Palestine
Slovenia
Spain
Syria
Tunisia
Turkey

Clams, cockles, arkshells
Mussels
Oysters
Miscellaneous marine molluscs
Oysters
Abalones, winkles, conchs
Scallops, pectens
Squids, cuttlefishes, octopuses

Own Production. Source: FAO Fisheries.
### MAP A.13 | CO₂ Emissions in Mediterranean Countries 2016

#### CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion (millions of tonnes of CO₂)

- **More than 300**
- **From 200 to 300**
- **From 100 to 200**
- **From 50 to 100**
- **From 20 to 30**
- **From 5 to 20**
- **Less than 5**
- **Data unavailable**

#### Countries with Highest CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion (millions of tonnes of CO₂)

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<td>Japan</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
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#### Evolution of Mediterranean Countries CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion and Share over Total World Emissions

- **CO₂ emissions**
- **% over World total**
CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion per capita (tonnes of CO₂/capita)

- More than 7
- From 6 to 7
- From 5 to 6
- From 4 to 5
- From 3 to 4
- From 2 to 3
- Less than 2
- Data unavailable

CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion by Sector

- Electricity, Heat and Energy industry
- Manufacturing Industries and Construction
- Transport
- Residential and Commercial

Countries with Highest CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion per capita (tonnes of CO₂/capita)

- 1971:
  - Luxembourg: 15.5
  - Qatar: 18.8
  - USA: 20.7
- 1995:
  - Qatar: 30.8
  - UAE: 26.1
  - Bahrain: 20.8
- 2016:
  - Qatar: 32.8
  - Kuwait: 22.2
  - Bahrain: 20.8

Share of Electricity Output from Non Fossil Sources (%)

Luxembourg: 15.5
USA: 20.7
Qatar: 18.8
Kuwait: 17.5
Czech Rep.: 15.6
Canada: 15.5
Bahrain: 13.2
Germany: 12.5
Belgium: 12.2
Denmark: 11.2
Chronologies

Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events

January 2018

In Spain, the Constitutional Court nullifies the investiture of Carles Puigdemont as Catalan President. The European Commission (EC) proposes community mediation for the border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia. In Kosovo, the Kosovo Serb leader Oliver Ivanovic is murdered. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) – currently Republic of North Macedonia – approves co-official status for Albanian and a landmark friendship agreement with Bulgaria. The country also reaches an agreement with Greece for a new initiative to resolve the naming dispute, which sparks large-scale protests in Thessaloniki. In Albania, protests are staged against the government and two MPs lose their seats in connection with a scandal involving undeclared criminal offences. New protests take place in Greece against the austerity measures. Turkey launches its Olive Branch offensive against Manbij and Afrin, in Syria. Northern Cyprus holds elections. The Syrian army announces the capture of Western Ghouta. In Egypt, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi looks set to be the only candidate to the presidential elections in March. In Libya, clashes continue between Islamist militias and the forces of the Tripoli and Tobruk government. Social protests are held in Tunisia and Morocco.

Spain

• On 15 January the High Court of Barcelona orders Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC), the predecessor to the current Catalan European Democratic Party (PDeCat, pro-independence), to pay 6,676,105 euros for benefitting from the plot orchestrated by the accused party members, in which they received illegal commissions in exchange for public contracts.

France

• On 19 January the President Emmanuel Macron confirms his plans to bring back compulsory national service.
• On 24 January thousands of prison guards begin a strike over the spate of assaults against them by inmates and the overcrowding of French prisons.

Italy

• On 9 January some 170 people, including the president of the Crotone province Nicodemo Parrilla, are arrested in an operation against the Calabrian mafia, the ‘Ndrangheta.
• On 9 January the Italian centre-right announces that it will join forces to run in the March elections.
• On 10 January Rome hosts a new summit of the southern European countries Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Greece and Cyprus to reach a common stance on migration and EU policy.
• On 11 January the former mayor of Rome Ignazio Marino is sentenced to two years’ imprisonment for embezzlement.
• On 22 January 56 Cosa Nostra members are arrested in Agrigento accused of extortion in relation to immigrant processing centres.
• On 27 January to mark the commemoration of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp, the mayor’s office of Rome announces the renaming of streets dedicated until now to the signatories of the 1938 Manifesto of Race.

Malta

• On 26 January the collective agreement between Air Malta and its pilots is signed following weeks of tense negotiations.

Slovenia

• On 8 January the EC proposes European mediation between Slovenia and Croatia following Zagreb’s rejection of the 2017 ruling by the Court of Arbitration of The Hague over the bilateral border dispute.
• On 24 January more than 10,000 civil servants go on strike to demand salary increases.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

• On 30 January Tomislav Kovac, the former Minister of the Interior of the Republika Srpska, is charged over his responsibility in the Srebrenica massacre.

Montenegro

• On 27 January the Democratic Front (DF, conservative) and another three opposition parties sign a declaration of reconciliation between Chetniks and Partisans in an act condemned by the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) as revisionist and for reviving World War II divisions.

Serbia

• On 15 January the Belgrade Appeals Court sentences eight former members of the Vukovar Territorial Defence to 101 years’ imprisonment for the 1991 Ovcara massacre.
• On 17 January Dragan Sikimic is appointed director of the Serbian Anti-Corruption Agency amid controversy over his past involvement with the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS, conservative) as candidate and donor.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

• On 5 January the police reports the arrest in Cyprus of an Israeli man involved in the organ-trafficking network uncovered a decade ago in Kosovo.
• On 16 January Oliver Ivanovic, a prominent Kosovo Serb politician, is murdered in Mitrovica. In response, Serbia withdraws from the negotiations for the normalization of relations with Kosovo.

FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

• On 9 January FYROM and Greece agree on a new initiative to resolve the naming dispute of FYROM.
• On 11 January the Parliament adopts the law that grants Albanian co-official status throughout the country.
• On 15 January the Parliament ratifies a historic friendship agreement with Bulgaria despite the boycott by the opposition Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE).
• On 15 January the Parliament approves an amnesty bill under which around 670 convicts will be released to ease overcrowding in the prison system.

Albania

• On 5 January Aqif Rakipi, from the conservative Party for Justice, Integration and Unity (PDIU) and Gledjon Rehovica, from the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI), are stripped of their seats after the public prosecutor presents evidence of their criminal activities in Italy in the late nineties.
• On 27 January thousands of people in Tirana call for the resignation of Edi Rama’s government, accusing it of having ties with organized crime.

Greece

• On 10 January the Parliament approves a law that restricts the application of Sharia law in Thrace, where the Islamic law has governed family matters of the Muslim minority since 1923, in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne.
• On 15 January the Parliament approves the reform package agreed between the government and international lenders for the release of a new 4.5-billion-euro tranche of the Greek bailout. Thousands of demonstrators protest outside the Parliament against the cuts.
• On 21 January following the resumption of negotiations on the naming dispute, thousands of people protest in Thessaloniki against the use of the name Macedonia to describe FYROM, claiming that it would imply territorial claims over Greek Macedonia.

Turkey

• On 4 January orders are issued for the arrest of 70 army officers over their alleged ties with the Islamist cleric Fethullah Gulen, accused by Ankara of orchestrating the attempted coup in July 2016.
• On 4 January Idris Baluken, member of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), is sentenced to 16 years and eight months in prison for terrorism and the party’s vice-president, Aysel Tugluk, to a year and a half for organizing illegal demonstrations.
• On 4 January Turkey describes the decision of a US jury to convict Mehmet Hakan Atilla, an executive at the Turkish bank Halkbank, on counts of conspiracy, as “political conspiracy.” Atilla was found guilty of helping Iran evade sanctions imposed by Washington.
• On 4 January the government removes Murat Hazinedar from his position as mayor of Istanbul’s Besiktas district, after linking him with the 2016 coup attempt.
• On 4 January, speaking from where he is imprisoned on terrorism charges, the co-leader of the HDP Selahattin Demirtas announces that he will not seek reelection.

Syria

• On 2 January the Syrian army announces it has fully captured Western Ghouta.
• On 6 January at least 17 civilians are killed in Syrian and Russian airstrikes in Eastern Ghouta, a rebel enclave under siege by government forces. On 8 January at least 21 civilians are killed in a number of airstrikes attributed to Syrian and Russian aircraft in Idlib. The offensive on both areas continues throughout January and inflames diplomatic tensions with Turkey.
• On 19 January the Turkish Defence Minister Nurettin Canikli announces the start of Operation Olive Branch to intervene in Afrin, under the control of the People’s Protection Units (YPG), the Syrian wing of the terrorist organization the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). The move comes in response to the US announcement to transform its allies in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance led by the YPG, into a border protection force.
• On 25 January the ninth round of Syrian peace talks begins in Vienna, in which the issue of how to move forwards with a new constitution is addressed.
• On 26 January the Kurdish administration in Afrin calls on Damascus to send troops to defend the area from the Turkish offensive.

Egypt

• On 4 January the public prosecutor orders the arrest of 75 people accused of human trafficking.
• On 7 January the former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq announces that he will not run in the presidential elections in March, saying that he is not the ideal person to guide the country’s future.
• On 9 January the Parliament approves a three-month extension of the state of emergency, in force since April 2017.
• On 9 January more than three-quarters of parliamentarians back Abdel
On 1 January Bulgaria takes over the six-month rotating European Presidency with the priorities of socioeconomic cohesion, European stability and security, the membership of the Western Balkans and the digital economy.

On 11 January Bulgaria announces its intention to accelerate its adoption of the euro, requesting entry into the Exchange Rate Mechanism II in June 2018.

On 29 January the European Council agrees on the directives for the second phase of the Brexit negotiations, which include the permission for London to negotiate commercial deals during the transition period with prior approval from the EU27 countries and the United Kingdom’s continuance in the Single Market until 31 December 2020, following its withdrawal from the Union in March 2019, but with no voice or vote.

February 2018

In Portugal, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) elects a new leader. France recognizes a special statute for Corsica.
Monaco and Cyprus hold parliamentary elections. Sectoral strikes are held in Malta and Slovenia. Kosovo again postpones parliamentary approval for its border agreement with Montenegro. In Greece and the FYROM, nationalist protests take place against concessions in the negotiations on the dispute over the name of the former Yugoslav republic. The Greek Economy Minister resigns. Tensions flare between Cyprus and Turkey over gas and oil exploration. The arrests continue in Turkey in connection with the coup attempt in 2016. In Syria, the army calls on its Kurdish population to help combat the Turkish offensive and steps up its offensive on Idlib and Eastern Ghouta. In Lebanon, a new political crisis erupts. Egypt launches a large-scale anti-terror operation. In Libya, the Supreme Court gives its backing to the Constitution Drafting Assembly. In Tunisia, proceedings begin for the dismissal of the governor of the Central Bank. The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) validates the fisheries agreement with Morocco.

**Portugal**

- On 18 February, the PSD elects the former mayor of Porto, Rui Rio, as the new leader of the conservative party.

**Spain**

- On 22 February, thousands of pensioners demonstrate to defend the public pensions system and against the inadequate 0.25% rise in pensions for 2018.

**France**

- On 1 February, thousands of students protest against the university admission reforms, considering them an attack on equal opportunities.
- On 7 February the President Emmanuel Macron accepts a special mention of Corsica in the Constitution, but rejects any demands that might threaten French unity.
- On 8 February the Constitutional Court overturns a law from 1963 that reserved financial compensation for the victims of the Algerian War for French citizens and extends this to include all Algerian residents during the conflict.
- On 13 February the National Assembly (lower house) approves the return to a single French constituency in the European elections.

**Monaco**

- On 28 February the new nationalist party Priority Monaco led by Stephane Valeri wins in the parliamentary elections (57.71%, 21 seats). Horizon Monaco and Union Monegasque win 2 and 1 seats, respectively.

**Italy**

- On 3 February, a former militant member of the Northern League shoots and injures several black passers-by in Macerata.
- On 13 February, the Five Star Movement (M5S, populism) discovers a “1.4-million-euro hole” in its accounts, allegedly resulting from the fraudulent activities of some of its members.

**Malta**

- On 6 February, the medical sector goes on strike after negotiations with the government fail for the privatization of three of the main Maltese hospitals.

**Slovenia**

- On 12, 13 and 14 February respectively, police officers, nurses and teachers go on strike to demand salary increases.

**Croatia**

- On 12 February, Croatia and Serbia commit to increasing cooperation, especially regarding minority rights, border policy and the search for missing persons from the Yugoslav Wars.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

- On 7 February, the Republika Srpska vetoes a cooperation agreement between the Federal Government and Europol.
- On 16 February, the former police commander Goran Saric is cleared of charges of genocide in Srebrenica.
- On 28 February, the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council orders the Bosnian State Court to compensate 44 people for the time they spent in custody while standing trial for the Bosnian War, before being acquitted.

**Montenegro**

- On 22 February, a man blows himself up outside the US embassy in protest against Montenegro’s NATO membership.

**Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244**

- On 26 February, the Appeals Court in Pristina releases three members of the pro-independence party Vetevendosje, jailed for throwing an explosive device in the Parliament in 2016, and orders a retrial.
- On 28 February, the Parliament again postpones the vote to ratify the border agreement with Montenegro.

**FYROM**

- On 18 February, the BESA Movement (Albanian nationalist) holds a congress in Skopje in which it elects Afrim Gashi as its new leader after voting for Bilal Kasami’s dismissal on 6 January over the party’s poor results in the last local elections. On 24 February, the Tetovo branch of the movement organizes a parallel congress in which it confirms that Kasami still holds the position. A split thereby emerges in which both groups claim their legitimacy to lead the movement.
- On 28 February, thousands demonstrate against the concessions the country is willing to make to reach an agreement on the naming dispute.

**Albania**

- On 22 February, on the 10th anniversary of Kosovo’s unilateral independence declaration, the Prime Minister Edi Rama suggests a single president and joint security policy for Albania and Kosovo, sparking criticism from Serbia, the US and the EU.

**Greece**

- On 4 February, thousands gather to protest against the possible uses of the term Macedonia to rename FYROM.
• On 13 February Greece lodges a formal complaint against Turkey after a collision between a Turkish boat and a Greek coastguard vessel in waters near a group of Aegean islets, whose ownership is disputed by both countries.

• On 31 January the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announces a government reshuffle following the resignation of three of its members. The most notable change is the appointment of Yannis Dragasakis as Development Minister, to replace Dimitris Papadimitriou, who resigned after he was revealed to be unethically claiming government benefits.

Turkey

• On 1 February the Konya public prosecutor orders the arrest of 120 people who formed part of a network of “secret imams” in the police forces, linked to Fethullah Gulen.

• On 16 February, minutes after announcing the release of the German Turkish journalist Deniz Yucel, the Istanbul High Criminal Court hands down life sentences to six people over their involvement in the 2016 coup attempt, among them the former editor-in-chief of the now-defunct newspaper Taraf, Ahmet Altan, and the former deputy of the Virtue Party, Nazli Ilicak.

• On 23 February Turkey summons the Dutch Embassy’s chargé d’affaires over the Dutch Parliament’s decision to recognize the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Empire as genocide.

• On 27 February a Czech court orders the release of the former leader of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), Salih Muslim, arrested in Prague on 25 February at Ankara’s request, despite Turkey having asked for him to remain in custody while the request for his extradition was being processed.

• On 27 February the Parliament approves the expulsion of the pro-Kurdish HDP MPs Ahmet Yildirim and Ibrahim Ayhan for insulating the President and making propaganda for the PKK terrorist organization, respectively.

• On 28 February the journalist Ahmet Altan is sentenced to six years in prison for spreading propaganda for a terrorist organization and insulting the Turkish President, in a sentence that is added to the life sentence handed down to him in another case.

Cyprus

• On 4 February Cyprus holds the second round of its presidential elections between the two most voted candidates from the first round (28 January). The current President, Nicos Anastasiades of the conservative Democratic Rally (DISY), wins with 55.99% of the vote, against Stavros Malas of the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), who wins 44%.

• On 13 February the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warns the Cypriot government not to “overstep the mark” in the eastern Mediterranean, after Cypriots accused the Turkish military of obstructing a vessel exploring for gas.

• On 13 February Nicos Anastasiades unveils his new government. The changes include Costas Kadas’ move from Education to Agriculture and Nicos Christodoulides as the new Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Syria

• On 4 - 5 February the regime’s forces step up their offensive on Idlib.

• On 5 February at least 23 people are killed in regime airstrikes in rebel-held Eastern Ghouta. On 7 February new strikes leave 78 dead.

• On 7 - 8 February over 100 Syrian regime fighters are killed by the US-led coalition in a failed large-scale attack in Deir ez-Zor.

• On 18 February Bashar al-Assad’s regime and the Syrian Kurds reach an agreement to halt the Turkish offensive in the north of the country. On 20 February the contingent sent by Damascus to the Afrin Canton is met with warning shots fired by Turkish troops in the area.

• On 20 February the army steps up airstrikes on the opposition stronghold of Eastern Ghouta leaving hundreds dead.

• On 22 February the Kurdish YPG announce that all its forces deployed in Aleppo will be moved to Afrin to strengthen the area against the Turkish-led military operation, thereby surrendering the control of its territory in Aleppo to the Syrian regime.

• On 23 - 24 February the EU and the UN Security Council calls for an immediate ceasefire in Eastern Ghouta in light of the urgent humanitarian situation. On 26 February Russia orders a ceasefire and the opening of humanitarian corridors, although fighting continues.

Lebanon

• On 1 February the AMAL Movement, the party of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, calls on its supporters to stop the street protests against the President Michel Aoun, from the Free Patriotic Movement, in response to the insults made by the latter’s son-in-law, Gebran Bassil, against Berri. The rivalry between Aoun and Berri has intensified since Aoun promoted dozens of officers in December 2017 without the signature of the Finance Minister Ali Hasan Jalil, a member of AMAL.

• On 7 February the Defence Council calls on Israel to stop building a border wall, which it says constitutes a direct attack on Lebanese sovereignty and violation of resolution 1701 of the United Nations Security Council.

Egypt

• On 8 February the Court of Cassation upholds the five-year prison sentence of a police Lieutenant Colonel for the death of 37 supporters of the former President Mohamed Morsi in 2013.

• On 9 February the army and police launch a full-scale anti-terror operation in Sinai, the Nile Delta and the Western Desert. On 22 February, according to the army, the operation has left 71 terrorists and six soldiers dead.

• On 21 February the authorities announce the arrest of four members of the Muslim Brotherhood on a property in Beheira belonging to the former presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, arrested on 14 February for his ties with the Brotherhood.

• On 28 February the singer Laila Amer is sentenced to two years’ imprisonment for “inciting debauchery.”

Libya

• On 2 February around 90 migrants are killed in a shipwreck off the coast of Libya.
• On 7 February Mahmud al-Werfalli, member of Khalifa Haftar’s Libyan National Army and wanted by the International Criminal Court for the summary execution of dozens of prisoners, hands himself in to the military police in eastern Libya.
• On 8 February the Coast Security Department denies the involvement of state-connected armed groups in human trafficking networks, as denounced by an exports’ report presented to the UN Security Council.
• On 9 February at least two people are killed in a double bomb attack at a mosque in Benghazi.
• On 14 February the Supreme Court overturns a ruling from July 2017 by the Bayda Appeals Court against the Constitution Drafting Assembly, thereby paving the way for a constitutional referendum and parliamentary and presidential elections.
• On 16 February Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that the authorities in Misrata and various armed groups are blocking the return to Tawergha of 40,000 forcibly displaced people, because of the support that the Tawerghans gave to Muammar Gaddafi.
• On 26 February the EU approves a 115-million-euro package to fund a programme in Libya for the evacuation of 3,800 refugees and the voluntary return of a further 15,000 to their countries of origin.
• On 28 February at least six civilians are killed in clashes in Sabha between the Awlad Suleiman and Tebu tribes, which began at the beginning of the month.

Tunisia

• On 7 February the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed begins the procedure to dismiss the governor of the Central Bank Chledi Ayari, following the European Parliament’s decision to classify Tunisia as a high-risk country for money laundering. Marouane Abassi, a senior official at the World Bank, is proposed as his replacement.
• On 11 February the longtime human rights activist Said Sadi announces his retirement from public life at the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) congress.
• On 12 February the National Defence Minister Abdelkarim Zbidi announces the future national service reform project, with adjustments regarding its compulsory nature.
• On 13 February five agents from Tunisia’s Central Bank are arrested for corruption.

Algeria

• On 12 February thousands of residents doctors, who have already been on strike for three months, demonstrate in Algiers against their working conditions and call for the suspension of the so-called civil service, which forces them to practice in remote areas.

Morocco

• On 3 February the authorities recover the bodies of more than 20 migrants that went missing in the Strait of Gibraltar.
• On 10 February the Prime Minister Saadeddine Othmani announces measures in response to the citizen protests in Jerada, which, since December 2017, have denounced shortfalls in public spending.
• On 27 February the CJEU rules on the validity of the fisheries agreement between the EU and Morocco, stating that it is not applicable to Western Sahara or the waters off the coasts of said territory.

Mauritania

• On 9 February Mauritania and Senegal sign an agreement that will allow the exploitation of the common offshore gas field Grand Tortue-Ahmeyim as of 2021.
• On 23 February the G5 Sahel antiterror security force raises 414 million euros at a donor conference in Brussels.

EU

• On 6 February the Commission presents its strategy for the Balkans which opens the door to the membership of Montenegro and Serbia in 2025, stressing that there will be no accession if the Balkan states do not resolve their territorial disputes.
• On 7 February the European Parliament rejects the proposal to create transnational lists for the 2019 European elections and approves maintaining the process for appointing the President of the Commission and the distribution of seats after the withdrawal of the United Kingdom.

March 2018

In Spain, the new Economy Minister is appointed and the former Catalan President is arrested in Germany. In France, a three-month railway strike begins. Italy holds parliamentary elections. The Slovenian Prime Minister resigns. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, divisions emerge in the Party of Democratic Action (SDA). In Montenegro, it is announced that Milo Djukanovic will run again in the presidential elections. In Serbia, the Prime Minister announces she may resign or make changes in the cabinet. In Kosovo, the border agreement with Montenegro is approved and tensions ignite with Serbia and Turkey. In FYROM, the President refuses to endorse the co-official status of the Albanian language. Turkey approves an electoral reform. In Syria, the regime forces continue to make ground in Eastern Ghouta and Turkey takes control of Afrin. Egypt holds presidential elections. In Tunisia there is unrest in Gafsa and the Parliament votes not to extend the mandate of the Truth and Dignity Commission. In Morocco there is more unrest in Jerada.

Portugal

• On 19 March the PSD appoints Jose Silvano as its secretary general after Feliciano Barreiras Duarte’s resignation over irregularities in his curriculum.

Spain

• On 1 March the former Catalan President Carles Puigdemont withdraws his candidacy to the Catalan presidency and proposes the activist Jordi Sanchez as candidate, who is currently being held in custody for alleged crimes of sedition. On 9 March the National Court denies Sanchez permission to attend
his investiture debate. On 20 March, Sanchez renounces his candidacy after the pro-independence party Together for Catalonia (JuntsxCat) proposes the former minister Jordi Turull. On 24 March, it is revealed that the leader of the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) Marta Rovira has fled to Switzerland, Turull, the former speaker of the Catalan Parliament and four former ministers are remanded in custody due to the flight risk they pose after being prosecuted for rebellion and misuse of public funds in the independence process. Spain also issues international arrest warrants against Puigdemont and the former ministers who have left the country. On 25 March, Puigdemont is arrested in Germany.

- On 7 March the Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy announces the appointment of Roman Escolano as Economy Minister to replace Luis de Guindos, appointed in February as Vice-President of the European Central Bank.
- On 8 March, International Women’s Day, a national feminist strike is held in protest against the wage gap with respect to men.
- On 17 March thousands of pensioners take to the streets again to demand guaranteed decent pensions. After this, more marches are organized throughout the year.
- On 20 March the National Court sentences ETA member Sergio Polo to 110 years’ imprisonment for the murder in 1995 of Commander Luciano Cortizo.

France

- On 11 March Jean-Marie Le Pen is stripped of his honorary presidency of the National Front at the party’s congress. There is also a proposal to rename the party the National Rally put forward by Marine Le Pen, who is confirmed as the party leader.
- On 15 March thousands of pensioners demonstrate throughout France over their loss of purchasing power.
- On 20 March the former President Nicolas Sarkozy makes a statement in the investigation into the illegal funding by the Libyan regime of his 2007 election campaign.
- On 22 March the first of multiple demonstrations takes place in the context of an intermittent three-month strike against Emmanuel Macron’s plans to reform the railway sector.
- On 23 March at least three people are killed in a hostage incident in Trebes by a Daesh supporter who is later shot dead by police in Carcassonne.
- On 23 March Mireille Knoll, a survivor of the Nazi holocaust, is murdered by two men at her home in Paris in a crime described by the authorities as anti-Semitic and which prompts a concerned Jewish community to warn of a rise in anti-Semitism in France.

Italy

- On 4 March Italy holds parliamentary elections. M5S is the most voted party (32.68%), but the right-wing coalition wins a total of 35.73% of the vote - 17.37% of the League, a far-right party, which was previously Padano secessionist and now Italian ultranationalist, 14.01% of Forza Italia (FI) and 4.35% of the liberal-conservative Brothers of Italy (Fdi). The Democratic Party (PD, centre-left) of former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi suffers a historic defeat (18.72%). Renzi steps down as the party leader on 5 March.
- On 24 March Roberto Fico (M5S) is elected President of the Chamber of Deputies and Elisabetta Alberti Caselati (FI) becomes the first woman President of the Italian Senate.

Slovenia

- On 14 March the Prime Minister Miro Cerar resigns after the Supreme Court’s decision to annul the results of the referendum held in September 2017 on the Koper-Divaca railway project.
- On 16 March Slovenia files a complaint with the EC against Croatia for the country’s refusal to abide by the arbitration court ruling on the Piran Bay border dispute.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 13 March the Prime Minister of Sarajevo Elmedin Konakovic founds a new party People and Justice, after handing in his full resignation from the SDA on 30 January over tensions with the party leader Bakir Izetbegovic.
- On 20 March Bosnian and Moldavia agree to give each other mutual support in their European integration processes.

Montenegro

- On 19 March the ruling DPS announces Milo Djukanovic as its presidential candidate in April’s elections.

Serbia

- On 4 March the SNS wins the Belgrade elections.
- On 20 March the Prime Minister Ana Brnabic announces she may resign or make changes in the cabinet if the members of her government cannot work together more cohesively.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 7 March the mayor of Pristina Shpend Ahmeti leaves Vetevendosje adding to a string of members who have left since December 2017 due to the pro-independence party’s internal crisis.
- On 9 March Fatmir Limaj, the former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) and former minister, is cleared of responsibility for the murder of two civilians in Bellanica during the conflict in 1998.
- On 21 March Vetevendosje deputies throw tear gas canisters to stop the ratification of the border deal with Montenegro, which is, nonetheless, approved by 80 of the 120 deputies.
- On 26 March violent clashes erupt after the head of Serbia’s government office for Kosovo Marko Djuric is arrested during a meeting in Mitrovica and deported for entering Kosovo without authorization from Pristina.
- On 30 March the Prime Minister Rasim Haradinaj fires Kosovo’s intelligence agency chief Dinton Gashi and the Interior Minister Flamur Sefaj for ordering the arrest and deportation to Turkey of five Turkish workers, suspected of having ties with the Islamic cleric Fethullah Gulen, without his knowledge.

FYROM

- On 1 March the authorities remove the Alexander the Great statue emplaced
by the previous government in Skopje airport, as a goodwill gesture towards Greece in the country’s naming dispute.

- On 5 and 7 March five of the seven members of the State Anti-Corruption Commission resign after a Public Revenue Office report is published suggesting they have spent excessively.
- On 15 March the President Gjorge Ivanov refuses to endorse parliamentary approval of Albanian language’s co-official status for the second time.
- On 20 March the Justice Minister Bilen Saliji resigns following the public prosecutor’s decision to drop the charges of premeditated murder against an ethnic Macedonian who ran over and killed an Albanian child in Kumanovo. On 21 March, Albanian Macedonian citizens protest outside the government building.

Albania

- On 31 March the police clash with demonstrators protesting against the rise in the tolls on the motorway that joins Albania and Kosovo.

Greece

- On 2 March the public prosecutor in Ankara issues arrest warrants against 56 people for their alleged ties with Fethullah Gulen and the 2016 coup attempt.
- On 26 March the former Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis unveils his economic bailout.
- On 3 March the Supreme Court upholds the decision of the Constitutional Court of Human Rights (ECHR) which describes the proceedings of Northern Cyprus’ Immovable Property Commission as “protracted and ineffective”.

Cyprus

- On 16 March the Parliament unani-mously condemns Turkey’s actions in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus and calls for a reaction from the European Council.
- On 16 March Averof Neophytou is reelected leader of the ruling DISY.
- On 22 March the judgement made in December 2017 by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) which describes the proceedings of Northern Cyprus’ Immovable Property Commission as “protracted and ineffective” becomes final in light of Turkey’s failure to file an appeal.
- On 26 March the security chief in Alexandria Mostafa al-Nemr survives a car bomb attack in which two people are killed.
- On 30 March Mostafa Moussa, his only opponent and a self-declared al-Sisi supporter, wins fewer than 3% of the votes, behind the spoilt votes (7.27%).

Syria

- On 4 March regime troops take al-Nashabiya, Autaya, Hazaruna, Hosh al-Salihiyah, Hosh al-Fadaliya and Furzat.
- On 6 March Turkey announces that it will put up camps in Idlib to provide shelter for 170,000 displaced persons in Afrin, where Turkey launched an offensive in January against the Kurdish militias.
- On 13 March the evacuation begins of the first hundred civilians from Eastern Ghouta through the humanitarian corridors set up by Russia. On 15 March, more than 10,000 people leave Eastern Ghouta, where one of the armed opposition groups, Faylaq al-Rahman - linked with al-Qaeda - loses control of Hamouria.
- On 18 March two months after the launch of Operation Olive Branch, the Turkish army, supported by the Free Syrian Army, takes control of the centre of Afrin.
- On 21 March at least 20 people are killed by a new airstrike on Idlib province, one of the opposition’s last strongholds.
- On 23 March Eastern Ghouta is hit by new airstrikes hours after the rebel group Faylaq al-Rahman announces a ceasefire in the area under its control.

Jordan

- On 1 March five people are sentenced to between five and seven years in prison for collaboration with Daesh.

Egypt

- On 3 March the Supreme Court upholds the deal to transfer the islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia.
- On 24 March the security chief in Alexandria Mostafa al-Nemr survives a car bomb attack in which two people are killed.
- On 26, 27 and 28 March Egypt holds presidential elections amid reports of vote buying and abstention fines. With a turnout of 47.5%, the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi wins, as expected, with 97.08% of the vote.

Libya

- On 1 March Libya announces the closure of two of its immigrant detention centres due to inadequate conditions. A further 16 were closed in 2017.
- On 20 March the Popular Front for the Liberation of Libya announces the candidacy of Saif al-Islam, son of Muammar Gaddafi, for the presidential elections later in the year.
- On 24 March the US military kills Musa Abu Dawud, a senior figure of AQIM in an airstrike in southern Libya.
- On 28 March Daesh carries out a bomb attack in Ajdabiya leaving five dead.
• On 29 March the chairman of the High Council of State Abdurahman Sewehli survives an assassination attempt in Gharyan.
• On 30 March Abdulraouf Baitelmal, mayor of Tripoli, is released after being kidnapped the previous day.

Tunisia

• On 6 March the presidency extends the state of emergency for a further seven months.
• On 10 March a demonstration in Tunis demands equal inheritance rights for men and women.
• On 13 March the Assembly of the Representatives of the People fails to reach an agreement on the four members of the Constitutional Court, whose appointment is the Assembly’s responsibility under the country’s Constitution.
• On 17 - 18 March clashes break out in the mining region of Gafsa between police and demonstrators protesting against the inadequate measures announced by the government.
• On 28 March after two tense sessions, the People’s Assembly votes not to extend the mandate of the Truth and Dignity Commission.

Morocco

• On 11 and 14 March six activists from the protest movement in Jerada are arrested, as protests continue in the former mining town.

Mauritania

• On 30 March two people are sentenced to 10 and 20 years in prison for the practice of slavery, which was outlawed in 2007. At the same time, anti-slavery groups assert that activist arrests and protest bans have increased.

EU

• On 1 March the European Parliament approves the Commission’s proposal to bring sanctions against Poland for being at risk of a serious breach of EU values.
• On 19 March the United Kingdom accepts crucial concessions on Brexit to be able to begin negotiating its future relations with the EU after a transitional period: Northern Ireland will remain linked to the single market and Europeans arriving in the United Kingdom during the transitional period will have the same rights as those who arrived before this time.

April 2018

Portugal increases the quota of women on election lists and in public administration. In Spain, the terrorist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), announces its imminent dissolution. France announces a reduction in the number of deputies and senators and the Socialist Party elects a new first secretary. In Italy, it is confirmed that secret negotiations took place between the government and Cosa Nostra in the nineties and elections are held in Friuli–Venezia Giulia. In Croatia, the government survives a confidence vote and the Parliament ratifies the Istanbul Convention on violence against women. Montenegro holds presidential elections. The International Criminal Court finds the ultranationalist Serb leader Vojislav Seselj guilty of crimes against humanity. In FYROM, the government survives a confidence vote. Greece privatizes its biggest oil company. Turkey announces early elections. The US, France and the United Kingdom launch an attack against the Syrian army in response to a chemical attack in Douma. In Egypt, the former Anti-Corruption Authority chief is sentenced to five years’ imprisonment. In Tunisia, the government announces equal inheritance rights for men and women. In Algeria there are ministerial changes. Morocco and the EU begin negotiations to renew their fisheries agreement.

Spain

• On 20 April the Parliament approves two draft bills which will increase the 40% quota of women on the electoral lists and in public administration.

Italy

• On 20 April a ruling by the Court of Palermo confirms that negotiations between the government and Cosa Nostra took place in the early nineties to put an end to the attacks carried out by the mafia. The court sentences the main defendants, which includes the former Forza Italia senator Marcello Dell’Utri, to between eight and 28 years in prison.
• On 23 April the President Sergio Mattarella gives the president of the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) Roberto Fico a 48-hour mandate to try to come to an agreement between M5S and the PD to appoint a prime minister and form a new government.
• On 30 April the League’s candidate Massimiliano Fedriga wins in the Friuli–Venezia Giulia elections.

Slovenia

• On 24 April Brdo pri Kranju hosts the Southeastern European Cooper-
tion Process Summit which agrees to strengthen the European integration process and to enhance cooperation in security, digital connectivity and young people’s social and work prospects.

Croatia

• On 13 April the Parliament rejects a no-confidence vote tabled against the Deputy Prime Minister and Economy Minister Martina Dalic for her role in the restructuring of the bankrupt company Agrokor.

• On 13 April the Parliament ratifies the Istanbul Convention on violence against women.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

• On 24 April following Croatia’s signing of a contract to build a bridge that connects Peljesac with the rest of the country, Bosnia lodges a formal complaint with the EU, arguing that the border demarcation between both countries must be completed first.

• On 27 April Atif Dudakovic, former commander of the Bosnian army, and another 11 people, are arrested for war crimes against Serbs and Bosniaks during the Yugoslav Wars.

Montenegro

• On 2 April hundreds of Army of Islam fighters, the main opposition force in Eastern Ghouta, leave the enclave heading to the north of Syria.

• On 4 April the second trilateral summit between Turkey, Russia and Iran, held in Ankara, as part of the Astana Process, culminates with a declaration in favour of the unity, sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and non-sectarian nature of Syria.

• On 11 April the European Court of Human Rights rules that Giorgos Papadopoulos must be released because of the time he has spent in custody.

• On 26 April Serbia bans the Croatian Defence Minister Damir Krsticic from entering its territory as a reciprocal measure to Croatia’s announcement on 22 April, according to which his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vulin was not welcome at a ceremony to commemorate the victims of the Second World War concentration camp in Jasenovac.

FYROM

• On 12 April the government survives a confidence vote tabled by the conservative opposition which accuses the government of damaging relations with neighbouring countries, failing to control corruption and ineffectiveness in halting economic stagnation.

Greece

• On 18 April Greece begins the privatization of Hellenic Petroleum (Helpe), Greece’s largest oil company.

• On 22 April Greece rejects Turkey’s proposal to exchange two Greek soldiers, held in Turkey since March without charge, for eight Turkish soldiers, who fled to Greece following the failed coup d’état in 2016.

• On 23 April the Hellenic Statistical Authority (Elstat) announces that Greece has reached a budget surplus of 0.8% of GDP, exceeding the targets set by the EU and IMF for the second year running.

Turkey

• On 3 April Turkey and Russia sign a historic deal for Russia to build the Akkuyu nuclear plant in Mersin, which will go into operation in 2023.

• On 18 April the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces early parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for 24 June.

• On 25 April a court in Istanbul hands prison sentences down to 15 senior staff members, journalists and collaborators of the opposition newspaper Cumhuriyet, accused of having “terrorist” links with both the PKK and Fethullah Gulen.

Cyprus

• On 22 April Giorgos Perdikis is re-elected as leader of the Cypriot Green Party.

• On 30 April the Supreme Court rules that Giorgos Papadopoulos must give up his seat, describing as unconstitutional the formula by which the Solidarity Movement MP inherited the seat from the party’s leader Eleni Theocarakous, so that she could continue as a MEP.

Syria

• On 2 April thousands of Army of Islam fighters, the main opposition force in Eastern Ghouta, leave the enclave heading to the north of Syria.

• On 12 April Russia announces that Jaysh al-Islam agree to leave Douma in exchange for the release of all prisoners held by the insurgents in the city.

• On 8 April the Syrian Civil Defence and Syrian American Medical Society accuse the Syrian army of killing at least 49 civilians and injuring a further 500 in a nerve gas attack on Douma. On 9 April the US denies bombing the Tiyas Airbase, in Homs, in response to the chemical attack on Douma.

• On 12 April Russia announces that the Syrian army has taken control of Douma, the last rebel-held stronghold on the outskirts of Damascus.

• On 12 April, in the UN Security Council, Russia blocks the US proposal to launch an investigation into the chemical attacks in Douma.

• On 14 April the UK, United Kingdom and France attack Syrian army positions in response to the Douma chemical weapons attack. Syria, Russia, Iran and China condemn the attack. On 16 April, the UN Security Council rejects Russia’s proposal to condemn the attack against the Syrian army.

• On 16 April the team of experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) begins its...
work in Syria to investigate reports of the use of chemical weapons.
- On 29 April a series of bombings on two military bases in Hama and Aleppo, allegedly used by Iran, leave more than 10 people dead. Damascus condemns the action without attributing specific responsibility. Israel denies being behind the attack.
- On 28 - 29 April Bashar al-Assad’s forces cross the Euphrates in the province of Deir ez-Zor to begin their advance on FSA positions.

Lebanon
- On 6 April the government obtains loans and donations amounting to over 10 billion euros from the international community during the conference held in Paris to boost the Lebanese economy and help the country deal with the refugee crisis.
- On 20 April HRW reports that at least 3,664 Syrian refugees have been forcibly evicted in at least 13 Lebanese municipalities and warns that a further 42,000 may suffer the same fate.

Egypt
- On 1 April two soldiers and six jihadists are killed in the latest anti-terror operations in Sinai, in which more than 500 people are arrested.
- On 18 April the army announces the death of the Emir of the Daesh-linked Sinai Province jihadist group, in an operation in North Sinai.
- On 19 April the authorities release on bail the former editor-in-chief of the newspaper al-Masry al-Youm, Mohamed al-Sayed Saleh, currently under investigation over the newspaper’s coverage of the presidential elections in March.
- On 24 April a five-year prison sentence is handed down to Hisham Geneen, the former anti-corruption chief who was detained by the military prosecutor’s office on 13 February for declaring that the former chief of staff Sami Anan possessed documents that implicated the country’s leadership in corrupt practices.
- On 25 April the army announces the death of 30 terrorists and the arrest of a further 173 during the last week of operations in Sinai.

- On 29 April the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi praises the attitude shown by the people in facing the tough measures of the economic reform programme, which comes in response to demands made by the IMF to reduce the budget deficit and which translates into a sharp rise in inflation.

Libya
- On 3 April the unity government announces the start of an operation against Daesh in Misrata.
- On 3 April Saadi Gaddafi, Muammar Gaddafi’s son, who has been held in Tripoli since his extradition from Niger in 2014, is cleared of the murder of footballer Bashir ar-Rayani.
- On 6 April Khalid al-Mishri, from the Justice and Construction Party, the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, is elected in Tripoli as head of the High Council of State, taking over from the outgoing Abdelraheem al-Sweihili.
- On 10 April a United Nations report denounces cases of torture and other violations of human rights by Libyan armed groups, some of them linked to the authorities.
- On 18 April at least one person is killed in an attack in Benghazi on a convoy carrying the army chief of staff Abdel Razeq Nazuri.
- On 18 April Tripoli airport suffers a new attack which the Special Deterrence Force (Rada) attributes to Brigade 33 from Tajura.
- On 21 April the unity government renews its call for talks to renew their fisheries agreement before it expires on 14 July, and which will include, under specific conditions, areas of Western Sahara.

Morocco
- On 20 April a well-supported boycott campaign begins against three powerful brands - Sidi Ali, Centrale Danone and Afriquia - to halt price hikes in bottled water, dairy products and petrol, respectively.
- On 20 April Morocco and the EU begin talks to renew their fisheries agreement before it expires on 14 July, and which will include, under specific conditions, areas of Western Sahara.

Mauritania
- On 25 April two people are sentenced to a year in prison for sending WhatsApp messages in which they referred to others as slaves. This is a historic ruling as these are the first sentences handed down since the approval of the anti-slavery law.
EU

- On 17 April the EC recommends the European Union open accession negotiations with Albania and FYROM.

Arab League

- On 17 April the 29th Arab League summit concludes in Az-Zahran, Saudi Arabia, notably condemning Iran for its interference in the internal politics of the Arab countries and the US for recognizing Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

May 2018

Portugal rejects the decriminalization of euthanasia. In Spain, the sentence in the Gurtel case leads to a no-confidence motion. In France, demonstrations take place against the government’s reform programme. In Italy, M5S and the League agree to form a government. In Croatia, the Deputy Prime Minister resigns. Montenegro holds local elections. FYROM and Greece reach an agreement to resolve the naming dispute. In Albania, anti-government demonstrations are held. In Turkey, four opposition parties agree on an alliance for the June elections. Syria becomes the stage for the first armed confrontation between Israel and Iran and the forces of Bashar al-Assad continue to gain ground. Lebanon holds parliamentary elections. In Egypt, fare hikes on the Cairo metro spark protests and increase the number of opposition arrests. In Libya, the rival powers of Tripoli and Tobruk agree to hold legislative and presidential elections. Tunisia holds municipal elections. Morocco cuts diplomatic ties with Iran.

Portugal

- On 4 May the former Prime Minister Jose Socrates leaves the Socialist Party after the party leadership accepts his implication in 31 counts of corruption, which he has been accused of since 2014.
- On 29 May the conservative and communist opposition rejects the government’s four draft bills on the decriminalization of euthanasia.

Spain

- On 14 May Joaquim Torra is sworn in as Catalan President after the unsuccessful attempts of Carles Puigdemont, Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Turull, which were blocked by the central government.
- On 25 May the National Court passes sentence in the Gurtel corruption case, which mainly affects the ruling People’s Party (PP, conservative). Among numerous senior party officials, the former treasurer Luis Barcenas is sentenced to 33 years’ imprisonment and the party is ordered to pay 245,492.8 euros for benefitting from the scheme orchestrated by the defendants. The sentence prompts a no-confidence motion against the government, tabled by the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE).

France

- On 1 May 283 people are arrested in clashes that erupt during the International Workers’ Day marches.
- On 5 May thousands demonstrate in Paris and other cities against the privatization reforms and cuts introduced by Emmanuel Macron, a year after his election as President.

Italy

- On 13 May the Milan Surveillance Court orders the rehabilitation of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who was banned from running for public office until 2019 after being convicted of tax fraud five years ago.
- On 17 May the leaders of M5S and the League, Luigi Di Maio and Matteo Salvini, reach an agreement to form a government. On 21 May, they propose the jurist Giuseppe Conte as Prime Minister. On 24 May, Conte gives up efforts to form a government when the President Sergio Mattarella vetoes his candidate for Economy Minister, the Eurosceptic Paolo Savona. The League and M5S call for new elections and Mattarella tasks the former IMF director Carlo Cottarelli to form a caretaker government until early elections are held after the summer. On 31 May Cottarelli relinquishes his position following a new agreement between M5S and the League under which Conte will lead a government without Savona as Economy Minister.

Croatia

- On 14 May Martina Dalic resigns as Deputy Prime Minister and Economy Minister, after being accused of failing to prevent conflicts of interest in her efforts to save the Croatian food giant, Agrokor, from bankruptcy. On 25 May, Darko Horvat is appointed Economy Minister. The Agriculture Minister Tomislav Tolušić takes over as Deputy Prime Minister.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 15 May thousands gather in Sarajevo to demand that the authorities find the truth behind the deaths of Bosnian Dzenan Memic in 2016 in Sarajevo and the Serb Bosnian David Dragicevic in March 2018 in Banja Luka. Protesters accuse the authorities of covering up the killings and negligence, and denounce the ethnic divide fuelled by the political class and the lack of socioeconomic improvements.

Montenegro

- On 29 May the former mayor of Belgrade Sinisa Mali is appointed the new Finance Minister to replace Dusan Vujovic, who resigned on 8 May citing personal reasons.

Serbia

- On 14 May Martina Dalic resigns as Deputy Prime Minister and Economy Minister, after being accused of failing to prevent conflicts of interest in her efforts to save the Croatian food giant, Agrokor, from bankruptcy. On 25 May, Darko Horvat is appointed Economy Minister. The Agriculture Minister Tomislav Tolušić takes over as Deputy Prime Minister.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 11 May Kosovo’s Justice Ministry and the Islamic community sign an agreement to engage Kosovo imams in the deradicalization of young people.
- On 24 May the President Hashim Thaci refuses to endorse the parliamentary appointment of Radomir Laban (Serb List) as member of the Constitutional Court, due to an investigation into his criminal conviction in Serbia for smuggling.
• On 28 May major unrest erupts in Klinë when Kosovo Albanian residents protest against Serbs displaced in the aftermath of the 1999 conflict who return to visit the local church.

FYROM

• On 4 May the Deputy Justice Minister Oliver Ristovski announces that the Special Prosecution set up in 2015 to investigate high-level crimes committed during the VMRO-DPMNE’s mandate will become part of the regular prosecution, thereby allowing an extension to its mandate.

• On 21 May the Skopje Criminal Court clears the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev of charges of bribing a local businessman from Strumica.

• On 23 May a court in Skopje sentences the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski to two years’ imprisonment for the unlawful purchase of a luxury car.

Albania

• On 26 May the main opposition parties lead a mass demonstration accusing the government of links to drug dealers and calling for the resignation of the Prime Minister Edi Rama and Interior Minister Fatmir Xhafaj.

Greece

• On 4 May the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras travels to Lemnos and Lesbos. He announces measures to improve their economies and highlights the growing number of migrants that continue to arrive from Turkey, despite the agreement between Ankara and the EU. He also stresses the importance of maintaining stability in the region and national security and integrity, a message tacitly aimed at Turkey. The visit comes amid rising anger from an overwhelmed local community, with settlement delays already leaving detention centres at double their capacity. On 16 May the Parliament agrees to simplify and streamline asylum procedures.

Turkey

• On 2 May the Republican People’s Party (CHP), the country’s main opposition party, the new centre-right party İYİ, the moderate Islamist Saadet and the liberal-conservative Democratic Party agree on an alliance to run together in the early legislative elections set for 24 June.

• On 4 May Muharrem İnce is elected as the CHP candidate for the presidential elections on 24 June.

Cyprus

• On 2 May the press reports the intention of Cyprus and Israel to apply for international arbitration to resolve a dispute over the reserves of the Aphrodite gas field, located on the sea border between the two countries.

Syria

• On 9 May Syria becomes the stage for the first armed confrontation between Iran and Israel when Iranian missiles aimed at Israeli positions in the Golan Heights are intercepted by Israeli air defence batteries and land in Syria. In response, Israel launches an airstrike against targets of the Revolutionary Guard in Syria.

• On 14 May a new round of Syrian peace talks begin in Astana, brokered by Iran, Russia and Turkey and without the participation of the US.

• On 15 May the last of the fighters withdraw from the last rebel-held area in central Syria.

• On 16 May the OPCW reports that its investigators have determined that chlorine gas was used in an attack on Saraqib in Idlib, in February 2017. The chemical agents found had not been declared by Damascus before the destruction of its stockpile in 2013.

• On 21 May the army announces its total control over the south of Damascus after pushing Daesh out of the area, following a ceasefire to allow the evacuation of jihadists from Yarmouk and Tadamun.

Lebanon

• On 6 May, with a turnout of 49.2%, the alliance between Hezbollah and Amal wins the parliamentary elections and takes 30 seats, followed by the Future Movement with 21 seats.

• On 16 May Gay Pride in Beirut is suspended after its main organizer Hadi Damien reports his arrest and subsequent release by the authorities on the condition that he sign a statement calling off the event.

• On 16 May the Gulf Cooperation Council increases sanctions against senior Hezbollah officials, a measure similar to that taken by the US.

• On 23 May Nabih Berri is reelected as speaker of the Parliament.

• On 25 March the President Michel Aoun appoints Saad Hariri as Prime Minister again.

Egypt

• On 10 May the army announces the death of 21 terrorists in recent days in Sinai. Like in the preceding months, operations in the area continue throughout May with more deaths and arrests.

• On 14 May the police are deployed at Cairo’s metro stations a day after more than twenty people are arrested in the context of the protests against the fare hikes.

• On 16 May the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi announces he will pardon 332 prisoners on the eve of the month of Ramadan.

• On 22 May the journalist Ismail Al-exandradi, arrested more than two years ago, is sentenced to 10 years in prison for belonging to an outlawed organization and spreading fake news.

• On 29 May four senior officials are arrested, including the chairman of the state-owned Food Industries Holding Company (FIHC), accused of receiving bribes.

• On 30 May the EU expresses concern, following a similar declaration by the US in recent days, over the rise in the arrests of Egypt’s political and human rights activists in May. The arrests include the opposition leader Hazim Abdelazim, the journalist Wael Abbas, the lawyer Haitham Mohamedeen, the activists Shady Ghazali Harb and Amal Fathy and the blogger Sherif Gaber.

Libya

• On 10 May the British government issues an official apology to the Libyan Islamist leader Abdel Hakim Belhaj and his wife, recognizing its participation, in collaboration with the CIA, in their cap-
ture in Malaysia in 2004 and subsequent hand over to the Gaddafi regime in Libya, where both were tortured.

- On 18 May the authorities unveil a new agreement that will allow the return of Tawergha’s population, a town that was ransacked in 2011 by rebel forces in retaliation for its support of the Gaddafi regime.

- On 21 May the unity government announces the dismantling of a cell known as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Libya, accused of having ties with Muammar Gaddafi’s regime.

- On 25 May Libya’s two rival governments condemn the car bomb attack carried out the previous day in Benghazi, which left at least seven dead.

- On 29 May the summit on Libya held in Paris sees the country’s rival leaders reach an agreement to hold legislative and presidential elections in December.

- On 31 May the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warns that, since April, unprecedented levels of violence have been reached in Derna in the fighting between the Islamist Derna Protection Force and Khalifa Haftar’s forces, which have held the city under siege since July 2017.

Tunisia

- On 6 May Tunisia holds its first municipal elections since the Revolution in 2011, with an abstention rate of 70%. The Islamist Ennahda party took 155 of the 350 municipalities with 44.29% of the vote. There are good results also for the independent lists, which are the most voted in 96 municipalities. Nidaa Tounes, the party of President Beji Caid Essebsi, wins in 83 municipalities.

- On 28 May the President Beji Caid Essebsi cancels the talks initiated by the government coalition to address economic reforms and a possible cabinet reshuffle over the disagreements surrounding these. On 29 May, the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed accuses the President’s son, Hafez Caid Essebsi, of destroying and manipulating the party that forms part of the government coalition and of again demanding, the previous day, Chahed’s resignation, arguing that the current government no longer abides by what was agreed in the First Carthage Dialogue.

- On 30 May the special court for trying cases of human rights abuses in Tunisia between 1955 and 2013 holds its first session, which sets 10 July for the beginning of the trial against 14 former public officials, including the former President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, for the murder in 1991 of the Islamist Kamel Matmati. The Truth and Dignity Commission, set up in 2014, has already referred its 10 first cases to this court.

Algeria

- On 22 May the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urges Algeria to put an end to the mass expulsion of migrants carried out in recent months.

- On 25 May Merzougu Touati, the blogger arrested in 2017 for his social network posts, is sentenced to 10 years in prison for spying for Israel.

Morocco

- On 1 May Morocco cuts diplomatic ties with Iran, accusing it of arming, financing and training the Pulsario through the Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah.

- On 23 May Nasser Zefzafi, the leader of the protests that took place between late 2016 and mid-2017 in the Rif region, begins a hunger strike in protest against the conditions of his detention.

- On 26 May Hakim Benchamach succeeds Ilyas el-Omari as the leader of the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM).

EU

- On 8 May the House of Lords approves an amendment against the plans of the British Prime Minister Theresa May to leave the single market after Brexit.

- On 17 May Sofia hosts the first EU-Balkans summit in 15 years, focused on strengthening the Union’s commitment to regional stabilization, but not on its enlargement.

June 2018

In Spain, a parliamentary no-confidence vote leads to a change in government and Valencia welcomes more than 600 migrants travelling on the ship Aquarius.

France approves the public railways reform and leads an initiative on strengthened military cooperation. In Italy, M5S and the League form a government. Slovenia holds legislative elections. In Montenegro, the opposition puts an end to the parliamentary boycott. The European Foreign Affairs Council agrees to open accession talks with Albania and FYROM in 2019. In FYROM, the President refuses to sign the agreement to put an end to the dispute over the name Macedonia. Greece concludes its international financial assistance programme. Turkey holds early presidential and parliamentary elections. In Syria, the regime takes control of the eastern part of Dera. In Jordan, Abdullah II replaces the Prime Minister. In Egypt, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is sworn in as President. In Morocco, the leaders of the Hirak protest movement are jailed.

Spain

- On 1 June the government accepts the new ministers of the Catalan government appointed by the regional President Joaquim Torra, thereby ending the application in Catalonia of article 155 of the Constitution, imposed because of the region’s unilateral declaration of independence in 2017.

- On 2 June Pedro Sanchez, the leader of PSOE, is appointed Prime Minister by Felipe VI after the success of the no-confidence motion tabled against Mariano Rajoy, sparked by the court rulings against the PP in the Gurtel corruption case. On 7 June the new government takes over, with a cabinet formed by 11 women and six men.

- On 13 June the new Culture and Sport Minister Maxim Huerta resigns after it emerges that he had been fined for tax fraud. On 14 June, Jose Guirao replaces Huerta.

- On 17 - 18 June 69 dinghies carrying 986 immigrants reach the Andalusian coast in a time span of 48 hours. Since the beginning of the year, 17,614 immigrants aboard 803 dinghies have so far landed on Andalusian shores. On 23, 24 and 25 June almost 1,700 immigrants are rescued in Spanish waters, bringing the number of arrivals in the last fortnight to more than 3,000.
France

- On 1 June the far-right party the National Front holds an internal referendum that approves changing its name to the National Rally.
- On 4 June the police evict thousands of people from two illegal migrant camps in Paris, following a similar operation in May, in which the city’s largest camp was dismantled.
- On 5 June the anti-corruption prosecutor orders the search of the Finance Ministry in an anti-corruption probe that would affect the secretary-general of the Élysée Palace, Alexis Kohler.
- On 13 June the National Assembly approves the reform of the state railway (SNCF) to open the sector to competition in 2020. On 14 June, the Senate approves the ambitious and controversial reform bill for SNCF, which has accumulated a debt of 54.4 billion euros.
- On 25 June the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia and Portugal join France in the creation of the European Intervention Initiative (E2I), a military coalition outside of NATO and the EU.

Italy

- On 1 June Giuseppe Conte is sworn in as Prime Minister along with 18 ministers of his cabinet, formed by M5S and the League. The cabinet includes the Eurosceptic Paolo Savona as European Affairs Minister and not at the helm of the Economy, a proposal that led to a presidential veto on Conte’s first attempt to form a government in May.
- On 10 June the Italian Vice-President and Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, leader of the League, orders the closure of Italian ports to Aquarius, a ship carrying more than 600 immigrants, and asks Malta to receive the vessel. Malta refused to accept any responsibility in the matter. Spain welcomed the ship in Valencia on 17 June.
- On 13 June a coast guard ship with 932 immigrants aboard and two bodies arrives in Catania.
- On 18 June the Interior Minister Matteo Salvini announces his intention to take a census of the Roma population and expel any residing in the country illegally.
- On 24 June the centre-right wins in 75 municipalities in the local elections, thanks to the surge of the League and the crisis suffered by the left, which loses several of its historical strongholds.

Malta

- On 26 June Malta agrees to receive the German NGO rescue ship LifeLine. Some of the 234 immigrants aboard will go to Italy.

Slovenia

- On 3 June Janez Jansa’s conservative and anti-immigration Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) wins in the legislative elections. The List of Marjan Sarec (LMS) comes second place.
- On 18 June Slovenia announces it is filing a case against Croatia at the European Court of Justice for Zagreb’s failure to implement the ruling of the UN Permanent Court of Arbitration on the Piran Bay border demarcation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 4 June the State Court of Bosnia annuls the acquittal of Naser Oric, the former commander of the Bosnian army in Srebrenica, so that he can stand trial again for the death of three Serbian prisoners of war in 1992.
- On 4 June the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), the Party of Democratic Progress (PDP) and the National Democratic Movement (NDP) agree to cooperate to defeat the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) in October’s elections in Republika Srpska.

Montenegro

- On 7 June the managing council of the public broadcaster sacks Andrijana Kadija, the media outlet’s director, at a time when Kadija’s team is distancing herself from the ruling DPS.
- On 13 June the URA movement and the Democrats end their parliamentary boycott which has been in place since the victory of socialist Milo Djukanovic in April’s presidential elections and announce they are going to submit a plan to the EC for the creation of a parliamentary commission to revise the country’s legislation on corruption and organized crime, as well as its election laws.

Serbia

- On 4 June the ruling SNS appoints the independent Zoran Radojicic as mayor of Belgrade.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 8 June the EU Council decides to refocus the mandate of the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX-Kosovo) handing responsibility for judicial proceedings over to Pristina.
- On 11 June the Constitutional Court rules that the Supreme Court must review the case against 10 former UÇK members convicted of war crimes in 1998 and 1999.

FYROM

- On 17 June the Prime Ministers of Greece and FYROM sign an agreement by which FYROM will change its name to North Macedonia, thereby ending a dispute that dates back to the breakup of Yugoslavia. On 20 June, the Parliament ratifies the agreement despite opposition from VMRO-DPMNE. On 27 June, the President Gjorge Ivanov refuses to ratify the agreement, which sparks protests in both FYROM and Greece.

Albania

- On 26 June the European Foreign Affairs Ministers agree to begin accession negotiations with Albania and FYROM in 2019.

Greece

- On 16 June the government survives a no-confidence motion over the agreement with FYROM on the Macedonia naming dispute, tabled by the opposition New Democracy (ND).
- On 18 June the MP of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party Konstantinos Barbarousis is arrested for high treason for his Parliamentary intervention in which he called on the armed forces to overthrow the government.
• On 27 June the eurozone closes Greece’s fourth and final bailout review, entailing measures to reduce the public debt, a new reimbursement of 15 billion euros and the end of eight years of assistance programmes.

Turkey

• On 1 June more than 60 people are arrested for their alleged links with Fethullah Gulen, accused by Ankara of being behind the 2016 coup attempt. On 23 June, a further 47 people are arrested on the same charges.

• On 7 June Turkey announces the suspension of its bilateral migrant readmission deal with Greece following the release of four Turkish soldiers who were seeking asylum in the country, and whose extradition has been demanded by Ankara.

• On 24 June Turkey holds early presidential and legislative elections. With a turnout of more than 87%, Recep Tayyip Erdogan secures his continued presidency until 2023 with 52.59% of the vote, and his party, the Islamist AKP, allied with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), obtains 342 of the 600 seats in the legislative elections.

Cyprus

• On 4 June the IMF concludes its post-programme monitoring discussions with Cyprus and supports its extension until 31 July 2019.

Syria

• On 7 June a Russian airstrike kills at least 38 people in Zardana, a town in Idlib located in one of the demilitarized zones delineated by Russia, Turkey and Iran and the stage for fighting between the Salafist militias Jaysh al-Ahrar and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

• On 13 June the Turkish army announces an agreement reached with the US army for the withdrawal of the YPG from Manbij, a group that Ankara links with the PKK terrorist organization.

• On 23 June the Iraqi air force bombs a meeting of senior members of Daesh in Hajin, Deir ez-Zor, and kills at least 45 members of the terrorist group.

• On 27 June despite Russian opposition, the OPCW approves Britain’s proposal for the organization’s inspectors to attribute responsibility for the chemical weapons attacks.

• On 29 June the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimates that more than 120,000 people have been forced to abandon their homes since the start of the regime’s offensive in the south-east of the country.

• On 30 June, with control of most of the eastern half of Dera province taken in the regime’s offensive launched on 19 June, the rebel forces in the areas under attack negotiate surrender agreements.

Jordan

• On 1 June Abdullah II freezes the fuel price hikes planned in May by the government of Hani al-Mulki, as advised by the IMF and which have intensified the widespread social protests that began in January with the VAT rise. On 4 June, Abdullah II replaces al-Mulki with Omar Razaz, who withdraws both measures.

• On 7 June Abdal fattah el-Sisi is sworn in for his second term as President and on 7 June appoints the former Housing Minister Moustafa Madbouly as Prime Minister.

• On 7 June Abdal fattah el-Sisi issues pardons for 712 prisoners following a campaign of mass arrests in May.

• On 14 June the new government is sworn in with changes in the Defence and Interior Ministries, headed by Mohamed Zaki and Mahmoud Taufik.

• On 30 June, the date that marks the anniversary of the coup d'état that overthrew the Islamist President Mohamed Morsi on 3 July 2013, the viral campaign “Irhal, ya Sisi” (“Sisi must go”) calls for the Egyptian President’s resignation.

Libya

• On 7 June the UN Security Council imposes its first sanctions on six leaders of migrant trafficking networks active in Libya.

• On 21 June Khalifa Haftar’s forces take back control of large areas of Sidra and Ras Lanuf, following an attack by Islamist militias.

• On 25 June the Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini travels to Tripoli with the intention of halting the migrant flows into Italy by establishing “reception and identification camps” in Africa. Libya refuses to allow these centres to be set up on its territory because of the country’s evident lack of security.

• On 29 June around a hundred migrants are killed after they are shipwrecked off the coast of Libya. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that, over the past year, at least 635 people have gone missing on their journey to Italy and 292 en route to Spain. The IOM also estimates that migrant arrivals have reached around 45,000 since January, with Italy as the biggest recipient country.

Tunisia

• On 3 June at least 60 immigrants are killed when a boat carrying at least 180 people sinks. The Tunisian authorities report that since the beginning of 2018, 6,000 migrants have been intercepted.

• On 14 June data on tourism in Tunisia reveal the sector’s rebound, with figures exceeding those of 2010.

Algeria

• On 13 June with almost 800 resident doctors on strike in university hospitals, the protests are stepped up to demand the reform of their compulsory civil service, which began in November 2017. On 24 June, the doctors temporarily return to work to allow negotiations with the government.

• On 26 June the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika replaces Abdelghani Hamel, considered to be one of his most likely successors, with Colonel Mustapha Lahbiri as the head of the Directorate General for National Security.

• On 26 June Fethi Ghares, spokesman for the Democratic and Social Movement (MDS) and candidate in the 2019 presidential elections is cleared by the Court of Ghardaia of charges of inciting unrest, spreading false information and contempt of court.

Morocco

• On 27 June the main leaders of the Hirak movement, which led the social protests in the Rif region in 2016 and 2017,
are sentenced to 20 years in prison for plotting to undermine the security of the State.

Mauritania

• On 20 June the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights calls for the release of the former senator Mohamed Ould Ghadda, in jail since August 2017 on corruption charges.

EU

• On 6 June the EC approves charging import duties on a range of US products in response to Washington’s decision to tax European aluminium and steel imports.
• On 12 June the British Prime Minister Theresa May achieves a narrow parliamentary victory to avoid the need for approval of the final Brexit deal in the House of Commons.
• On 21 June the EU-Armenia Partnership Council highlights the remarkable improvements in bilateral relations and the progress made by Armenia since 2015.
• On 29 June the European Council of Heads of State and Government reaches a complex migration agreement which establishes that Member States can, on a voluntary basis, set up controlled centres for separating refugees and economic migrants on their own soil and processing centres in origin and transit countries. They also pledge greater financial assistance for Africa and the EU Mediterranean countries.

July 2018

In Spain, the PP holds primary elections. In France, the government survives two confidence votes. Italy continues with its harsh approach to migration policy. In Malta, the Prime Minister is cleared in the Egrant case. In Slovenia, negotiations to appoint a prime minister continue without progress. Kosovo receives the green light for visa-free travel for its citizens within the Schengen Area. FYROM is invited to join NATO, parallel to the parliamentary ratification of the agreement on the naming dispute. Greece is hit by a wave of wildfires. In Turkey, the new presidential system enters into force and a security law is passed that gives the authorities broader powers. In Syria, the regime takes control of Dera. In Egypt, the Parliament grants immunity to senior officials in the armed forces. In Libya, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Presidential Council resigns. In Tunisia, the al-Massar party withdraws from the coalition government. Mauritania hosts the 31st AU Summit.

Spain

• On 3 July the transfer to Catalan prisons of the pro-independence leaders arrested under charges of rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds in the independence process begins.
• On 12 July the High Court of Schleswig-Holstein authorizes the extradition to Spain of the former Catalan President Carles Puigdemont for the misuse of public funds but not for rebellion, in the framework of Catalonia’s independence declaration process. On 19 July, the Spanish judge in charge of investigating the case withdraws the European arrest warrant on the pro-independence figures.
• On 21 July Pablo Casado is elected leader of the PP in the primary elections, beating the government’s former Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaría.
• On 25 July Barcelona’s taxi drivers begin a strike which continues throughout the month and which Spain’s other main cities join to demand a limit be put on the licenses for car-hailing services.
• On 26 July 602 sub-Saharans enter Ceuta after storming the border fence and clashing with police officers. 22 police officers and 132 migrants are left injured.

France

• On 7 July Nantes suffers its fifth night of unrest following the death of Aboubakar Fofana, a young Frenchman of African origin who was wanted by police and died on 3 July at a police traffic stop during his capture.
• On 15 July clashes break out in Paris during the celebration of France’s victory over Croatia in the final of the Russia World Cup, despite the deployment of more than 12,000 police officers.
• On 22 July Alexandre Benalla, security chief for the President Emmanuel Macron, is charged with beating demonstrators on 1 May posing as a police officer. The Gaullists and the left both table no-confidence votes against the government on 31 July, which are defeated thanks to the parliamentary majority of Macron’s party, the Republic on the Move (LREM, liberal).

Italy

• On 15 July Italy allows 450 immigrants to disembark after Malta, Spain, Portugal, Germany and France all agree to receive some of them.
• On 26 July citing a sanitary and hygiene emergency, Rome’s City Council clears the Roma camp “Camping River,” a day ahead of when the ECHR had requested the eviction be delayed until.
• On 31 July, according to the NGO Proactiva Open Arms, an Italian towboat, Asso 28, takes the 108 migrants it is carrying to disembark in Libya.

Malta

• On 22 July after a year-long inquiry, the attorney general considers there to be insufficient evidence to link the Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, his wife Michelle, his aide Keith Schembri, the Tourism Minister Konrad Mizzi or the former European Commissioner John Dalli with fraudulent practices in the Egrant case, connected with the Panama Papers financial scandal.
• On 30 July the MPs from the Democratic Party, Godfrey and Marlene Farrugia, report death threats against them for calling for the resignation of the Nationalist Party leader Adrian Delia, accusing him and the Labour Party of their involvement in corruption.

Slovenia

• On 16 July the conservative New Slovenia (NSI) withdraws from talks to form a government. On 23 July, the President Borut Pahor declines to nominate a candidate for prime minister in the absence of the necessary parliamentary majority.
**Croatia**

- On 30 July Croatia begins construction work on the Peljesac Bridge that will join Dubrovnik-Neretva with the rest of the country, despite protests from Bosnia, which argues that there is no maritime border agreement and that the bridge will negatively affect the operation of the port of Neum, Bosnia’s only sea access.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

- On 12 July five Bosnian Serb military policemen are sentenced to a total of 82 years in prison for the murder of 28 Bosnian civilians in Mount Borje in 1992.
- On 13 July the former commander of the Bosnian army’s Zulfikar squad, Nihad Bojadzic, is found guilty of crimes against civilians and prisoners of war in Jablanica in 1993.
- On 26 July around fifty local councilors and mayors in the country’s northeast protest in Sarajevo against the creation of migrant reception centres in their municipalities.

**Montenegro**

- On 19 July the Prime Minister Dusko Markovic announces it will introduce stricter penalties for anyone publicly commemorating or praising war crimes convicts. The move comes after the service held in Herceg Novi two days previous by the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro for the World War II-era Chetnik leader, Draguljub Mihailovic.

**Serbia**

- On 13 July the Belgrade Higher Court acquits seven members of the security service’s dissolved Special Operations Unit of involvement in a rebellion against the government of Zoran Djindjic in 2001.

**Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244**

- On 18 July the EC considers that Kosovo meets the requirements for visa-free travel for its citizens within the Schengen Area.
- On 26 July the writer and politician Adem Demaci dies, one of Kosovo’s legendary pro-independence activists.
- On 31 July Kosovo announces it has lifted the temporary trade barriers introduced on 18 July to protect its agricultural produce, after the move was met with fierce opposition from the countries of the Central European Free Trade Agreement.

**FYROM**

- On 5 July the Parliament again ratifies the agreement with Greece to change the country’s name to North Macedonia, following the President Gjorge Ivanov’s refusal on 26 July to sign the first parliamentary approval of the text.
- On 11 July NATO formally invites FYROM to begin accession talks after its agreement with Greece on the name change.
- On 20 July the businessman Sedad Kocan, an ally of the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, begins serving his six-year prison sentence for falsifying documents to win a tender in 2011.
- On 23 July the government and opposition agree to appoint an election commission to organize the referendum on the country’s name change. The agreement marks the end of VMRO-DPMNE’s parliamentary boycott.

**Greece**

- On 11 July Greece expels two Russian diplomats for interfering in national affairs and undermining national security.
- On 23 July at least 91 people are killed and 200 injured by wildfires in Attica, which spark fierce social criticism against the authorities for inadequate prevention measures and their poor handling of the situation.

**Turkey**

- On 2 July the public prosecutor in Ankara orders the arrest of 68 members of the army over their ties with the organization of the Islamist cleric Fethullah Gulen.
- On 8 July the government orders the dismissal of 18,632 civil servants over their links with “organizations that present a threat to the security of the State.”
- On 9 July Recep Tayyip Erdogan is sworn in as President in a ceremony that marks the entry into force of the new presidential system, under which the post of prime minister disappears and the President is granted broader powers, such as the appointment of senior members of the judiciary and direct control over the secret services and religious affairs. After the ceremony, the new government is unveiled, which includes Berat Albayrak, Erdogan’s son-in-law and hitherto Energy Minister, as Treasury and Finance Minister; Erdogan’s chief advisor Mustafa Varank as the new Industry Minister; and the hitherto chief of the general staff Hulusi Akar as Defence Minister. Continuing at the helm of the Foreign Affairs, Interior and Justice Ministries are Mevlut Cavusoglu, Suleyman Soylu and Abdulhamit Gul, respectively.
- On 15 July the Interior Ministry announces the death of Mehmet Yakisir, the commander of the PKK terrorist organization in the Black Sea region.
- On 25 July the Parliament approves a security law that grants authorities with broad anti-terror powers after, on 18 July, the state of emergency is lifted, in place since the failed coup attempt in 2016 and during which over 80,000 arrests have been made and more than 130,000 dismissals.

**Cyprus**

- On 26 July the UN Security Council renews the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for a further six months.

**Syria**

- On 12 July following a brutal bombing campaign, the army takes control of Dera, the cradle of the Syrian revolution, before negotiating surrender agreements with the local rebel groups.
- On 19 July, faced with the advance of government troops, the rebels in Quneitra reach an agreement with the regime for some of them to leave towards Idlib.
On 25 July at least 135 civilians, 111 regime fighters and 56 jihadists are killed in Sweida in a chain of Daesh attacks and executions.

On 25 July a delegation from Syrian Kurdistan, which includes FSA members, travels to Damascus to negotiate an agreement for a “decentralized and democratic Syria” in exchange for preserving the country’s unity.

**Lebanon**

On 24 July the Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri confirms talks with Russia for the return of around 890,000 refugees to Syria.

On 28 July the US orders a one-year extension to its national emergency with respect to Lebanon and the sanctions imposed on the country since 2007, owing to activities involving Hezbollah.

**Jordan**

On 3 July the United Nations urges Jordan, currently playing host to 650,000 registered Syrian refugees, to open its borders to those fleeing the rising violence in Dera.

**Egypt**

On 5 July the Parliament approves giving the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi the authority to appoint military leaders, who will enjoy lifelong immunity for the repression carried out in the 30 months between 2013 and 2016, during the Constitution’s suspension.

On 22 July Daesh’s branch in Sinai confirms the death of one of its leaders Abu Jaafar al-Maqdesi.

On 30 July the US unfreezes 195 million dollars in military aid withheld by Washington since August 2017 because of human rights violations and Egypt’s ties with North Korea.

**Libya**

On 5 July the International Criminal Court issues a second arrest warrant against Mahmoud Mustafa Busaif al-Werfalli, a senior commander of Khalifa Haftar’s army, for war crimes in Benghazi.

On 10 July the reopening of the ports of Ras Lanuf, Sidra, Hariga and Zueitina is announced after Khalifa Haftar’s forces agree to hand them over to the Government of National Accord.

On 19 July Fathi al-Majbari, Libya’s Deputy Prime Minister, resigns as member of the national unity government’s Presidential Council, over his disagreement with the way in which the country’s security and economy has been handled.

On 20 July the Prime Minister of the national unity government Fayez Serraj reiterates his rejection of the EU’s plans to set up migrant reception centres in Libya.

**Tunisia**

On 4 July Souad Abderrahim, from the Islamist Ennahda, becomes the first woman to serve as mayor of an Arab capital.

On 6 July the IMF approves payment of a new tranche of 249 million dollars of Tunisia’s 1.14-billion-dollar loan, signed in 2016 in exchange for economic reforms.

On 17 July the Al-Massar party, which forms part of the cabinet in which Samir Taieb serves as Agriculture Minister, withdraws from the weakened government coalition.

On 17 July the security forces arrest Tarek Haddad, spokesman for the protest movement that has paralysed oil and gas production in Kamour, in Tataouine, since 2017, demanding socioeconomic improvements.

**Algeria**

On 30 July the Democratic National Rally (RND) and FLN defend a fifth presidential term for Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

**Morocco**

On 8 and 15 July thousands demonstrate in Casablanca and Rabat to denounce the harsh prison sentences handed down to the leaders of the Hirak protest movement.

**Mauritania**

On 1 - 2 July Nouakhchott hosts the 31st AU Summit, dominated by the security crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Western Sahara, South Sudan and the Sahel, the unchecked migration flows and the creation of a continental free trade area.

On 24 July the coalition formed by the IRA abolitionist movement and the pan-Arab Sawab party presents as candidates for the September legislative elections the freed slave Haby Mint Rabah and Adama Sy, a widow of a black soldier who was murdered in the nineties.

**EU**

On 1 July Austria takes over the EU Presidency with the priorities of security, migration, competitiveness, digitalization and stability in the neighbourhood.

On 2 July the EC begins a new infringement procedure against Poland for its reform of the law on the Supreme Court, in the understanding that it compromises judicial independence.

On 9 July the British Prime Minister Theresa May appoints Dominic Raab as Brexit Minister after the resignation of his predecessor David Davis for disagreements over the strategy for leaving the EU.

On 9 July the 20th EU-Ukraine Summit reaffirms European support for Ukraine’s territorial integrity and the positive results of the partnership with Kiev.

On 10 July the Western Balkans summit concludes in London, as part of the Berlin Process, reaffirming the commitment to creating a society anchored to European values and highlighting the progress made by candidate countries.

On 19 July the EC brings Hungary before the CJEU for failing to comply with EU rules on asylum and return legislation.

On 24 July faced with Italy’s ultimatum to find alternatives to its ports, the Commission proposes compensation of 6,000 euros for each migrant taken in for countries that accept migrants rescued in the Mediterranean, and pledges its support to Member States that set up reception centres on their soils. Italy rejects the proposal, which it describes as a “charity handout.”

On 25 July the EU and the US reach an agreement to avoid a trade war and relaunch economic relations.
August 2018

In Portugal, the former Prime Minister Pedro Santana Lopes launches a new party. In France, Emmanuel Macron issues a decree giving the government the authority to appoint - or dismiss - certain senior positions of the administration without needing to have previous experience in the civil service.

France

- On 3 August the President Emmanuel Macron issues a decree that gives the government the authority to appoint - or dismiss - certain senior positions of the administration without needing to have previous experience in the civil service.

Italy

- On 13 August the Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini proposes the nationalization of the motorway concessionary company Autostrade following the collapse, on 7 August, of the Morandi Bridge in Genoa, which left 43 people dead.
- On 25 August the Interior Minister Matteo Salvini defends a penal code reform to facilitate the deportation of migrants convicted of crimes following the news of the rape of a teenage girl by a Senegalese man near Venice.
- On 26 August Italy authorizes the disembarkation of 134 migrants aboard the coast guard ship Diciotti, which has been docked in Catania for five days.

Malta

- On 15 August 141 migrants, rescued on 10 August, disembark from the ship Aquarius in La Valeta after Germany, France, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain agree to share responsibility for the group.
- On 22 August the army rescues 100 migrants.

Slovenia

- On 17 August the Parliament confirms Marjan Sarec as the new Prime Minister.

Croatia

- On 22 August migrants and refugees waiting in Bosnia to continue their journey towards central Europe accuse the Croatian police of beating them at the border, a claim denied by Zagreb.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 14 August the Parliament of the Republika Srpska votes in favour of revoking the 2004 report that concludes that Bosnian Serb forces killed roughly 8,000 Muslims in Srebrenica, and appoints a new international independent commission to investigate.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 4 August the four-month period that EU gave Kosovo in April to approve a special statute for Serbian municipalities comes to an end without Pristina fulfilling its commitment, which arose from talks to normalize relations with Belgrade.

Greece

- On 2 August according to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), more than 10,000 migrants and refugees have crossed the Evros River from Turkey in the first half of 2018, surpassing the figures for the whole of 2017.
- On 12 August a state of emergency is declared in Evia due to a wildfire that forces the evacuation of the villages of Kontodespoti and Stavros.
- On 20 August the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) announces that Greece has finally left the last bailout programme agreed on in 2015. The country’s next economic programme, therefore, will be the first to be developed by the Greek government in eight years.
- On 28 August Alexis Tsipras carries out a government reshuffle. Alexis Haritsis takes over the Interior Ministry from Panos Skourletis, who becomes the general secretary of Syriza. Michalis Kalogirou is appointed the Justice Minister, Myrsini Zorba the Culture Minister and Mariliza Xenogiannakopoulou the Administrative Reform Minister.
- On 31 August UNHCR urges Greece to address the situation of thousands of migrants in the Aegean islands, where detention centres are becoming dangerously overcrowded.

Turkey

- On 15 August Turkey doubles its tariffs on certain US imports in response
to the US’ “deliberate attacks on the Turkish economy.”

- On 26 August at least nine PKK members are killed in anti-terrorism operations carried out by the army in the provinces of Bingol, Agri and Tunceli and in the Iraqi region of Avasin-Basyan.

**Syria**

- On 5 August a car bomb attack carried out by the Abu Amara Brigades in the province of Hama kills Aziz Asber, director of the Syrian Scientific Research Centre, which Western countries believe is part of the Syrian regime’s chemical weapons programme.
- On 17 August Saudi Arabia announces aid to the value of 100 million euros for the international coalition fighting Daesh to stabilize projects in liberated areas of northeastern Syria.
- On 25 August the newspaper Asharq al-Awsat reports that more than 16,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon have returned to Syria since 23 July through the Masnaa border crossing.
- On 27 August Syrian rebel militias hand over 231 weapons and 11 tonnes of ammunition in the southeast of the country, according to the Russian Defence Ministry.

**Jordan**

- On 2 August the Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi confirms that the border with Syria will remain closed until the situation in its northern neighbour is totally and definitively normalized.
- On 11 - 12 August four members of the security forces and three suspected terrorists are killed in a police operation in Salt in the hunt for the suspects of a bomb attack which, on 10 August, killed a police officer.

**Egypt**

- On 5 and 12 August the army reports the death of 52 and 12 suspected jihadists, respectively, in anti-terrorism operations in Sinai. Anti-terrorism operations in the peninsula continue throughout the month resulting in more deaths.
- On 12 August a court in Giza hands down another life sentence to the leader of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood Mohammed Badie over the 2013 protests that followed the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi.
- On 27 August a coalition of secular and leftist parties criticizes the arrests of opposition figures and calls for the release of those people convicted of non-violent crimes, a day after the arrest of the former ambassador Massum Marzuk, along with another two government opponents.

**Libya**

- On 1 August the Libyan coast guard rescues 547 migrants trying to reach Europe.
- On 11 August the IOM reports that the number of refugees and migrants intercepted in the Mediterranean and arrested in Libya in deplorable conditions has risen from 5,500 to 9,300, between 2017 and 2018.
- On 16 August 45 members of the forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi are sentenced to death for killings committed during the 2011 uprising.

**Tunisia**

- On 13 August the President Beji Caid Essebsi proposes equal inheritance rights for men and women. The measure sparks demonstrations from its opponents, who believe it violates Islamic precepts.

**Algeria**

- On 17 August the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika sacks two generals Said Bey and Lahbib Chentouf, as part of an over haul of Algeria’s military leadership.

**Morocco**

- On 1 August Mohammed VI dismisses the Economy and Finance Minister Mohamed Boussaid citing the principle of accountability, which the king aims to apply to all civil servants.

**September 2018**

_In Spain, the Health Minister resigns and the Parliament approves the exhumation of Francisco Franco. In France, there are changes in the government. Italy hardens migration policies. In Slovenia, the Parliament approves the new government. Bosnia approves changes to the criminal code required to move forwards in the accession process. FYROM holds a referendum on the agreement with Greece over the naming issue. Greece announces lower taxes and increases in public spending. There are new arrests in Turkey for the 2016 attempted coup. In Syria, the agreement between Russia and Turkey to establish a demilitarized zone prevents the Syrian regime’s imminent military assault on Idlib. In Jordan, there are new protests against a new attempt to introduce income tax. In Egypt, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi ratifies a law that regulates the media and social networks and hands down new sentences against the Muslim Brotherhood. In Libya, there are weeks of intense fighting in Tripoli and the Prime Minister of the unity government Fayed Serraj takes over as Defence Minister and approves a new security body. In Tunisia, a new fuel price hike is announced and the crisis intensifies in both Nidaa Tounes and the government coalition. In Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika approves new dismissals within the military leadership and citizen protests are held in Ouargla. In Morocco, the law that criminalizes violence against women enters into force. Mauritania holds elections._
Cisco Franco from the mausoleum in the Valle de los Caídos.

France

- On 4 September the President Emmanuel Macron carries out a cabinet reshuffle. François de Rugy replaces Nicolas Hulot as Ecological Transition Minister and Roxana Maracineanu takes over from Laura Flessel as Sports Minister.
- On 9 September at least seven people are left injured after a stabbing in Paris perpetrated by a man of Afghan origin.

Italy

- On 18 September the public prosecutor rules that the League is to return the 45 million euros it owes the State over the next 75 years, saving the far-right party from possible bankruptcy.
- On 22 September at least two people taking part in an anti-racist demonstration are injured by activists from the fascist group CasaPound Italia in Bari.
- On 24 September the government approves a decree that establishes tougher conditions for asylum approval and doubles the time that irregular immigrants can be detained.

Malta

- On 30 September 58 migrants and refugees rescued by the rescue ship Aquarius are disembarked in Malta.

Slovenia

- On 4 September the President Borut Pahor voices his concern after images emerge showing the Stajerska Guard, an armed group led by the former presidential candidate and leader of the nationalist movement United Andrej Sisko.
- On 13 September the Parliament approves the new centre-left government of Marjan Sarec.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 5 September the police quell a protest in Sarajevo held by hundreds of war veterans calling for a law to improve the benefits they receive from the State.
- On 17 September the Federal Parliament approves changes to the criminal code to bolster the rule of law and the fight against crime and corruption, a move required for progress to be made in the accession process.

FYROM

- On 16 September thousands demonstrate in Skopje in favour of EU and NATO membership and for the country’s name change to North Macedonia.
- On 30 September a non-binding referendum is held on the political agreement with Greece for the country’s name change. Despite a convincing “yes” victory of 91%, the low 37% turnout renders the referendum invalid, falling short of the required 50%.

Greece

- On 2 September the former President of the Eurogroup Jeroen Dijsselbloem declares that the eurozone “has asked too much” of Greece in return for the bailout loans given to the country.
- On 8 September the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announces tax cuts and increases in public spending and the minimum wage to alleviate the effects of austerity after the end of the financial bailout programme.
- On 8 September thousands demonstrate in Thessaloniki against the agreement between Athens and Skopje on the naming issue.

Turkey

- On 1 September an electricity price hike comes into effect to counter the effects of the fall in the Turkish lira of up to 42%.
- On 19 September a court orders the pre-trial detention of 24 of the 400 arrested for taking part in protests against the poor working conditions on the construction site of Istanbul’s new airport.
- On 24 September the army announces the death of five PKK members in the province of Sirt, as part of the anti-terrorism operations carried out throughout the month.
- On 24 September the authorities order the arrest of 61 soldiers for their alleged links with the cleric Fethullah Gulen.

Syria

- On 2 September the state media reports loud blasts at an airbase near Damascus, attributed, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, to Israeli airstrikes, a claim denied by Syrian military sources.
- On 3 September Russia resumes its bombing campaign in Idlib, after a three-week pause.
- On 21 September Russia and Turkey agree on the borders of the demilitarized zone to be established in Idlib as part of the agreement announced on 17 September, which has the Syrian regime’s backing and prevents an imminent offensive from Damascus.
- On 29 September Russia confirms the supply of S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Syria after the downing of a Russian warplane, for which Moscow blames Israel.

Lebanon

- On 25 September the General Security Directorate reports that some 50,000 Syrian refugees living in Lebanon have returned to Syria since January.

Jordan

- On 15 - 16 September groups of activists boycott ministerial appearances in Tafileh and Maan in protest against the announcement on 11 September of a new income tax introduced by the Prime Minister Omar al-Razzaz.

Egypt

- On 1 September the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi passes a law, approved in July by the Parliament, which regulates the media and will allow the monitoring of certain accounts of social network users.
- On 8 September a court hands down death sentences to 75 people for the incidents that took place in 2013 during the dismantling of the protest camps in Cairo, against the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi.
- On 11 September Egypt announces the seizure of assets belonging to 1,589 supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as 118 companies, 1,133 char-
On 22 September the Court of Cassation rejects a motion from the family of former President Hosni Mubarak for his political rights to be restored following his conviction for corruption in 2015.

On 23 September a court hands down another life sentence to the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Mohammed Badie and a further 64 members of the Brotherhood for inciting murder and violence during the protests against the coup d’etat in 2013.

On 24 September the Court of Cassation upholds the death sentences for 20 people convicted in the attack on the Kerdasa police station in Giza, in August 2013.

On 30 September a court orders a retrial against Mohammed Badie, but adds new charges against him.

**Libya**

- On 1 September several missiles hit the Hotel Waddan, near the Italian embassy in Tripoli leaving three people injured. An oil depot to the south of the Libyan capital is also affected by the clashes between the Tarhuna Seventh Brigade and the Tripoli and Nawasi Revolutionary Brigades, allies of the unity government.
- On 2 September at least four people are killed and seven injured by a rocket that hits the al-Falah camp of displaced Tawerghans, in Tripoli, on another day of clashes between rival militias.
- On 6 September the Prime Minister of the unity government Fayez Serraj takes over the Defence Ministry as well.
- On 9 September the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) announces an agreement between the armed groups that operate in Tripoli to create a mechanism that consolidates the ceasefire agreed on 4 September.

The announcement comes after, on 7 September, the military commander-in-chief of the east of the country Khalifa Haftar warns that he will intervene in Tripoli to settle the weeks-long clashes.

- On 12 September the Prime Minister of the unity government Fayez Serraj admits that Libya is yet to fulfil the conditions needed to hold elections.
- On 18 September Fayez Serraj approves a decree for the creation of a new security body, the Joint Force for Conflict Resolution and Security Improment, prompted by the clashes in recent weeks between different militias in Tripoli.
- On 20 September the National Oil Corporation (NOC), announces the reopening of the runway at the Wafa oilfield hours after reporting its closure by members of the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG).
- On 23 September the Libyan coast guard rescues 235 migrants.
- On 24 September the death toll of the fierce fighting between militias in Tripoli which began in August stands at 115.

**Tunisia**

- On 1 September the government announces a 4% fuel price hike, the year’s fourth, to control its budget deficit and comply with agreements reached with the international lenders.
- On 15 September Nidaa Tounes announces it is suspending the membership of the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed in the context of a confrontation over the leadership of the ruling government between the Prime Minister and Hafez Caid Essebsi, the Tunisian President’s son. In May, Chahed accused Essebsi of dynamiting the party. Essebsi, for his part, supported by the UGTT union, has been calling for Chahed to step down from the leadership of the government, accusing him of failing to resolve the economic and social crisis affecting Tunisia.
- On 25 September the President Beji Caid Essebsi announces the end of the alliance between his party Nida Tounes and the moderate Islamist Ennahda, and promises legislative and presidential elections for December 2019.

**Mauritania**

- On 1 and 15 September Mauritania holds the two rounds of its first legislative, regional and municipal elections following August’s constitutional reform which created a unicameral parliamentary system. The elections are won by the ruling Union for the Republic (UPR).
- On 21 September the President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz rules out amending the Constitution to allow him to run for a third term.

**EU**

- On 12 September the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker defends, before the European Parliament, a dramatic reform of the common migration and asylum policy, which includes greater border protection, part of a project aimed at accelerating the return of irregular migrants and European funding to manage this, among other measures.
- On 14 September the EC announces that the Member States will have to decide before April 2019 whether or not they would prefer to stay on summer
time or winter time, and, therefore, end the practice of adjusting clocks.

- On 16 September the EC proposes a new alliance between Europe and Africa which includes a free trade agreement capable of fusing the numerous current agreements and which allows for cooperation “between equals.”

October 2018

In Spain, the former Economy Minister and IMF director Rodrigo Rato begins his prison sentence. Portugal, France, Greece, Albania and Kosovo all see changes in the composition of their governments. In Italy, the general budget for 2019 is rejected by the EC. In Slovenia, the police resume their strike which is ongoing since February. In Croatia, the Health Minister survives a confidence vote and the former Prime Minister Ivo Sanader is sentenced to prison. Bosnia holds general elections and the former Agriculture Minister Jerko Ivanovic is sentenced to prison. In FYROM, the Parliament approves the agreement with Greece over the country’s name change. In Turkey, the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul ignites an international crisis. In Cyprus, an agreement is reached to open two new border crossings. Turkey, Russia, France and Germany agree in Istanbul on a political solution for Syria. Jordan reshuffles the government and announces the cancellation of two annexes of its bilateral peace treaty with Israel. In Libya, the unity government is restructured. Tunisia adopts a law that penalizes racism and is the victim of a terrorist attack. In Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika announces his candidacy for the 2019 presidential elections. Mauritania appoints a Prime Minister.

Portugal

- On 15 October there are changes in the government after the resignation on 12 October of the Defence Minister Jose Azeredo Lopes, who is implicated in the cover-up of a military arms depot robbery in June 2017. He is replaced by Joao Gomes Cravinho. Graça Fonseca takes over as Culture Minister; Pedro Siza Vieira as Economy Minister; and Marta Temido as Health Minister.

Spain

- On 1 October a march in Barcelona marks the first anniversary of the unilateral independence referendum. On 8 and 12 October there are also demonstrations across Barcelona in support of Spanish unity.
- On 6 - 7 October Salvamento Marítimo rescues at least 1,181 people in the Mediterranean.
- On 25 October the former Economy Minister and former IMF director Rodrigo Rato begins serving his four-and-a-half-year prison sentence for embezzling funds for personal use.

France

- On 2 October the President Emmanuel Macron accepts the resignation of the Interior Minister Gerard Collomb, who on 18 September announced his candidacy for mayor of Lyon for the 2020 municipal elections. Collomb’s departure leads to a newly formed cabinet on 16 October: Christophe Castaner takes over as Interior Minister; Franck Riester as Culture Minister; Dider Guillaume as Agriculture Minister and Jacqueline Gourault as Territorial Cohesion Minister.
- On 12 October Emmanuel Maurel, leader of the leftist branch of the Socialist Party, announces his departure from the party, amid a serious crisis that is splitting the party.
- On 18 October protests break out during a police raid of the offices of the Unbowed France party as part of two investigations into the alleged irregularities of Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s campaign in the 2017 presidential elections.

Italy

- On 2 October the mayor of Rome Lucano, notorious for his policy of welcoming refugees, is placed under house arrest charged with facilitating illegal immigration.
- On 8 October the leaders of the French and Italian far right, Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini, meet in Rome and announce an alliance of far-right and Eurosceptic parties for the 2019 European elections.
- On 17 October the Deputy Prime Minister Luigi Di Maio (M5S) accuses the League of presenting a manipulated - more lenient - version of the tax amnesty on fortunes held in overseas accounts agreed by both government partners, and blocks the document before its signing by the President Sergio Mattarella.
- On 23 October the EC rejects the annual budget of a Member State for the first time and gives Italy three weeks to redraft its 2019 budget, for failing to comply significantly with European public spending policy, as it foresees a rise in the deficit until 2.4% of the GDP.
- On 25 - 26 October four undocumented immigrants with criminal records are arrested for the rape and murder of the minor Desiree Mariotti in Rome. The dark circumstances of the crime are reminiscent of the murder of Pamela Mastropietro in February in Macerata and reignite the debate on migration and identity.

Malta

- On 7 October the army rescues 120 migrants.

Slovenia

- On 1 October the police resume their strike for higher wages a month after the government of Marjan Sarec took the power following the June elections. The strike began in February but was suspended in March after the resignation of then Prime Minister Miro Cerar, which prompted early elections.

Croatia

- On 12 October the Health Minister Milan Kujundzic survives a confidence vote led by the social democratic and centrist opposition who blame him for the precarious situation of the public health system.
- On 20 October thousands protest in Zagreb against pension reforms that will raise the retirement age and make it more difficult to take early retirement.
- On 22 October the former Prime Minister Ivo Sanader is sentenced to two
and a half years in prison for profiting from the breakup of Yugoslavia by accepting illicit payments from the Austrian Hypo Alpe Adria bank.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

- On 7 October Bosnia holds general elections. The SNSD is the most voted party in the Republika Srpska and Zeljka Cvijanovic (SNSD) will preside over the entity. The main Bosniak party, the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), is the most voted in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its Bosniak cantons, while the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ-BiH) wins in the majority Croat cantons. The three-member state presidency is formed by the Bosnian Serb Milorad Dodik (SNSD), the Bosnian Sefik Dzaferovic (SDA) and the Bosnian Croat Zeljko Komsic (DF) whose victory over the HDZ-BiH candidate Dragan Covic sparks protests from the Croatian nationalist party.

- On 22 October the Bosnian State Court sentences Jerko Ivanovic Ljajnovic, the former Agriculture Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to 12 years in prison for fraud, money laundering and organized crime.

- On 23 October clashes break out between police and some 300 migrants trying to enter the country from Croatia.

**Cyprus**

- On 16 October Cyprus protested to the UN over actions taken by Turkey against Cypriot fishermen.

**FYROM**

- On 5 October the six members of a cell accused of trafficking over 7,000 people are arrested.

- On 8 October the government approves the agreement with Greece on the country’s name change. On 19 October, the Parliament agrees to amend the Constitution to allow the country to change its name to North Macedonia.

- On 23 October the opposition VMRO-DPMNE expels one of its deputy leaders Mitko Jancev and another three senior party members for acting against the interests of the party.

**Albania**

- On 21 October the former socialist MPs Arben Ndoka and Arben Cuko are arrested during a series of operations against organized crime.

- On 25 October the Parliament approves a law that bans privately managed betting and gambling.

- On 27 October the Interior Minister Fatmir Xhafaj resigns after his brother is arrested during a series of operations against organized crime.

- On 30 October hundreds of pensioners protest in Belgrade and other cities against the pension cuts.

- On 15 October the Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj sacks Bejtush Gashi as Interior Minister and replaces him with Ekrem Mustafa. Gashi had replaced Flamur Sefaj in April after the controversial arrest and deportation of six Turkish nationals accused of having links with Fethullah Gulen.

- On 30 October Serbia and Kosovo reach an agreement on the reciprocal repatriation of the remains of the victims of the 1998-1999 war.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

- On 7 October Serbia and Kosovo begin their prison sentence for corruption.

- On 10 October Bashar al-Assad decrees an amnesty for army deserters and military service dodgers.

- On 12 October a court sentences one of the brothers of the Islamist cleric Fethullah Gulen to more than 10 years in prison for belonging to a terrorist organization.

- On 2 October the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi is murdered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. On 23 October, the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses the Parliament to give an account of the investigation into the murder, which he describes as a “political murder.”

- On 3 October the Parliament approves a year extension to its authorization for cross-border military operations in Iraq and Syria against Kurdish armed groups.

- On 8 October 23 people are arrested for their alleged ties with Fethullah Gulen.

- On 12 October a court in Esmirna sentences the US evangelical pastor Andrew Brunson to three years in prison, leading to his release because of the time he has been held in prison since his arrest in 2016. The ruling puts an end to the dispute between Ankara and Washington, after, on 1 August, the US announced it would impose economic sanctions against Turkey for refusing to release the pastor.

- On 23 October Turkey warns Greece it will not tolerate a change in Greece’s maritime border, days after Athens announces plans to extend its territorial waters.

**Greece**

- On 17 October the Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias resigns following a clash with the Defence Minister Panos Kammenos over the agreement with FYROM on the naming dispute. The Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras takes over the post.

- On 24 October the former socialist minister Yannis Papantoniou and his wife begin their prison sentence for corruption.

**Turkey**

- On 2 October the President Bashar al-Assad decrees an amnesty for army deserters and military service dodgers.

- On 10 October Bashar al-Assad approves Law 31/2018 which regulates the structure and functions of the Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Affairs) which is aimed at preventing religious mobilizations spinning out of control in post-war Syria.
• On 14 October Syria and Jordan reopen their border.
• On 27 October Turkey, Russia, France and Germany agree in Istanbul to set up a constitutional committee to come up with a political solution for Syria.

**Lebanon**

• On 2 October the President Michel Aoun describes Israel’s claims of the existence of Hezbollah missile facilities close to Beirut’s airport as “unfounded.”

**Jordan**

• On 1 October the Foreign Affairs Minister Ayman Safadi announces that Russia and Jordan are in talks to dismantle the Syrian Rukban refugee camp.
• On 11 October the Prime Minister Omar al-Razzaz announces a government reshuffle. Basam Samir Talhouni takes over as Justice Minister; Azmi Mahmud Mahafaza as Education Minister; Ghazi Mansur al-Zabin as Health Minister; Basma Musa Ishaqat as Social Development Minister; Raed Muzaffar Abu al-Saud as Water and Irrigation Minister; Majd Mohammad Shweikeh as Administrative and Institutional Development Minister; Falah Abdullah al-Amoush as Public Works Minister; Ibrahim Subhi al-Shehadeh as Agriculture and Environment Minister; and Mohamed Suleiman Abu Rumman as Culture and Youth Minister.
• On 23 October Jordan’s former counterterrorism chief Habis al-Hanini is murdered in Madaba.

**Egypt**

• On 2 October Daesh announces the death of Abu Hamza al-Maqdissi, one of its senior members in Sinai, in anti-terrorist operations carried out in the peninsula, which continue throughout October.
• On 4 October HRW accuses security forces of the forced disappearance of the lawyer and human rights defender Ezzat Ghoneim, who has been in custody since March and was due to be released on 4 September.
• On 6 October the former presidential candidate and human rights activist Khaled Ali is banned from leaving the country accused of illegal funding with the aim of harming national security.

**Libya**

• On 3 October Ahmed Araibi, the deputy head of the secret services in eastern Libya is kidnapped.
• On 7 October the Prime Minister Fayez Serraj reshuffles the government to broaden the unity government’s powers in Libya and bolster security in Tripoli. Fathi Ali Bashagha, from Misrata and close to armed groups involved in the clashes in Tripoli takes over as Interior Minister and Ali Abdulaziz Issawi, from Benghazi, as Economy and Finance Minister.
• On 8 October Libya’s eastern forces, led by Khalifa Haftar, arrest the Islamist Hisham al-Ashmawy in Derna, wanted by the Egyptian authorities.

**Tunisia**

• On 9 October the Parliament approves a law with an overwhelming majority that penalizes racist discourse, the incitement of hatred and discrimination.
• On 9 October Slim Azzabi, the head of the presidential cabinet, resigns in the context of a steady weakening of Beji Caid Essebsi and his party, Nidaa Tunes.
• On 15 October the Free Patriotic Union merges with Nidaa Tunes.
• On 29 October at least nine people are injured in a suicide bomb attack outside the Municipal Theatre in Tunis, carried out by a young woman from Mahdia.

**Algeria**

• On 21 October the Parliament resumes its activity after being paralysed for more than three weeks by a broad group of lawmakers, mostly from the ruling FLN and the RND, demanding the resignation of the parliament speaker and FLN member Said Bouhadjia. On 24 October, the Parliament elects Mouad Bouchareb as its new speaker. On 27 October, the Socialist Forces Front suspends its parliamentary activity to denounce “the taking of legislative power” by the cabinet following Bouchareb’s election.
• On 28 October a demonstration in Tizi Ouzou calls for a boycott of the teaching of Arabic in colleges in Kabylie in response to demands from MP Naima Salhi and numerous parents of students to stop the generalized teaching in Amazigh in the region.
• On 28 October the secretary general of the FLN Djamel Ould Abbes announces that the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika will be the ruling party’s candidate for the presidential elections in April 2019.

**Morocco**

• On 26 October 22 prisoners from the Hirak movement which, led the protests in the Rif region in 2016 and 2017, end their hunger strike after the authorities agree to improve living conditions in the prison.

**Mauritania**

• On 8 October a demonstration demands the release of the anti-slavery activist Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, ending in clashes with the police.
• On 8 October Cheikh Ould Baya is elected as speaker of the National Assembly.
• On 29 October the President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz appoints Mohamed Salem Ould Bechir as Prime Minister.
• On 29 October Boydiel Ould Houmed dissolves his party, El Wiam, which took part in the protests in 2011 against Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, to join the ruling UPR.
• On 30 October the chief of staff Mohamed Ould Ghazouani is appointed Defence Minister and the leader of the UPR Sidi Mohamed Ould Maham takes over as government spokesman.

**EU**

• On 8 October the EU expresses its alarm over the recent murders of three investigative journalists - Victoria Marinova in Bulgaria on 6 October, Jan Kuciak in Slovakia on 21 February and Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta on 16 October 2017.
November 2018

In Spain, judges and prosecutors go on strike to demand better working conditions and greater independence and there are demonstrations in Catalonia against the public spending cuts. In France, there are major protests against the rise in fuel prices and New Caledonia votes against independence. Malta is urged by the EC to step up measures against money laundering. In Bosnia, the former commander Naser Oric is acquitted of committing war crimes. Kosovo triggers a regional crisis by imposing 100% tariffs on imports from Serbia and Bosnia. The former Prime Minister of FYROM flees to Turkey to avoid being jailed. In Greece, there is a general strike. In Cyprus opens two new crossings between the north and south of the island. The Syrian government accuses the armed opposition of a chemical weapons attack in Aleppo. An agreement is yet to be reached to form a government in Lebanon. Egypt outlaws the Islamist group al-Gamaa al-Islamiya. Palermo hosts an international summit to work towards an effective transition in Libya, whose parliamentary elections are postponed. In Tunisia, there is a government reshuffle and major protests. In Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika appoints Muad Bouchareb as the FLN secretary general.

Spain

- On 5 November the former secretary general of the PP and former Defence Minister Maria Dolores de Cospedal steps down from the party’s executive committee after details are revealed of a meeting with the former police commissioner Jose Manuel Villarejo, currently serving a prison sentence for corruption, in which she asked him to spy on different political figures.
- On 6 November the Strasbourg Court concludes that the National Court judges that convicted the Basque politician Arnaldo Otegi for trying to rebuild the terrorist group ETA’s political wing Batasuna were not impartial.
- On 8 November the government approves a law decree under which banks, and not borrowers, are responsible for paying the Documented Legal Acts tax on mortgages, two days after the controversy caused by the Supreme Court ruling which establishes the opposite, contradicting its previous ruling on 19 October.
- On 19 November judges and prosecutors hold their second general strike of the year after the one held in May - the third since 1978 - to demand better pay and working conditions and greater judicial independence.
- On 26 November a week of demonstrations and strikes begins in the Catalan health sector, demanding that the regional government reverse the public spending cuts. On 28 - 29 November the state education sector and firefighters join the demonstrations.

France

- On 1 November France deploys 15,000 security officers to deal with the riots, attacks on police officers and torching of cars that took place across multiple cities during the night of Halloween, in a series of acts inspired by the film saga The Purge.
- On 4 November a referendum is held in which New Caledonia decides against independence from France with 56.4% of the vote.
- On 6 November six people who belong to the extreme right group the Barjols, are arrested for plotting to assassinate the President Emmanuel Macron.

Monaco

- On 6 November the President of AS Monaco Football Club Dmitry Rybolovlev is detained and released after testifying in a corruption probe.

Italy

- On 10 November the mayor of Rome Virginia Raggi (M5S) is acquitted of giving false testimony in a corruption trial involving one of her chief advisors in Rome’s city hall, Raffaele Marra.
- On 27 November the ECHR rejects the appeal of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi against his six-year ban on running for public office due to his 2013 tax fraud conviction and in accordance with the 2012 Severino law, approved by the government of Mario Monti.

Malta

- On 5 November the Financial Services Authority of Malta announces the closure of the Maltese Pilatus Bank for its involvement in the Panama Papers financial scandal.
- On 8 November the EC urges Malta to take effective measures to comply with European regulations against money laundering.
- On 16 November the Prime Minister Joseph Muscat states that he is ready to resign if the official inquiry into the reports of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who was murdered in October 2017, on his Dubai-based company 17 Black reveals fraudulent practice in relation to the Panama Papers scandal.

Slovenia

- On 21 November the government announces a 4% public sector pay hike.
as of January 2019 to prevent the wave of strikes planned for December.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

- On 20 November the members of the three-part presidency are sworn into office after the elections held in October.
- On 30 October Naser Oric, the Bosnian army’s former commander in Srebrenica, is acquitted by a court in Sarajevo of war crimes during the Bosnian War.

**Montenegro**

- On 27 November Montenegro summons the Serbian ambassador in Podgorica after Branka Milic, a suspect in the trial of the 2016 failed coup attempt, flees to the Serbian embassy to avoid arrest.

**Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244**

- On 7 November Belgrade and Sarajevo protest against the decision of Kosovó’s government to impose a 100% tariff on Serbian and Bosnian imports because of the hostility shown by both countries towards Kosovo. The measure also sparks protests in the Serb-majority areas, as well as the resignation on 27 November of the mayor of North Mitrovica Goran Rakic. The US urges Pristina to suspend the tariff hike, which is backed by Albania.
- On 8 November the Serbian and Kosovo presidents Aleksandar Vucic and Hashim Thaci meet with the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini in Brussels to try to relaunch bilateral talks.
- On 23 and 26 November the police in Kosovo arrest four ethnic Serbs in Mitrovica for their alleged connection with the murder of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic in January.

**FYROM**

- On 1 November a court temporary freezes 69 real-estate assets of the main opposition party VMRO-DPMNE, as part of a large-scale money-laundering probe.
- On 13 November the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski uses a car from the Hungarian embassy in Skopje to flee through Albania and Montenegro to Hungary, where he requests political asylum. The incident comes after Gruevski was sentenced, on 5 October, to two years’ imprisonment for illegally soliciting the purchase of a vehicle, a case in which the former Interior Minister Gordana Jankuloska was also given an eight-year jail sentence.
- On 18 November around a thousand people demonstrate in Skopje against the agreement with Greece over the country’s name change.
- On 20 November police arrest the former secret service chief, during Nikola Gruevski’s term in office, Saso Mijalkov in the investigation into criminal activity involving VMRO-DPMNE.
- On 28 November the opposition VMRO-DPMNE leads the first of a series of demonstrations against the social democrat government of Zoran Zaev, accusing it of mismanaging the economy and making intolerable concessions to Greece.

**Albania**

- On 14 November the 10th Stabilisation and Association Council with Albania reaffirms the need to continue with reforms in the areas of Justice and the fight against corruption in order to begin accession talks in June 2019.

**Greece**

- On 17 November thousands of demonstrators demand an end to austerity in a march to commemorate the 1973 student uprising, which was decisive in bringing down the Regime of the Colonels.
- On 27 - 28 November the journalist unions hold a strike in the sector to support the national strike called for 28 November to demand higher wages and pensions and an end to cuts in public spending, in the same month that the EC detects delays in the implementation of certain measures agreed with Greece in its economic bailout, which came to an end in August.

**Turkey**

- On 4 November the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that Turkey will not accept “any attempt to extract natural resources in our country, Cyprus or the eastern Mediterranean” in the context of the disputes over the overlapping jurisdictional claims for the exploitation of oil and gas reserves in the area.
- On 20 November the ECHR condemns Turkey for holding the Kurdish opposition leader Selahattin Demirtas in prison since November 2016 given that he was a candidate in the June 2018 presidential elections.
- On 27 November Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces that his party the AKP will reach an agreement with the MHP for the March 2019 municipal elections to bolster the centre-right vote.

**Syria**

- The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan calls on the US to suspend its joint patrols with the Kurdish militia on the Turkish-Syrian border.
- On 25 November Syria and Russia blame rebel groups for a toxic gas attack in Aleppo. Russia responds by destroying the rebel positions from where the attack was said to be launched and asks the UN Security Council to condemn the attack. The National Liberation Front denies responsibility.
- On 29 November a new round of talks comes to an end in Astana, without making any progress, over the formation of a constitutional committee that could put an end to the hostilities.
- On 30 November the SDF announces the capture of the prominent Daesh officials Osama Oweid Saleh, in the anti-jihadist operations in Deir ez-Zor.

**Lebanon**

- On 14 November Samir Geagea and Suleiman Franjieh, leaders of the Christian Lebanese Forces and Marada Movement, hold a meeting in Bkerke where they put an end to 40 years of tension
dating back to the 1978 Ehden massacre, which took place during the civil war and saw the Marad Movement leader’s parents and sister murdered at the hands of the Lebanese Phalangists, of which Geagea was a leader.

**Egypt**
- On 2 November at least seven people are killed in a Daesh attack on three buses carrying Coptic worshipers in Minya. In response, an anti-terrorist operation leaves at least 19 militants dead.
- On 11 November a court in Cairo outlaws the Islamist group al-Gamaa al-Islamiya and orders the inclusion of 164 of its members on an official list of terrorist entities.
- On 25 November Egypt and Sudan agree to deploy joint anti-terrorist patrols along its borders with Libya.

**Libya**
- On 9 November the UN Special Envoy to Libya Ghassan Salame rules out elections in Libya for December and supports starting the process to hold them in spring 2019, following a national conference between the parallel rival powers, aimed at helping to stabilize the country.
- On 23 November at least six people are killed and several kidnapped in a Daesh attack on a police station in Tazerbo.
- On 12 - 13 November Palermo hosts a conference on Libya under the auspices of the United Nations. Following the conference organized by France in Paris on 29 May, in which a commitment was made to hold elections in December, which has since been ruled out, attempts were made to bring the rival powers of Tripoli and Tobruk to an agreement on a way out of Libya’s political crisis and set in motion a new United Nations plan to guarantee the start of an ordered and peaceful transition.

**Tunisia**
- On 5 November the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed announces a major government reshuffle under pressure from the IMF to reduce the deficit to 4.9% of GDP in 2018, down from 6.2% in 2017, in order to continue to receive the international financial aid the country depends upon and amid a surge in social protests.
- On 22 November some 650,000 public workers go on strike in protests against the government’s refusal to increase their salaries.
- On 23 November the government approves the draft bill that gives equal inheritance rights for men and women.
- On 28 November Tunisia sees the first protest in an Arab country against the Saudi crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman during an official visit of the country.

**Algeria**
- On 5 November the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika orders the provisional release of five generals who were sacked in 2017 and who, on 14 October, in an unprecedented decision, were placed in custody by a military court charged with corruption and negligence.
- On 25 November less than five months ahead of the 2019 presidential elections, Abdelaziz Bouteflika appoints the FLN secretary general Mouad Bouchareb as the speaker of the National Assembly to replace Djamel Ould Abbes, who was sacked on 14 November.

**Morocco**
- On 9 November nine demonstrators that took part in the Jerada protests in 2017 and 2018 are sentenced by the court of first instance in Uxda to between three and five years in prison.

**EU**
- On 5 November the Dutchman Frans Timmermans, the Commission’s First Vice-President is elected to head the list of the Party of European Socialists (PES) in the 2019 European elections.
- On 9 November, the European People’s Party (EPP) elects the German Manfred Weber.
- On 8 November Finland becomes the tenth country to join the European Intervention Initiative.
- On 13 November the European Parliament approves a resolution in which it asks Romania to reestablish its separation of powers in light of the controversial reform of the law regulating the Romanian legal system.
- On 15 November the British Prime Minister Theresa May retains the support of her government for the draft agreement negotiated with the 27 for Britain’s withdrawal from the EU, despite the resignations of several of her ministers, among them the Brexit Minister himself, Dominic Raab. On 25 November, the EU and the United Kingdom hold a special summit in Brussels to close the agreement, approved on 19 November by the European Council.
- On 21 November Poland approves an amendment to the reform of its judicial system repealing the section on the retirement age of Supreme Court judges, thereby abiding by the CJEU ruling on 19 October which ordered the immediate suspension of the reform, arguing that it compromises judicial independence.
- On 28 November the Czech Republic approves a partial amnesty for the 2017 referendum, thereby abiding by the CJEU ruling on 19 October which ordered the immediate suspension of the referendum, arguing that it compromises judicial independence.

**December 2018**
Portugal repays its debt to the IMF. In Spain, Andalusia holds regional elections. France is still engulfed in a wave of anti-government protests led by the so-called Yellow Vests. Italy presents a new version of the 2019 budget. NATO reactivates Bosnia’s accession process. Anti-government protests continue in Syria. Kosovo approves the creation of its own army and new tariffs. FYROM approves a partial amnesty for the 2017 attack on the Parliament. Albania reshuffles its government. The CJEU rules that the United Kingdom could revoke its withdrawal from the EU right up to the last minute. The US announces the imminent withdrawal of its troops in Syria. The protests continue in Jordan against tax hikes. In Egypt, the trials continue against members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In Libya, there are new clashes in Tripoli. In Tunisia, the Truth and Dignity Commission concludes its mandate. Morocco hosts the signing of the Global Compact for Migration and approves compulsory military service.
**Portugal**

- On 10 December the Finance Minister Mario Centeno announces the early payment of 4.7 billion euros to the IMF, thereby fully repaying its debt with the international body for its economic bailout.

**Spain**

- On 2 December Andalusia holds regional elections won by PSOE, although the number of seats held by the party drop from 47 to 33. The socialists may lose the option to govern faced with the possible formation of a right-wing coalition that would take control of the region after 36 years of socialist rule. The alliance would be formed by the PP - which came second although winning only 26 seats, down from 33 -. Citizens - which wins 21 seats, up from nine - and Vox, the far-right party which makes a dramatic entry into the Andalusian Parliament with 12 seats.

- On 28 December the NGO ship Open Arms, carrying more than 300 sub-Saharan migrants, docks in the Spanish port of Crinavis, in the province of Cadiz, after Italy denies it permission to enter any of its ports.

**France**

- On 3 December, faced with the persistent protests of the Yellow Vest movement and after, on 1 December, Paris is witness to its most serious unrest in the last decade, the President Emmanuel Macron tasks the Prime Minister Edouard Philippe with setting up crisis talks. On 4 December Philippe announces a suspension of the fuel tax hike which was set to enter into effect in January 2019, but the protests continue and are joined by students denouncing the education reforms, lorry drivers, who call an indefinite strike, and farmers, protesting against the rise in taxes, among others. On 10 December Macron announces a rise in the minimum wage, year-end bonuses, and the cancellation of a tax hike on small pensions. These measures will cost between 8 and 10 billion euros and cast doubt on France’s ability to fulfil the European stability pact. They also fail to halt the protests, on which the far-right FN begins to capitalize.

- On 11 December a shooting in Strasbourg leaves at least three people dead and 11 injured. The perpetrator, Cherif Chekkatt, had 27 prior convictions in France and Germany and was on the “S” list for showing signs of radicalization.

**Italy**

- On 4 December, in Palermo, the police arrest Settimo Mineo, the new Cosa Nostra boss following the death of Toto Rina in November 2017.

- On 5 December “Operation Pollino” is carried out, the biggest simultaneous raid in history against the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta in Italy, Germany, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands. The operation affects the Mammoliti and Giorgi families, which form the “Pelle-Romeo” clan of San Luca, in control of the Colombian cocaine trafficking routes into Europe. The clan has also extended its activity to include human trafficking.

- On 8 December the Piazza del Popolo in Rome is the stage for a mass rally in support of the League in which its leader and Interior Minister Matteo Salvini proposes a “new European community.”

- On 16 December the government presents a new version of its 2019 budget which, as compared to the initial version, includes less ambitious public spending after, on 21 November, the EC requests a procedure to be opened against Italy for its high public debt - around 131% of GDP - and for the absence of measures to reduce this and comply with the Stability and Growth Pact.

**Malta**

- On 30 December the army reports it has rescued 69 migrants in the Mediterranean.

**Slovenia**

- On 11 December Tatjana Bobnar becomes the country’s first female police chief, after the appointment in November of another woman, Alenka Ermenc, as head of the army.

**Croatia**

- On 12 December Bosnia expresses its disapproval of the Croatian Parliament’s adoption of a non-binding declaration that calls for changes to Bosnia’s Constitution and electoral law, to give the Bosnian Croat community equal rights with Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

- On 5 December the former Bosnian Commander Ramiz Drekovic is arrested for allegedly committing war crimes against Serb civilians during the Balkans war.

- On 7 December the former Bosnian Serb soldier Bosko Devic is sentenced to 10 years in prison for crimes against humanity committed in Kjuc in 1992.

- On 5 December NATO decides to activate the Membership Action Plan for Bosnia, after years of impasse.

- On 11 December Bosnia misses the deadline to present its answers to the 3,242 supplementary questions that make up the pre-accession questionnaire, received by Sarajevo in December 2016 and whose completion is needed for the EC to issue a ruling on the country’s membership application.

- On 31 December the mayor of Banja Luka Igor Radijovic cancels the New Year celebrations in the Bosnian Serb capital for security reasons, in view of the demonstrations demanding the truth behind the murder in March of the student David Dragicevic.

**Montenegro**

- On 10 December Montenegro and the EU open the chapter on the environment and climate change in the membership negotiations.

- On 12 December the Constitutional Court orders the release of Nebojsa Medojevic, one of the leaders of the opposition DF, arrested on 30 November for refusing to testify in a bribery case involving the country’s special prosecutor and a former mayor of Podgorica.

**Serbia**

- On 10 December Serbia and the EU opens chapters on economic policy and statistics in the membership negotiations.
• On 29 December thousands protest in Belgrade in the fourth week of demonstrations in support of the opposition Alliance for Serbia against the President Aleksandar Vucic and the SNS, who they accuse of corruption and stifling freedoms in the country following the attack in Krusevac on 23 November on the leader of the Serbian Left party Borko Stefanovic.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

• On 14 December NATO says that it will “reassess” its involvement in Kosovo, on the same day as the Kosovo Parliament approves transforming the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) into an army, in the face of Serbian opposition.
• On 28 December Kosovo announces increased tariffs on foreign products imported from Serbia and Bosnia, escalating tensions with the two countries.

FYROM

• On 4 December the former secret service chief Vladimir Atanasovski is arrested under suspicion of orchestrating the attack on the Parliament in April 2017.
• On 18 December the Parliament approves a controversial amnesty law which clears anyone not personally involved in the violent storming of the Parliament in 2017 by supporters of the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the then-ruling VMRO-DPMNE, in protest against the alliance between the Social Democrat Party (SDSM) and the Albanian nationalists to form a government.

Albania

• On 8, 9 and 10 December Albanian students protest against rises in university tuition fees and the 2014 education law, in the context of the commemoration of the 1991 student uprising, which marked the beginning of the fall of the socialist regime.
• On 28 December the Prime Minister Edi Rama announces a government reshuffle that affects eight ministries, including Education, Foreign Affairs and Energy.

Greece

• On 17 December militants from the far-left Popular Fighters Group (OLA) carry out a bomb attack on the headquarters of the SKAI-TV media group. Ten days later, another device explodes outside the Church of St. Dionysios in Athens leaving two people injured and for which there is no claim of responsibility.

Turkey

• On 14 December the public prosecutor orders the arrest of 219 military personnel for their alleged ties with Fethullah Gulen.

Cyprus

• On 2 December protests are held in different cities to denounce the sharp increase in house prices in the country after, on 26 November, a parliamentary majority censures the government for not doing enough to support people in vulnerable situations who are unable to afford decent housing.
• On 4 December the Geroskipou town council launches a campaign in opposition to its merging with Paphos, as part of the government’s plan to reduce the number of town councils from 30 to 16, in view of the financial difficulties many of them are facing.
• On 14 December the Nicosia criminal court acquits the former executives of the Bank of Cyprus, Yiannis Kypris and Andreas Eliades, of charges of market manipulation. A further five implicated in the same case will be taken to trial.

Syria

• On 3 December the Syrian army kills over 270 Daesh militants as part of its offensive in the province of Sweida.
• On 5 December the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet reports that Daesh is executing prisoners accused of cooperating with rebel groups in the province of Deir ez-Zor.
• On 5 December the Syrian army kills around twenty Daesh militants in an offensive to the east of the city of Homs.
• On 12 December the Syrian authorities announce the discovery in Deir ez-Zor province of seven mass graves with the unidentified bodies of hundreds of people murdered by Daesh.
• On 12 December the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces a new military operation about to be launched in areas of Syria to the east of the Euphrates, to eliminate any “terrorist separatist” threat, in reference to Kurdish militias like the YPG.
• On 18 December Turkey, Russia and Iran agree in Geneva to set up a constitutional committee to resolve the Syrian conflict, tasked with drafting a new constitution and holding elections.
• On 19 December the US President Donald Trump announces the withdrawal of 2,000 US troops in Syria, shortly after the hitherto Pentagon chief James Mattis announces his resignation due to disagreements with Trump.
• On 25 December the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu says that Turkey has reached an agreement with the US on Manbij, which will see the completion of its roadmap in the town when the withdrawal of the US troops is finalized. The roadmap includes the full withdrawal of the YPG from the area.
• On 31 December Iraqi fighter jets bomb a meeting of alleged Daesh leaders on the outskirts of the Syrian town of al-Sousa, a day after the Iraqi government announces it is stepping up its involvement in Syria following the withdrawal of US troops from the country.

Lebanon

• On 2 December the pro-Syrian political leader Wiam Wahhab calls for calm following the death of his bodyguard in a shootout with police, who wanted him for questioning over accusations of fuelling civil unrest. The incident sparks tension and clashes between Wahhab’s supporters and police.

Jordan

• On 13 December hundreds of Jordanians take to the streets again in Amman protesting against the tax hikes planned by the government at the re-
quest of the IMF and high unemployment rates. In response, the government of Omar al-Razzaz calls for talks with demonstrators and Abdullah II orders the approval of a general amnesty, which will affect thousands of prisoners.

**Egypt**

- On 3 December a court sets 12 January 2019 as the date for the trial against the actress Rania Youssef, accused of “spreading vice in ways that violate established norms in Egyptian society” after agreeing to process the complaint presented by a group of lawyers who accuse her of inciting “debauchery and temptation” for arriving at a film festival showing her legs.
- On 5 December a court hands down life sentences to the Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammed Badie and his number two Khairat el-Shater in a retrial over the violence leading up to the military coup of July 2013.
- On 6 December a court in Cairo agreed to hear a citizen-led petition for a referendum to be held on the amendment of article 140 of the Constitution, which limits a president to two terms in office.
- On 11 December the government announces that it will restrict the sale of yellow vests fearing that the people will copy the wave of protests that has hit France. The concerns are caused by the growing popular discontent in Egypt in the face of the IMF-imposed austerity programme, which has eliminated fuel subsidies and caused petrol and public transport prices to soar by 50%; electricity by 26%; and metro fares in the capital by 250%.
- On 11 December the authorities release the blogger and journalist Wael Abbas, seven months after he was detained.
- On 20 December the government announces the death of eight alleged members of the Hasm armed group, in operations in Cairo and Giza, considered by Egypt a splinter group of the Muslim Brotherhood.
- On 23 December, in a non-appealable sentence, the Court of Cassation in Cairo reduces the sentence handed down to the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Mohammed Badie from life to 10 years in prison. The conviction is part of the trial over the unrest in Ismailiya during the protests against the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi in July 2013.
- On 23 December the general Khaled Megawer is appointed the new military intelligence chief.
- On 29 December at least 40 Islamist militants are killed in three operations carried out by security forces in Giza and North Sinai, following the previous day’s bomb attack on a tourist bus in Giza, which left four people dead. The operations are also aimed at preventing acts of terrorism being carried out during the celebration of the Coptic Christmas on 7 January.
- On 30 December an appeals court sentences the activist Amal Fathy to two years in prison for accusing the authorities of failing to protect women from sexual harassment.

**Libya**

- On 2 December demonstrators demanding improvements to their salaries and living conditions storm the Presidential Council of Tripoli following the authorities’ refusal to talk with them.
- On 19 December the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade, the Bab Tajoura Brigade and the Joint Deterrent and Intervention Force Abu Salim, four of the biggest militias operating in Tripoli, announce they will join forces to form the Tripoli Protection Force. Two days later an agreement is reached between the militias to end the fighting.
- On 20 December the state oilfield El-Sharara remains closed, despite the national unity government’s announcement of its reopening following the Prime Minister Fayez Serraj’s visit on 19 December. The company reiterates its refusal to pay the demonstrators that forced its closure two weeks ago, demanding the payment of delayed salaries.
- On 22 December Libya and Turkey agree to launch an urgent joint investigation into the seizure at Khoms port, close to Tripoli, on 16 and 17 December, of two illegal arms shipments, one containing 2.5 million bullets and the other 3,000 weapons. In both cases the arms were made in Turkey.
- On 24 December the Libyan authorities recover the bodies of at least 34 Ethiopian Christians executed in 2015 by Daesh and buried in a mass grave.
- On 26 December a car bomb explodes outside the Libyan Foreign Ministry in Tripoli before assailants storm the building killing two people, in an attack claimed by Daesh.

**Tunisia**

- On 26 December Tunisia announces it has dismantled the Daesh-linked Brigade of Jihad in Sfax, days after another similar cell in Sidi Bouzid is dismantled.
- On 31 December after four years of work and the documentation of 25,000 violations of human rights, the Truth and Dignity Commission ends its mandate with the recommendations of preserving memory, cleaning up the security forces and judiciary and allowing the special courts to continue looking into the causes of corruption and violations of human rights that have been transferred to them.

**Algeria**

- On 29 December Algeria holds elections to renew 48 of the 96 seats of the Council of the Nation (upper house), elected by ballot and 50% of which are won by the FLN.

**Morocco**

- On 5 December the former editor-in-chief of the Akhbar al-Youm newspaper, Taoufik Bouachrine, is ordered on appeal to pay 130,000 euros to the Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Aziz Akhannouch and Economy and Finance Minister Mohamed Boussaid, for defamation, more than triple the amount established by the court of first instance. On 10 November Bouachrine was sentenced to 12 years’ imprisonment on several counts of sexual assault.
- On 10 December more than 150 states sign the United Nations Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration at the intergovernmental conference in Marrakech. Among those who
do not sign are the US, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Israel, Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, Australia, Chile and the Dominican Republic.

- On 26 December the Parliament votes in favour of the draft bill approved by the government in August which establishes a year of compulsory military service, which was suspended in 2006, for men and women under 25 years of age.

Mauritania

- On 6 December the EU announces additional funding of 125 million euros at the conference of the G5 partners and donors held in Nouakchott, to strengthen social cohesion in the Sahel’s cross-border regions and its institutional capacities in the area of Justice and Human Rights. European funding of the G5-Sahel rises to 8 billion euros in the 2014-2020 period.

EU

- On 7 December Switzerland asks for more time to conduct political consultations regarding the EU’s request to unite the 120 sectoral agreements that govern bilateral relations under a single treaty. This is the date originally given by Brussels as the deadline, following 10 years of pressure on Bern with respect to the matter.
- On 10 December the CJEU rules that the United Kingdom can back out of its EU withdrawal process right up to the last moment - March 2019 - maintaining all the exceptions that the country currently enjoys within the Union. On the same day, in light of its likely rejection, the British Prime Minister Theresa May is forced to postpone the parliamentary vote on the Brexit deal, which Brussels warns it will not renegotiate.
- On 12 December, May survives a confidence vote tabled by hardline right-wingers in the Conservative Party itself, unhappy about the terms of the deal brokered with Brussels.

Gibraltar

- On 16 March the Deputy Chief Minister of Gibraltar Joseph Garcia threatens to rescind the rights enjoyed by Spanish and other EU nationals if Spain exercises its right to veto to exclude the Rock from the Brexit deal.
- On 19 March Europe’s chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier and his British counterpart David Davis announce that the agreement on the transition period following Britain’s withdrawal from the EU will also affect Gibraltar, meaning that the Rock will be left outside of the Union, just as the United Kingdom will.
- On 20 August Gibraltar withdraws its permission for the migrant rescue ship Aquarius to use its flag, as it is not operating as a research ship, as per its registration at the Rock. A month later, the Panama Maritime Authority also initiates the process to revoke the ship’s registration, due, according to MSF and SOS Mediterranée, to pressure from the Italian government.
- On 25 November Spain lifts its veto at the last minute on the deal between the EU and the United Kingdom on Brexit, after receiving a “triple guarantee” in writing, including a statement signed by the 27 EU leaders - including the United Kingdom - and the Commission, for any future negotiation on Gibraltar to have Spain’s prior authorization.

Western Sahara

- On 3 January members of the Polisario occupy the Guerguerat buffer zone, on the border with Mauritania. In response, on 5 January, Morocco files a complaint with the UN over the “violation of the ceasefire agreement.”
- On 21 March the UN Envoy to the Western Sahara Horst Kohler presents the first conclusions of his regional tour in February to the Security Council.
- On 21 March Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, along with a further 38 of the 55 members of the AU, sign an historic agreement at the special summit in Kigali to launch the African Continental Free Trade Area (AICFTA), Representatives of the Polisario also sign the agreement.
- On 4 April Bujari Ahmed, diplomatic representative of the Polisario Front in the UN, dies in Bilbao where he was being treated for a long-term illness.
- On 23 September the Polisario leader Brahim Ghali asks the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to intervene “to put an end to the repressive practices of the Moroccan authorities and guarantee the safety and protection of Sahrawi civilians.”
- On 31 October the UN Security Council extends its mission in the Western Sahara (Minurso) by six months, and urges Morocco and the Polisario Front to move forward in the negotiations to put an end to the Sahrawi conflict.
- On 6 November, in his speech to mark the 43rd anniversary of the Green March, Mohammed VI proposes “the creation of a bilateral political mechanism for dialogue and consultation” with Algeria, a few weeks after talks resumed on the Western Sahara, under the auspices of the United Nations.
- On 26 November the Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita receives the Algerian ambassador in Rabat to ask for an official response from Algiers to Mohammed VI’s speech on 6 November to mark the anniversary of the Green March, in which he calls for an initiative to set up bilateral talks on the Western Sahara.
- On 5 - 6 December talks are held in Geneva on the Western Sahara which end without any progress on the status of the territory, but with the commitment of Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and the Polisario to meet again in the first quarter of 2019.

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Chronology of Events in Israel and Palestine

The decision taken by the United States on 6 December 2017 to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and subsequent move of the US embassy from Tel Aviv sets much of the agenda of the Arab-Israeli conflict for 2018. In response to the US decision, the Arab League announces a diplomatic drive for the United Nations to recognize Palestine as a state with the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) decides to suspend its recognition of the State of Israel and end security and economic cooperation until Israel recognizes Palestine as a state and the International Court of Justice announces that it has received a complaint filed by the State of Palestine against the US over its decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem. Outside of the diplomatic arena, the US decision sparks a new surge in protests and violence in Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem, especially as of 30 March, Palestine’s Land Day, and 14 May, the inauguration date for the new diplomatic delegation, the ceremony for which is attended by representatives of a number of countries including, Austria, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Albania, FYROM, Serbia, Ukraine and Georgia. The inauguration takes place a day before the Palestinians commemorate Nakba (catastrophe in Arabic), which remembers the 700,000 Palestinians who were expelled or forced to flee with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab-Israeli war. Washington’s decision to move its embassy to the Holy City, thereby fulfilling one of President Trump’s electoral promises, is joined by that of Guatemala, which inaugurates its delegation on 16 May.

Other countries also announce their transfer to Jerusalem, including Honduras, Brazil and Romania, the latter being the first EU member country to adopt the measure, which goes against the Union’s criteria. Turkey, in contrast, expels the Israeli consul in Istanbul over the death of 60 Palestinians in Gaza in the context of the protests against the embassy opening, a decision that Israel responds to with a similar measure. Clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and the Israeli army are the most intense since 2014, as are the missile attacks launched from Gaza and Israel’s corresponding response. The attacks continue unabated throughout the year prompting Palestine to file a complaint in May to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, the UN Human Rights Council’s approval to urgently dispatch an independent international commission to investigate alleged violations and abuses in the Israeli military operations and the approval of a resolution in the UN General Assembly, backed by the Arab countries, which condemns Israel’s response to the protests on Palestinian territory. In addition, there are two noteworthy ceasefires between Israel and Hamas in an effort to halt the spiral of violence in Gaza, agreed in talks brokered by Egypt and the UN on 21 July and 13 November. The second of these meetings leads to the resignation of the Israeli Defence Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, and leader of the ultra-right-wing Yisrael Beitenu (Israel Our Home). But the change in direction of the Trump Administration’s strategy towards Israel and Palestine with respect to the Obama Administration’s guiding principles leads to other worrying developments in 2018, such as Washington’s decision to cut US funding of the United Nations Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), a decision aimed at forcing Palestine to resume the deadlocked peace talks, dynamited by the US President himself when he recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, ordered the closure of the PLO delegation in Washington and downgraded the Consulate General in Jerusalem, which acted as representation for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and which is absorbed by the new embassy in Jerusalem. In this regard, Donald Trump announces, in the context of the United Nations General Assembly in September, that the new peace plan for the region, ambitiously dubbed the “Deal of the Century,” will be ready to be presented in early 2019. The deal contemplates the two-state solution, despite Jordan’s rejection at the beginning of the month of the US proposal to create a confederation between Jordan and Palestine, insisting that the two-state solution is the only viable way of resolving the conflict between Palestine and Israel. The year’s events are also marked by Israel’s growing involvement in the conflict in neighbouring Syria - particularly with attacks on Iranian targets - and by two new laws in Israel: the widely criticized nation-state law, which sparks large-scale protests in Tel Aviv and other cities, and the debate on the final draft of the new law on applying the death penalty for crimes of terrorism, crimes against humanity and high treason, driven forward by Yisrael Beiteinu and which extends the authority to apply the death penalty to civil courts and eliminates the criteria of unanimity in the court ruling. As regards the Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories, throughout 2018,
new constructions are approved, along with extensions to various settlements in the West Bank, like Adam or Efrat, which lead to unrest at the entrances to the Temple Mount / Noble Sanctuary and on the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip. In September, however, the Israeli Supreme Court authorizes the demolition of the Bedouin town of Khan al-Ahmar after rejecting the appeal filed by its residents. This ruling leads the PLO to file a new complaint against Israel at the ICC. The year in Israel ends with a disagreement in the government coalition over the military service law for ultra-Orthodox Jews, leading to early elections being scheduled for 2019 by Benjamin Netanyahu, who is being investigated in a number of different corruption probes.

January 2018

Israel

- On 4 January the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) gives its preliminary backing to the possibility of applying the death penalty for anyone found guilty of terrorism. The bill, sponsored by the Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman from the far-right Yisrael Beiteinu, is condemned by the Palestinian authorities, who warn that its definitive approval will lead to state-sponsored terrorism against Palestinians.
- On 6 January, in Bethlehem, a group of Christian Palestinians attack the car carrying the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem in protest against his church’s decision to sell land to Jewish groups.

Palestine

- On 4 January hundreds of Palestinians demonstrate at a refugee camp in the north of the Gaza Strip in protest against the poor economic situation and the energy crisis.
- On 6 January the Arab League announces a diplomatic drive in the United Nations to gain Palestine’s international recognition as a state with the borders established before the 1967 war and with East Jerusalem as its capital.
- On 7 January the Israeli government restores the Gaza Strip’s power supply after the PNA agrees to resume payments for the electricity Israel supplies to the Palestinian enclave.
- On 15 January the PLO executive committee votes in favour of suspending its recognition of the State of Israel, in light of the US decision on 6 December to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

Peace Negotiations

- On 6 January Israel expresses its support for the Trump Administration’s plans to cut US funding of UNRWA, if the measure is applied gradually. The threat is aimed at forcing Palestinians to resume negotiations which were dynamited by the US President himself when he recognized Jerusalem as the Israeli capital in December 2017.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 3 January the Israeli army bombs Hamas positions in the Gaza Strip, hours after three missiles fired from the Palestinian enclave land in the south of Israel.
- On 4 January a Palestinian is injured by shots fired by Israeli forces during clashes following the funeral of a Palestinian teenager who was killed on 3 January in clashes in the West Bank.
- On 15 January a young Palestinian is killed in clashes in Jayyous, the West Bank.
- On 17 January an Israeli military court extends the detention of the Palestinian teenager Ahed Tamimi until her trial on 31 January. The teenager was filmed in December 2017 hitting Israeli soldiers following the death of her cousin from a shot to the head fired by Israeli soldiers.
- On 17 January a Palestinian is killed in clashes with Israeli forces in Jenin, north of the West Bank. A further two demonstrators are arrested.

February 2018

Israel

- On 4 February the Egyptian army denies a report published the previous day in The New York Times on an Israeli airstrike on jihadists in Sinai, authorized by Cairo.
- On 4 February the Israeli government starts the procedure of issuing notices to between 35,000 and 40,000 migrants from Sudan and Eritrea, asking them to leave the country within 60 days in exchange for financial support of 3,500 dollars and a flight ticket.
- On 9 February the Lebanese Energy Minister Cesar Abi Khalil announces that preparations are underway to explore an oil and gas field, following an agreement signed with Russian, Italian and French companies, despite it being partially located in waters disputed by Israel.
- On 10 February an Israeli helicopter intercepts and downs the first drone sent directly into Israeli airspace by Iran and not by Hezbollah. In addition, eight Israeli fighter jets attack a military facility close to the Syrian city of Palmyra, from where Iran had sent the drone. For its part, the defensive batteries of Bashar al-Assad’s regime fire 25 missiles at Israeli warplanes, one of which is shot down and explodes in Galilee. This is the first Israeli fighter jet to have been shot down by enemy fire since the 1982 Lebanon War. The situation triggers a rapid escalation between Israel, Iran and Syria.
- On 13 February the Israeli police recommend that the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu be charged for bribery, fraud and breach of trust in the so-called Case 1000 and Case 2000. According to Case 1000, the Netanyahu received gifts to the value of more than 200,000 euros between 2007 and 2016 from the Australian businessman James Packer and the Hollywood film producer Arnon Milchan. According to Case 2000 Netanyahu held meetings as of 2009 with the owner of the media group in control of the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper and Ynet news site, Arnon Mozes, to give positive news coverage of Netanyahu in exchange for a reduction in the circulation of the rival freesheet, Israel Hayom.
- On 25 February the Christian leaders in Israel close the Church of the Holy Sepulchre indefinitely to protest against the tax measures taken by the Israeli government, under which church-owned “commercial” land - i.e., land
not dedicated to worship - is taxable by Jerusalem.
• On 26 February the Israeli army arrests 10 Palestinians during a military operation in Nabi Saleh. All those arrested are family members of the young symbol of Palestinian resistance Ahed Tamimi, whose trial for slapping an Israeli soldier during a protest against the US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel began on 13 February.

Palestine
• On 6 February the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) warns of an imminent humanitarian catastrophe if fuel is not sent immediately to the Gaza Strip, where the entity says there are only enough reserves to keep critical services in operation for a period of 10 days, due to the struggle between the PNA and Hamas for control over the public services.

Conflicts between the Parties
• On 5 February an Israeli is stabbed to death near the Ariel settlement in the West Bank, allegedly by a Palestinian assailant, who then fled the scene.
• On 7 February a Palestinian is shot down and killed by an Israeli security guard after stabbing and wounding another agent at the entrance to the Karmei Tzur settlement, in the West Bank.

March 2018
Israel
• On 21 March in the context of the army’s decision to declassify secret documents, Israel acknowledges for the first time that, in March 2007, the then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert ordered the destruction of an incipient Syrian nuclear reactor after Mossad agents in Vienna successfully hacked into the computer of the head of the Syrian Atomic Energy Commission Ibrahim Othman and that soldiers were sent to northern Syria to gather evidence to confirm Bashar al-Assad’s plans to build the reactor.
• On 21 March the Palestinian teenager Ahed Tamimi’s reaches a “plea bargain” with the military prosecution in exchange for eight months in prison, according to the NGO Human Rights Watch.

Palestine
• On 13 March the Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah escapes unharmed from a bomb blast in Beit Hanoun shortly after his convoy passed during an official visit to the Gaza Strip to inaugurate a wastewater treatment plant.

Conflicts between the Parties
• On 16 March two Israeli soldiers are killed and a further two injured in a car-ramming attack carried out by a Palestinian, close to the Mevo Dotan settlement in the West Bank, on a day when Hamas had called for a Day of Rage to mark 100 days following US President Donald Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.
• On 26 March the Israeli army attacks two targets in the north of the Gaza Strip hours after the Iron Dome anti-missile system mistakenly activates in response to machine-gun fire coming from inside the Strip identified as missiles. The shots came from military manoeuvres carried out by Hamas’ armed wing, the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades.
• On 30 March some of the fiercest protests in recent years break out in the Gaza Strip, after Israeli soldiers fire on 30,000 Palestinian demonstrators approaching the fence on the border with Israel during the “Great March of Return” protest. At least 16 of the demonstrators are killed making it the bloodiest day in the Strip since the war in 2014.

April 2018
Israel
• On 2 April Benjamin Netanyahu announces the cancelation of the plan to expel more than 30,000 migrants who have entered Israel illegally over the last decade. The government was set to legalize the situation of 16,000 undocumented migrants, while the UN would have managed the relocation of another 16,000 people to Western countries in the coming five years. The announcement is critical for the right-wing parties in the Parliament. Six hours later, Netanyahu himself posts a message on his Facebook page saying that he is going back on the decision and suspending the application of the agreement reached with the United Nations. On 3 April he officially cancels the agreement fearing the loss of his base support to his great right-wing rival, the Education Minister Naftali Bennett.
• On 3 April Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince, recognizes Israel’s rights to have “their own land,” like the Palestinians, in an interview with The Atlantic.
• On 21 April Romania announces that it will move its Israeli embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, making it the first EU country to follow the US initiative, after Guatemala and Honduras.
• On 30 April the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accuses Iran of lying about its secret programme to obtain nuclear weapons during a public appearance in which he presents evidence obtained by the Israeli secret service. According to Netanyahu, the Islamic Republic has a secret plan called “Project Amad” thereby violating what is laid out in the agreement reached with the G5+1 in 2015. During his presentation, Netanyahu asks for the agreement to be suspended and revised, days before the US President Donald Trump adopts a final decision on the possible US withdrawal from the agreement, undersigned by his predecessor Barack Obama.
set fire to tyres before throwing them over to the Israeli side of the fence.

- On 20 April on the fourth Friday of the so-called March of Return, two Palestinians are shot dead by Israeli soldiers on the border with the Gaza Strip.
- On 21 April the Palestinian engineer and scholar Fadi al-Batsh is shot dead at the entrance to a mosque in Kuala Lumpur, in an action attributed to the Israeli secret service, Mossad, by the young man’s family and intelligence sources, which although unrevealed are cited by The New York Times. The assassination is said to be aimed at dismantling a project run by the Hamas government in Gaza to send its most prominent scientists and technicians to other countries to obtain weapons for fighting against Israel.
- On 27 April four Palestinians are shot dead by Israeli soldiers on the Gaza Strip border during the fifth Friday of the so-called March of Return, in which some 200 people have been injured according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

May 2018

Israel

- On 4 May the Knesset approves a law, by 62 votes in favour to 41 against, which brings the decision to declare war down to just two people - the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister.
- On 16 May Guatemala becomes the first country to move its Israeli embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem following the initiative led by the US, which did so on 14 May. In the opposite direction to Guatemala’s decision, Turkey expels its Israeli consul in Istanbul Eitan Naeh, over the death of 60 Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli army on 14 May, in the context of the protests against the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem and the commemoration of the day of Nakba. Israel responds by expelling the Turkish consul in Jerusalem Husnu Gurcan Turkoglu.
- On 24 May the Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman announces that he will ask for approval for a plan to build 2,500 Israeli homes in 30 West Bank settlements and that he will also ask for authorization for the future construction of a further 1,400 homes.

Palestine

- On 4 May Mahmoud Abbas is re-elected chairman of the PLO’s executive committee, which meets in Ramallah for the first time in 22 years, an event which is boycotted by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian factions. At the meeting, Abbas says that the persecutions, pogroms and massacres suffered by the Jews in Europe since the 11th century until the holocaust were the result not of their religion, but because of the “social behaviour” and “activities related to banks and interests,” while in the Islamic world there was “not a single attack against the Jews in 1,400 years.” He also adds that Adolf Hitler offered the Jews money for them to go to Palestine under the British mandate “so the Jewish State would be under the rule of the Third Reich and would be useful” and that Israel is a mere colonial project bearing no relation to Judaism. He goes as far as to claim that there is no relation between Jews and the territory of Israel and Palestine.
- On 15 May Egypt authorizes the entry into its territory of Palestinians injured during clashes in the Gaza Strip between demonstrators and Israeli soldiers during the commemoration of Nakba.
- On 16 May the PNA Foreign Minister summons its main diplomatic representatives in Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria for consultations after the ambassadors of these four countries in Israel participate in an event organized on 13 May by the Israeli Foreign Ministry to celebrate the transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
- On 17 May the PNA presents its instrument of accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), for its entry into force on 16 June, and another two United Nations mechanisms: the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 14 May the US inaugurates its embassy in Jerusalem, thereby fulfilling one of President Donald Trump’s election promises. Palestinian groups call for widespread marches and protests against the measure and to commemorate the Nakba, which, on 15 May, remembers the 700,000 Palestinians who were expelled or forced to flee with the creation of Israel and the subsequent Arab-Israeli war 70 years ago. For its part, the head of al-Qaeda Ayman az-Zawahiri calls for jihad against the US.
- On 15 May the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights denounces Israel’s “seemingly indiscriminate killing” and reminds Israel that an attempt to jump over or damage the border fence does not justify the use of lethal force. The condemnation comes after at least 58 people are killed and 1,360 injured - 2,700 according to the Palestinian Health Ministry - from shots fired by the Israeli army during the protests against the inauguration of the new US embassy in Jerusalem and the commemoration of the day of Nakba.
- On 17 May the Israeli army attacks Hamas military positions in the north of the Gaza Strip.
- On 18 May the UN Human Rights Council approves, by 29 votes in favour, two against and 14 abstentions, the urgent dispatch of an independent international commission to Gaza to investigate the violations and abuses reported in the context of the Israeli military operations against the protests which began in March 2018. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, since December 2017, 142 people have been killed and 19,000 injured during the protests against Israel and the new US policy in the region.
- On 22 May Palestine files a complaint about Israel to the ICC for war crimes and other crimes in the settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip.
- On 27 May three Palestinian militants are killed in an Israeli attack on an Islamic Jihad border position in the south of the Gaza Strip, located next to the border where an explosive device was planted the previous day, subsequently detonated by an Israeli army robot.
- On 29 - 30 May the Israeli Defence Forces say their Iron Dome system has intercepted most of the 70 or so missiles launched from the Gaza Strip, which have left five people injured in southern Israel. In response, the Israeli
Conflicts between the Parties

• On 1 June the US vetoes the approval in the UN Security Council of a resolution proposed by Kuwait calling for the protection of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, because of its “grossly one-sided” focus.

• On 2 June the Israeli army reports that it has attacked around 15 Hamas positions in the north of the Gaza Strip in response to the launching of two mortar shells from Palestinian territory by an unidentified group, thereby breaking the declared unilateral ceasefire.

• On 13 June the UN General Assembly approves a resolution backed by Arab countries which condemns Israel’s response to the protests in Gaza and demands that international protection be organized for the Palestinian people. The approval comes after the Assembly narrowly rejects a US amendment to condemn Hamas “for repeatedly firing rockets into Israel and inciting violence along the boundary fence, endangering civilian lives.”

• On 18 and 20 June the Israeli army attacks around 20 targets in the Gaza Strip in response to the launching of several incendiary kites and balloons from the Palestinian enclave.

• On 29 June two Palestinians are killed and more than a hundred injured by shots fired by the Israeli army in new protests in Gaza next to the border fence with Israel.

July 2018

Israel

• On 15 July Syria’s state media report that Israeli rockets have hit a military facility close to the Syrian Nayrab Airport, in Aleppo, which was being used by Iran’s Revolutionary Guard.

• On 17 July the Parliament approves a law that could stop groups critical of the government’s politics towards the Palestinians from accessing Israeli schools and speaking with students.

• On 19 July the Israeli Parliament approves the nation-state law by 62 votes in favour, 55 against and two abstentions, which defines Israel as “the national home of the Jewish people,” establishes Hebrew as the only official language, defines the creation of Jewish communities in Israel as a national value and restricts the right to self-determination to Jews.

• On 23 July Israel activates its David’s Sling defence system for the first time, operative since March 2017 in the north of the country, faced with the increase in fighting in the Syrian province of Quneitra.

• On 24 July the Israeli army shoots down a Syrian fighter jet which had entered two kilometres into Israeli-controlled airspace.

• On 29 July the Palestinian activist Ahed Tamimi is released from Hasharon prison in the West Bank, after being held there for eight months for slapping two Israeli soldiers in Nabi Saleh on 15 December 2017, during a Friday of protest against the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

• On 29 July the Israeli navy intercepts the ship al-Awda (Return), from the Freedom Flotilla, and escorts it to Ashkelon along with the ships Freedom and Palestine, which were trying to break through the maritime blockade on the Gaza Strip.

August 2018

Israel

• On 1 August a Palestinian teenager is shot dead by Israeli soldiers during a raid on the Dheisheh refugee camp, near Bethlehem, in the West Bank.

• On 27 July the Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman announces the construction of 400 new homes in the West Bank settlement of Adam in response to the previous day’s killing of an Israeli in the settlement by a Palestinian man, who is also killed in the action. On the same day, there are clashes in Kobar, the assailant’s home town, between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli security forces. There are also new clashes on the border between Israel and Gaza and at the entrances to the Temple Mount / Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem.

• On 27 July young masked men shoot fireworks and stones in the direction of Israeli police near the al-Aqsa mosque, in Jerusalem, and clashes break out between demonstrators and the security forces.

Chronology of Events in Israel and Palestine

June 2018

Israel

• On 17 June the government approves the proposal put forward by the ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu, sponsored by the Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman, for a draft law which bans filming or publishing footage of the actions of Israeli troops, and envisages five-year prison sentences for attempts to “demoralize soldiers” and up to 10 years for attempts to “damage national security.”

• On 21 June the Israeli public prosecutor formally accuses the Prime Minister’s wife Sara Netanyahu of “crimes of systematic fraud and breach of trust” by racking up more than 84,000 euros in expenses at the official residence between 2010 and 2013.

• On 13 June the UN General Assembly approves a resolution back by ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu, sponsored by the Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman, for a draft law which bans filming or publishing footage of the actions of Israeli troops, and envisages five-year prison sentences for attempts to “demoralize soldiers” and up to 10 years for attempts to “damage national security.”

• On 17 June the government approves the proposal put forward by the ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu, sponsored by the Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman, for a draft law which bans filming or publishing footage of the actions of Israeli troops, and envisages five-year prison sentences for attempts to “demoralize soldiers” and up to 10 years for attempts to “damage national security.”

• On 26 June the Israeli army announces that it has attacked around 15 Hamas positions in the north of the Gaza Strip, because of its “grossly one-sided” focus.

• On 27 June anti-government protesters hold a march in Bethlehem, with the口号 “Away with the apartheid government. Give us our land and our rights.”

• On 28 June the Israeli government approves a $3 billion plan to build a new settler community in the West Bank.

• On 29 June two Palestinians are killed and more than a hundred injured by shots fired by the Israeli army in new protests in Gaza next to the border fence with Israel.

July 2018

Israel

• On 15 July Syria’s state media report that Israeli rockets have hit a military facility close to the Syrian Nayrab Airport, in Aleppo, which was being used by Iran’s Revolutionary Guard.

• On 17 July the Parliament approves a law that could stop groups critical of the government’s politics towards the Palestinians from accessing Israeli schools and speaking with students.

• On 19 July the Israeli Parliament approves the nation-state law by 62 votes in favour, 55 against and two abstentions, which defines Israel as “the national home of the Jewish people,” establishes Hebrew as the only official language, defines the creation of Jewish communities in Israel as a national value and restricts the right to self-determination to Jews.

• On 23 July Israel activates its David’s Sling defence system for the first time, operative since March 2017 in the north of the country, faced with the increase in fighting in the Syrian province of Quneitra.

• On 24 July the Israeli army shoots down a Syrian fighter jet which had entered two kilometres into Israeli-controlled airspace.

• On 29 July the Palestinian activist Ahed Tamimi is released from Hasharon prison in the West Bank, after being held there for eight months for slapping two Israeli soldiers in Nabi Saleh on 15 December 2017, during a Friday of protest against the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

• On 29 July the Israeli navy intercepts the ship al-Awda (Return), from the Freedom Flotilla, and escorts it to Ashkelon along with the ships Freedom and Palestine, which were trying to break through the maritime blockade on the Gaza Strip.

August 2018

Israel

• On 1 August a Palestinian teenager is shot dead by Israeli soldiers during a raid on the Dheisheh refugee camp, near Bethlehem, in the West Bank.

• On 27 July young masked men shoot fireworks and stones in the direction of Israeli police near the al-Aqsa mosque, in Jerusalem, and clashes break out between demonstrators and the security forces.
• On 4 August the Israeli army intercepts the Swedish ship Freedom, the second of three ships that make up a new Freedom Flotilla, as a symbolic attempt to break the Israeli blockade on Gaza.

• On 4 and 11 August thousands of people demonstrate in Tel Aviv against the new law on the nation-state of the Jewish people.

• On 14 August the government admits that the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu travelled in May to Egypt to meet with the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to discuss a possible long-term truce with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

• On 20 August the Israeli authorities approve an application from the settlers to build 106 new homes in the Efrat settlement, in the district of Bethlehem.

• On 26 August the Israeli authorities order the administrative detention - i.e., indefinite detention without charge - of 36 Palestinians, 26 of whom are already in Israeli jails, this being a renewal of their previous administrative detention.

Palestine

• On 16 August the media reports that Israel has handed 10 tonnes of letters and packages over to the Palestinian postal service, which had been withheld since 2010 by Israeli security forces on the Jordanian border for unspecified security reasons.

Peace Negotiations

• On 31 August the US announces that it will no longer commit funding to UNRWA, describing it as “an irredeemably flawed operation” which has not played the role it should have done to reactivate peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians.

Conflicts between the Parties

• On 7 August two members of Hamas’ armed wing the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades are killed in an Israeli bombing in the north of Gaza, in response to a previous attack launched from the Strip.

• On 9 August at least 300 Palestinians are killed and 241 injured in clashes with Israeli security forces on the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip. The unrest comes in the context of the Great March of Return protests which began on 30 March to demand the rights of refugees to return to the lands they were expelled from with the creation of the State of Israel.

• On 19 August the Israeli navy fires on dozens of Palestinian ships trying to symbolically break the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip.

• On 24 August Israel reports that a Palestinian assailant shot down by Israeli security forces after firing and throwing a bomb at Israeli soldiers from the Gaza Strip worked for the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières.

• On 31 August at least 120 Palestinians are injured in clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli soldiers on the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

September 2018

Israel

• On 3 September the mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat announces his intention to expel UNRWA from the city.

• On 3 September Amir Weissbrod, the new Israeli ambassador in Jordan, is sworn into his post in Amman, in the context of improved bilateral relations.

• On 5 September the Supreme Court of Israel authorizes the demolition of the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar after rejecting the appeal presented by residents. The Civil Administration sets 1 October as the deadline for the eviction. For its part, the PLO secretary general Saeb Erekat announces that a case has been filed against Israel with the ICC for war crimes, with regard to the situation of Khan al-Ahmar.

• On 5 September Mario Abdo Benítez’s new government in Paraguay announces that he will be moving the country’s embassy in Israel back to Tel Aviv after the previous President Horacio Cartes decided on 21 May to emulate the US and relocate the country’s diplomatic delegation in Jerusalem.

Palestine

• On 10 September the US President Donald Trump orders the closure of the PLO’s delegation in Washington.

• On 29 September the ICC announces it has received a complaint filed by the State of Palestine against the US over Washington’s decision to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Peace Negotiations

• On 3 September Jordan rejects the possibility of creating a confederation between Jordan and Palestine and insists on the two-state solution as the only viable way to resolve the conflict between Palestine and Israel. The announcement comes after the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas reveals that the US President Donald Trump proposed confederation as a solution to the conflict.

• On 26 September, for the first time since he assumed the US Presidency, Donald Trump expresses his support for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the two-state solution. In this respect, the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declares in his speech before the UN General Assembly his opposition to Trump’s peace plan - nicknamed by the US President himself as the “Deal of the Century” - described by Abbas as a “US-Israeli peace plan.” Abbas puts forward the alternative of holding the international peace conference and implementing a multilateral mechanism, whereby mediation would not be exclusively undertaken by Washington, since he no longer considers the US as an impartial party in the process.

Conflicts between the Parties

• On 16 September an Israeli man is stabbed to death by a Palestinian close to
the Gush Etzion settlement, after which the assailant is shot down.
- On 20, 23 and 24 September three Palestinians are shot dead, respectively, by Israeli soldiers during new protests on the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel.
- On 23 September clashes break out between Israeli security forces and Palestinian demonstrators after the arrest of the secretary of Fatah in East Jerusalem, Yasser Darwish.

October 2018

Israel
- On 7 October the trial against Sara Netanyahu, the wife of the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for the misuse of funds to order catering services begins.
- On 14 October the Israeli government approves the expansion of an Israeli settlement in the centre of Hebron, in the West Bank.
- On 15 October Israel reopens the Quneitra crossing, on the border with Syria and located in the Golan Heights, which has been closed since August 2014 because of the civil war in Syria and the control of the area by rebel groups.
- On 18 October the Supreme Court allows the entry into Israel of the US student and granddaughter of Palestinians Lara Alqasem, who had received a visa from the Israeli consulate in Miami after being accepted by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, but who had been detained since 2 October at Tel Aviv Airport accused of supporting the campaign of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against the State of Israel.
- On 19 October the US downgrades the consulate general in Jerusalem, which dealt with relations with the PNA. The consulate general is now absorbed by the embassy that has been moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, in a decision which implies a radical volte-face to seven decades of international consensus on the city’s status quo.
- On 20 October Israeli police arrest the Palestinian governor of the district of Jerusalem Adnan Gheith without giving grounds for the arrest.
- On 21 October Abdullah II of Jordan announces his intention to annul two annexes to the bilateral peace treaty signed in 1994 with Israel, which establishes the 25-year lease of Baqoura and Ghumar (Naharayim and Zofar, in Hebrew), to Israel. Under the annulment, both areas will come under complete Jordanian control in 2019.
- On 24 October Israeli police forcibly quell a protest held by the Patriarchate of the Orthodox Copts in Jerusalem against Israel’s Antiquities Authority starting urgent work to restore Jerusalem’s St. Michael the Archangel Chapel, without the participation of the Patriarchate, the owner of the temple since the Ottoman era.
- On 30 October Israel holds municipal elections which will see a second round held on 13 November in those municipalities where no candidate wins 40% of the vote. In Jerusalem, the conservative Moshe Leon, from the Our Jerusalem party, and the secular candidate Ofer Berkowitiz, from the liberal Hitorerut party (Wake up), will come up against each other in the second round. For their part, the Palestinians from East Jerusalem boycott the elections in protest against the Israeli occupation since 1967 and the annex in 1980. In Tel Aviv, Labour’s Ron Huldai wins his fifth consecutive term. Labour also wins in Haifa with a strong victory for Einat Kalisch Rotem, the first woman to become mayor of one of the main Israeli cities. In the Golan Heights there are clashes with Druze demonstrators carrying Syrian flags, who try to boycott the voting.

Palestine
- On 1 October Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip take part in a general strike to support the protests of Arab-Israelis against the nation-state law, passed in July by the Israeli Parliament.
- On 9 October fuel delivered by Qatar to Gaza to allow the operation of the Strip’s only power station enters Palestinian territory by the Kerem Shalom border crossing after receiving Israeli authorization.
- On 16 October a Rand Corporation report supports the predictions made by the United Nations that indicate that under the strict Israeli blockade, the Gaza Strip will be uninhabitable after the next decade. The study states that 97% of the water for Gazans is no longer drinkable, which is responsible for 25% of the illnesses in the territory and is the greatest cause of infant deaths.
- On 29 October the PLO’s Central Council decides to suspend its recognition of Israel and end security cooperation and economic relations until it recognizes Palestine as a state.

Conflicts between the Parties
- On 5 October the demonstrations of Palestinians on the border between Gaza and Israel leave three demonstrators dead, from Israeli army gunfire, and more than 370 injured. On 6 October, in response to the persistent demonstrations, the Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman orders the reduction of the fishing zone in Gaza from 9 to 6 nautical miles.
- On 7 October two Israelis are shot dead by a young Palestinian on an industrial estate near the Barkan settlement, in the West Bank.
- On 11 October an Israeli soldier is wounded after being stabbed by a Palestinian outside the Samaria Territorial Brigade base, in the West Bank.
- On 11 October Israeli reports the destruction of a tunnel that penetrated Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip and says that it was built by Hamas in order to carry out an attack on a nearby Israeli community.
- On 17 October two missiles fired from the Gaza Strip land in Beersheba and in the Mediterranean close to Gush Dan. In response, the Israeli air force launches airstrikes on Hamas positions in Gaza and the Israeli army chief Gadi Eizenkot interrupts his visit to the US to attend an emergency government meeting.
- On 25 October Israel bombs Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip in response to a rocket fired from the Palestinian enclave.
- On 27 October the Israeli army attacks around 80 military targets in Gaza in response to the launch of more than 30 rockets into Israel, which Israel attributes to Hamas.
- On 28 October three Palestinian minors are killed by an Israeli missile.
fired from a drone close to the border between Gaza and Israel, when, according to the Israeli army, they were trying to storm the border fence.

November 2018

Israel

- On 2 November Brazil’s President-elect the far-right Jair Bolsonaro confirms his intention to move the Brazilian embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
- On 5 November with the agreement of his coalition government partner, Nafli Benet’s HaBayit HaYehudi (Jewish Home), the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu authorizes the Parliament to debate the final approval of the modification of the law under which the death penalty can be applied in Israel for crimes of terrorism, crimes against humanity and high treason. The bill, sponsored by the former Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman’s Yisrael Beiteinu, had been held in the Parliament’s Constitution, Law and Justice Committee awaiting the Prime Minister’s green light since January, when its first reading was approved. The modification removes the limitations of the previous text under which death sentences could only be handed down by a military court composed of three judges by a unanimous ruling. Now capital punishment can be ordered both by military and civilian courts and it does not require unanimity in the judges’ ruling. The death penalty has not been effectively applied in Israel since 1962, when the Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann was executed.
- On 13 November Israel holds the second round of its local elections for those municipalities where no candidate has won 40% of the vote in the first round, held on 30 October. In Jerusalem, the Sephardi conservative candidate Moshe Leon wins against Ofer Berkovich.
- On 14 November the Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman resigns after disagreements with the government over its previous day’s acceptance of a truce with Hamas in Gaza.
- On 16 November at least 23 Palestinian demonstrators are injured by the Israeli army in protests in the Gaza Strip.
- On 19 November at least four Palestinians are injured by shots fired by the Israeli army in Deir Abu Mash’al, the West Bank.
- On 20 November Israel confirms that, together with Poland, it will not sign the United Nations Global Compact for Migration, which is due to be approved in December’s forum in Marrakech.
- On 25 November the Israeli authorities nearest Adnan Gheith, the Palestinian governor of Jerusalem, at his home in Silwan, East Jerusalem, under suspicion of recruiting a citizen in Israel to be part of an unspecified armed group.
- On 27 November the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets with the President of Chad Idriss Deby, who, two days before, began an unprecedented visit to Israel to reestablish diplomatic ties, which were severed in 1972. The meeting is part of the Israeli government’s strategy to open diplomatically to certain Arab and African countries, thereby breaking half a century of regional isolation since the occupation of the Palestinian territories. The strategy will also include countries like Bahrain and Oman.

Palestine

- On 9 November, in coordination with the UN, Qatar proceeds with the payment of part of the salaries owed to 23,000 Palestinian civil servants in Gaza, after receiving Israel’s approval.

Peace Negotiations

- On 23 November the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reiterates Moscow’s readiness to mediate between the Israelis and Palestinians to reactivate the peace talks, which stalled four years ago.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 11 November a new surge in violence erupts in Gaza following the failed Israeli special forces operation, which was taken by surprise when trying to leave the Strip, after killing a Hamas commander. On 14 November, after more than 400 rockets launched by Palestinian factions, and 150 attacks from Israeli fighter jets and artillery, the death toll in Gaza stands at, at least 14 Palestinian militants, one Israeli soldier and a Palestinian civilian, in the worst clashes in the Palestinian territory since 2014, and which lead to an Egypt-brokered truce between Israel and Hamas on 14 November.

December 2018

Israel

- On 2 December the Israeli police recommends opening a trial against Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara in what is known as Case 4000 or the Bezek-Walla Affair. According to the police inquiries, which began in February, between 2012 and 2017, the Prime Minister supported government policy that was financially beneficial to the Bezeq telecommunications group owner and personal friend, Shaul Elovitch, in exchange for favourable news coverage of Netanyahu and his wife. This case is added to another two police probes involving the Mr. and Mrs. Netanyahu, the Cases 1000 and 2000.
- On 4 December Israel reports the launch of Operation Northern Shield to locate and destroy cross-border attack tunnels from Lebanon, dug by Hezbollah.
- On 17 December Australia recognizes Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, although for the time being its embassy will remain in Tel Aviv.
- On 25 December Benjamin Netanyahu announces early legislative elections for April 2019 due to the disagreement in the coalition government on the law regulating the military enlistment of ultra-Orthodox Jews.
- On 25 - 26 December the government approves plans for the construction of 2,191 new homes in settlements in the West Bank.
- On 26 December the Knesset approves its dissolution to hold early elections in April 2019.
- On 27 December the former army chief Benny Gantz launches the Zionist and liberal party Hosen Le Yisrael (Israel Resilience).
- On 31 December the Education and Justice Ministers of Benjamin Netan-
yahu’s government, Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked, found the party HaYamin HeHadash (The New Right) after abandoning HaBayit HaYehudi.

- On 31 December the Israeli Parliament passes a bill that outlaws prostitution, creates social rehabilitation mechanisms for sex workers and establishes fines for anyone soliciting sexual services.

**Palestine**


**Conflicts between the Parties**

- On 4 December the Israeli Defence Forces kill a young, mentally disabled Palestinian man, who was not participating in any protest, during a raid on the West Bank Tulkarem refugee camp. Mohammed Habali’s death sparks clashes with Palestinian demonstrators.
- On 9 December a group of Israelis is shot at by a Palestinian man in the Ofra settlement in the West Bank, leaving a newborn baby dead.
- On 11 December two members of the Israeli security forces are run down and killed by a Palestinian in the Barkan settlement in the West Bank. The perpetrator is killed on 13 December in a police raid.
- On 13 December two Israelis are killed in the West Bank Givat Asaf settlement by shots fired by a Palestinian, who then flees towards Ramallah, hours after the Israeli forces kill two Palestinians involved in two attacks claimed by Hamas’ armed wing, the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades: one on 7 October in which two Israelis were killed in Barkan and another on 9 December in the Ofra settlement, which left seven people injured including a pregnant lady whose unborn baby dies. Parallel to this, two Israeli police officers are wounded in a stabbing attack in the Old City of Jerusalem carried out by a Palestinian who is then shot down by police. The surge in violence leads the Israeli authorities to encircle the town of al-Bireh and block the entrances to Ramallah, send reinforcements to the occupied West Bank to carry out raids, announce the accelerated demolition of the perpetrators’ homes, revoke permits for leaving the West Bank of relatives of terrorists and collaborators and ask the attorney general for permission to build 82 new homes in the Ofra settlement.
- On 28 December there is a new Friday of Protest in Gaza which ends in new clashes with the Israeli army in the context of the Great March of Return, which leave one demonstrator dead and eight injured.
- On 29 December Israel bombs a Hamas military target in Gaza after reporting the launch of a missile into Israeli territory from the Strip.
- On 30 December dozens of Palestinian students are suffocated by tear gas used by the Israeli forces to disperse a protest against an Israeli raid on the town of Sebastia, the West Bank.

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January

*Summit of Southern European Countries*

10 – Rome: Leaders of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain participate in the 4th Summit of Southern European Countries. The Summit Declaration, titled “Bringing the EU forward in 2018” builds upon the EU agenda settled last March 2017 in Rome on the anniversary of the Rome Treaty. The Declaration calls for the consolidation of a common European approach on security and the management of migration flows, stresses the importance of a Common Migration Policy and urging a reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and highlights the importance of reinforcing existing financial instruments, including the EU Trust Fund for Africa and the EU-Turkey facility. The Declaration does not feature prominently the EU regional dimension as such; no reference is made to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and to the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).


31 – Brussels: The HR/VP Mogherini and United Arab Emirates Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan sign a Cooperation Agreement that scales up the relation between the EU and the UAE through an intensification of political dialogue and strengthened cooperation on key strategic issues of mutual interest, notably trade facilitation and research. These key areas accompany the UAE’s Vision 2021 plans to boost growth, accelerate economic diversification and shift towards a knowledge based society. The situation in the Sahel was also raised and Mogherini welcomed the UAE’s announced pledge of over €24 million to the Sahel Joint Force.

https://ufmsecretariat.org/wuf9/

*Palestine*

31 – Brussels: The HRVP Mogherini and Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Soreide host an extraordinary meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), the principal policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance to the occupied Palestinian territory and seek to promote dialogue between donors, the Palestinian Authority, and the Israeli government. The AHCL adopts a new assistance package of €42.5 million, including for activities in East Jerusalem and support towards building a democratic and accountable Palestinian state through targeted policy reforms, fiscal consolidation, reinforcing businesses and small and medium sized enterprises, strengthening the Palestinian civil society and providing access to water and energy.

https://ufmsecretariat.org/wuf9/

Water

15 – London: EU helps EBRD to bring first sanitation services to one million Egyptians. The EBRD has received €38 million in grants from the European Union (EU) to blend with its own investment of €186 million in the extension and upgrade of wastewater services in the Egyptian governorate of Fayoum, where three million people live. The EBRD financing to the Fayoum Water and Wastewater Company is complemented by an EU grant investment grant of €30 million and over €7 million for technical assistance. In addition, the European Investment Bank is providing a loan of €172 million. The funding will support the construction of eight new wastewater treatment plants, the expansion of nine units and the rehabilitation of 10 plants as well as the installation of over 3,400 kilometres of pipes and 139 pumping stations. In addition, 350 sewage removal trucks will be procured to serve remote rural communities.


February

*Urbanism*

12 – Kuala Lumpur: The UfM Secretariat hold in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia the Networking Event: “Towards implementing the New Urban Agenda in the Euro-Mediterranean Region,” in the framework of the World Urban Forum (WUF9) in continued efforts to raise awareness about the UfM Urban Agenda with a view to ensuring a more sustainable urban future in the Euro-Mediterranean region and beyond. This Networking Event chaired by Amb. Ihab Fahmy, UfM Deputy Secretary General, and organized in cooperation with the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB), brought together representatives of several UN agencies and other key partner organizations and IFIs, as well as urban development actors and potential partners active in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

https://ufmsecretariat.org/wuf9/
16 – Sofia: HR/VP Mogherini announced a second Brussels Conference on the situation on the ground is deteriorating and this is something the world shouldn’t forget.” She confirmed that EU Ministers discussed “how to mobilize this humanitarian support, but also how to use the convening power of the European Union to support the UN-led political process that, as you know, is facing difficult moments in these weeks.”


Security
16 – Doha: Qatar calls for EU-style security pact for Middle East. Middle Eastern states should put their differences behind them and forge a security pact modelled on the European Union in order to pull the region back from the brink, Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani said on 16 February. He asked the international community to keep up diplomatic pressure on the countries concerned to achieve that, but offered few other details. “I believe that it is time for wider regional security in the Middle East. It is time for all nations of the region to forget the past, including us, and agree on basic security principles and rules of governance, and at least a minimum level of security to allow for peace and prosperity,” Sheikh Tamim told a security conference in Munich. Sheikh Tamim referenced violent conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya which have sparked humanitarian catastrophes and one of the largest refugee crises ever with millions of people washing up in Europe in recent years.”

https://af.reuters.com/article/world-news/idAFKCN1G01SY

Migration
22 – Tripoli: A high level mission of the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations visits Tripoli on 22 February to take stock of progress made and to further enhance cooperation with Libyan authorities in the joint response to migration and protection challenges. The visit to Libya is a direct follow-up to the meeting of the joint African Union – European Union – United Nations Task Force in Brussels, in December 2017. The Mission includes Commissioner of the African Union Amira El-Fadil, representatives of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission, the UN Support Mission in Libya, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They met with the Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed Sialla and other Libyan officials, and visited a detention centre for migrants and a shelter for internally displaced people.

https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/high-level-au-eu-un-mission-visits-tripoli-enhance-co-operation-migration-and

Energy
28 – Alexandria: EU inaugurates Thermodynamic Solar project in Egypt. Head of the European Union Delegation to Egypt Ambassador Ivan Surkoš, along with Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy Dr. Mohamed Shaker, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Khalid Abdul Ghaffar, President of Academy of Scientific Research and Technology Dr. Mahmoud Sakr, and a number of ambassadors of EU Member States, inaugurated on Tuesday the Multipurpose Applications by Thermodynamic Solar (MATS) project in Borg El Arab, Alexandria. MATS project, co-funded by the European Union, is a research facility and unique multipurpose solar plant with the goal of identifying and exploiting the appropriate technologies that can conveniently integrate solar energy in the current energy system and secure a stable supply to consumers.


March
6 – Brussels: The Foreign Affairs Council adopts a roadmap for the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). On 6 March the first Council meeting in formation of PESCO took place. PESCO was established by the EU Council on 11 December 2017 with the objective of deepening defence cooperation amongst EU Member States. During the
FAC meeting, a roadmap has been adopted in order to provide strategic direction and guidance on how to structure further work on both processes and governance, including for projects and in relation to the sequencing of the fulfillment of commitments. The roadmap also provides a timeline for agreement on possible future projects, as well as a common set of governance rules for projects to be adopted by the Council by the end of June 2018. Furthermore, Ministers formally adopted the first 17 PESCO projects as well as a list of the respective Member States participating. According to HR/VP Federica Mogherini, this FAC has represented a historical moment as PESCO means the birth of the European Union of Defence and Security after years of talks, and it will be necessary to make sure that resources to meet the expectations are provided, and instruments to mobilize the resources are created. https://www.euromesco.net/news/the-foreign-affairs-council-adopts-a-roadmap-for-pesco/

EU – Tunisia
6 - Brussels: EU and Tunisia agree to boost civil protection & disaster management cooperation. The European Commission signed an administrative arrangement with Tunisia to boost ties in civil protection and disaster risk management. The document, signed at this year’s European Civil Protection Forum in Brussels, outlines key areas of cooperation on disaster prevention, preparedness, and response on issues such as forest fires, floods, and search and rescue missions. The signature of this arrangement is an important step in the reinforcement of the EU-Tunisia Privileged Partnership. Under the new arrangement, Tunisia will benefit from training for experts, the setting up of joint emergency response plans as well as closer cooperation with the EU’s Copernicus satellite system. The move is part of the EU’s increasing cooperation with Tunisia in a number of fields. https://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/eu-and-tunisia-agree-boost-civil-protection-disaster-management-cooperation_en

EU – Qatar
7 – Brussels: EU and Qatar sign a Cooperation Arrangement. On 7 March, HR/VP Federica Mogherini meets in Brussels with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar. They discussed ways to enhance bilateral relations between the European Union and Qatar around areas of common interest. In this context, the EU HRVP and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, signed a Cooperation Arrangement between the European External Action Service and the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This Cooperation Arrangement will serve as a basis for an enhanced political dialogue and strengthened cooperation on sectoral areas of mutual interest, notably private sector development and research and innovation. Federica Mogherini reiterated the European Union’s support for the Kuwait mediation to achieve Gulf reconciliation and its readiness to assist. They also discussed counter-terrorism as well as several regional issues, including Syria, the Middle East Peace Process, Iran and Libya. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/40967/EU%20and%20Qatar%20sign%20a%20Cooperation%20Arrangement

Refugees
14 – Brussels: The Commission proposes to mobilize additional funds for Syrian refugees. On 14 March, the EU Commission establishes the legal framework for the second tranche of €3 billion of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, as foreseen in the EU-Turkey Statement, mobilizing €1 billion from the EU budget. The first tranche of the Facility set up in 2016 was made up of €1 billion from the EU budget and €2 billion from Member States’ contributions, which were submitted by the end of 2017. With this announcement, the Commission proposes to complete the EU commitment, and calls on Member States to honour their pledged contributions under the aforementioned agreement. The announcement on the mobilization of the funding takes place about two weeks ahead of the upcoming EU-Turkey Summit on March 26 in the Bulgarian city of Varna. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-1723_en.htm

Palestine
15 – Rome: The EU supports UNRWA with €82 million. During a meeting between HRVP Mogherini and UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl in the margins of the extraordinary UNRWA Ministerial Conference in Rome, €82 million in funding to UNRWA is announced. The Conference focuses on solving the acute funding crisis the Agency is facing and on moving forward necessary Agency reforms, following President Trump’s announcement of cutting US funding to UNRWA. In 2016 and 2017, the EU and its Member States together provided €424 million and €391 million respectively to UNRWA, making the European Union by far the largest and most reliable donor to the Agency. Today’s €82 million support is allocated as a part of the EU’s regular annual contribution for 2018, and has been made available through a sped-up procedure. The EU also host the annual spring meeting of the international donor coordination group in support of the Palestinian economy, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), in Brussels on 20 March 2018. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/58840/european-union-announces-vital-eur-82-million-contribution-unrwa_en

Sustainable economy
28 – Amman: EU Commissioner visits Jordan to promote sustainable economic development. Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations was in Jordan on 27 and 28 March to launch the External Investment Plan with the country and support its economic development. Johannes Hahn met with key political authorities of the country including Deputy Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Imad Fakhoury. The meetings focused on how the EU can further support economic development in Jordan and in particular, how the EU can help Jordan to attract foreign investors. The External Investment Plan has been launched as a concrete proof of EU engagement to respond to the demands of Jordanian citizens for economic growth and jobs. https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-commissioner-visits-jordan-promote-sustainable-economic-development
April

Elections
6 - Tunis: EU deploys election observation mission in Tunisia. Upon the invitation of the authorities, the EU deploys an election observation mission on 6 May to Tunisia for the local elections. It is the third election observation mission deployed by the EU to Tunisia since 2011, and a sign of the EU’s ongoing support for the democratic transition of the country. The mission of seven electoral analysts and more than 80 observers will be headed by Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Member of the European Parliament. Launching the mission, EU High Representative Moedas, Ambassador Dimiter Tzantchev, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the EU, and Mr. Saïd Amzazi, Moroccan Minister of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research signed the agreement in Brussels.

Research and innovation
10 – Rabat: Morocco joins the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area. The European Union and Morocco sign on 10 April an international agreement on Morocco’s participation in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA). This is the last international agreement signed with countries outside the EU not associated to Horizon 2020, the EU’s research and innovation programme, to ensure their participation in PRIMA. Morocco formally joins Member States and non-EU countries from both shores of the Mediterranean to work on developing responses to water scarcity and food security, two of the major challenges of the region. Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas, Ambassador Dimitr Tzantchev, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the EU, and Mr. Saïd Amzazi, Moroccan Minister of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research signed the agreement in Brussels.

Human rights
10 – Rome: Anti-Torture Committee calls for a coordinated European approach to address mass migratory arrivals in Italy. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) publishes on 10 April a report on an ad hoc visit conducted in Italy to examine the situation of foreign nationals deprived of their liberty in the so-called “hotspots” and immigration detention centres, in a context of large-scale arrivals from North Africa. The CPT recognizes the significant challenges faced by the Italian authorities regarding the influx of new arrivals by sea. It also acknowledges the substantial efforts in carrying out rescue operations and in providing shelter and support to the hundreds of thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants currently present in the country. In this framework, the CPT recalls the need for a coordinated European approach and support system to address the phenomenon of mass migratory arrivals.

Energy
8 – Rabat: The EU Backs Morocco’s Energy Strategy with more than €1 million Funding. On 8 May, a kick-off seminar of a two-year long twinning project between the EU and Morocco is held in Rabat. The project aims to strengthen the Moroccan energy sector while promoting energy transition towards the use of sustainable sources for energy. The EU will back Morocco’s national energy strategy seeking to ensure the security of its supplies, generalize access to energy and meet growing demand while protecting the environment. In this context, the EU funds the program with around €1.3 million to enhance the capacities of the Moroccan energy department in regulating electricity market and developing a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the energy strategy at national & regional levels.

May

Youth Employment
16 – Algiers: EU-co-funded Program in Algeria in the Service of Social and Solidarity Economy. As a result of the cooperation between the country and the European Union, a seminar on social and solidarity economy (SSE) is held by the Support Program Youth Employment (PAJE). The main objective is to inform about the PAJE activities in terms of SSE, and the emergence of this last one as a leading path towards innovation and economic diversification in Algeria. A study about the legal framework as well as a diagnosis of potentially job-generating and job-creating sectors was carried out in 2017, with the aim of becoming a basis for what the PAJE is helping build as the next national development plan of SSE to support the action and reforms of the Algerian government in terms of national policies for youth. Furthermore, the program has financed, with a budget of €4 million, the activities of the SSE employers.

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Transport
9 – Alexandria: UfM launches project to improve transport connectivity and logistics sector in the Mediterranean. On 9 May, during the first Mediterranean Conference on Maritime Transport and Logistics, held in Egypt, the Union for the Mediterranean announces the start of the TransLogMED project. The main goal of the five-year period initiative with a total budget of €1.5 million is to contribute to the development of an efficient and sustainable transport infrastructure network in the Euro-Mediterranean region and, therefore, to foster regional integration. First concrete step that is planned to be realized in practice – providing certified training and knowledge-transfer programmes to more than 1,000 professionals of the transport and logistics sector in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Italy, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia.
https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-launches-project-translogmed-transport/

EU – Algeria
14 – Brussels: On the occasion of the Association Council between the EU and Algeria, the EU and Algeria renew their commitment to implement the common Partnership Priorities and the conclusions of the joint evaluation of the Association Agreement, as well as their commitment to deepening their relations with a view to achieving a common area of stability, democracy and shared prosperity.

Women
14 – Brussels: EU-funded project supports female visibility in Libyan economic growth. As part of the EU-funded CSO WINS project, the Libyan association Jusoor Center for Studies and Development launches an advocacy campaign targeting female entrepreneurs with the aim of highlighting the consequences of the shadow economy, the effective participation in the national economic growth and increasing the percentage of Libyan women who formally register their businesses. In the same line and within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Instrument, and implemented by the European Institute of the Mediterranean through the Euro-Mediterranean Women’s Foundation, the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility funded a one-minute calling on local associations to strengthen their ability to mobilize public opinion with the aim of asserting women’s rights and encourage them to monitor women-related policies in the political, professional and social sectors at a local, national and Euro-Mediterranean level.

EU – Tunisia
15 – Brussels: The 14th EU-Tunisia Association Council takes place on 15 May in Brussels, gathering HR/VP Federica Mogherini and European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations Commissioner Johannes Hahn as EU representatives, and Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui on the Tunisian side. The EU keeps its commitment made in the 2016 Joint Communication to raise the annual level of new grants to €300 million. The 2018-2020 Partnership Priorities are adopted, with strong focus on the inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development; democracy, good governance and human rights, the rapprochement between different people, mobility and migration; as well as security and the fight against terrorism.

Infrastructures
23 – Suez: European Bank for Reconstruction and development finances upgrade of Egypt’s Suez refinery. Supporting the modernization of Egypt’s oil industry, the EBRD is providing a US$200 million for major investments in energy efficiency and refurbishment of the oil refinery owned by Suez Oil Processing Company. The agreement was signed on 22 May. In addition to improving the operational performance of the refinery, the investments will increase the flexibility of the plant’s crude intake and allow for the production of higher quality fuels and lower sulphur fuels.

June

Migration
4 – Brussels: The EU Mobilizes New Assistance for Migration Worth €467 million. The EU has adopted new programmes and projects of €467 million to continue to deliver on its commitments to assist vulnerable migrants and refugees as well as address root causes of irregular migration. Thanks to EU-IOM joint work, 150 migrants received assistance to return from Libya to Mogadishu, Somalia, in one day. These measures operate in line with the work of the African Union-EU-UN Joint Taskforce.

Palestine
11 – Brussels: The EU provides around €15 million to support families in need in Palestine. European Union allocates €15 million to the Palestinian Authority payment of social allowances. This money will be used to help around 65,839 vulnerable families, most of whom live in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank. Overall, the EU supports the Ministry of
Social Development of Palestine in serving about 110,000 families in need through an inclusive and equitable social protection system. 

Energy
12 – Istanbul: The EU welcomes the inauguration of Turkish-Azeri gas pipeline TANAP. On 12 June, Turkey and Azerbaijan open the TANAP pipeline that will bring gas produced in the Caspian Sea to Europe while bypassing Russia. The €7.2 billion project, which is a part of the Southern Gas Corridor, aims to turn Turkey into an energy hub, to diversify the EU natural gas suppliers and, finally, to play a key role in maintaining the energy security of Europe. 

Peace
13 – Brussels: HR/VP Federica Mogherini presents the creation of the European Peace Facility, an off-budget instrument that will cover the common costs of all EU military missions and operations, enabling the financing of operational actions under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that have military or defence implications. The aim is to ensure that EU funding is available on a permanent basis, thus facilitating rapid deployment and enhancing flexibility. The idea under this programme is to strengthen the EU’s role as a major global military actor and give it the capability to contribute to the financing of military peace support operations led by international partners on a global scale. Mogherini put on the table a figure of 10.5 Billion Euros over the next seven years of the multianual financial framework for Member States to discuss and negotiate it. Until now, CSDP military missions were funded under the so-called Athena mechanism, that could however not be mobilized in order to provide military equipment to third parties. 

Health
13 – Brussels: The EU starts launching projects in support of the health sector in Lebanon. The first two projects of a recently approved package of €70 million, aimed at raising the quality of health care in Lebanon and allocated by the EU Regional Trust Fund, were launched on 13 June. Their main aim is to provide quality medical services for all people in need across the country. More specifically, the first project will focus on the support of the primary health care system in Lebanon and ensure that more than 500,000 vulnerable people will have a chance to use quality and affordable services of the health sector. The other project specializes in secondary health care and includes facilities such as emergency and obstetric hospital admissions for refugees. 

Economic growth
19 – Brussels: On 19 June, the European Union and Morocco have officially launched the EU External Investment Plan in the country in order to improve a business environment and stimulate economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development. Moreover, the Plan implies technical assistance for improving the quality of projects and mobilizing investment from financial institutions, public institutions and private investors. The EU’s External Investment Plan aim is to encourage investment in the EU’s partner countries in Africa and the European neighbourhood region while promoting inclusive growth, job creation and sustainable development as a way to tackle some of the root causes of irregular migration. 

Syria
20 – Brussels: EU Syria Trust Fund approves aid package of €165 million for Lebanon. The EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis adopted largest ever support package to Lebanon and Jordan on 20 June. The total amount of the financial aid reaches €165 million, which will be directed to the improvement of the educational system of Lebanon, providing social assistance to the local communities and vulnerable groups, and, finally, strengthening the resilience of Palestinian refugees from Syria. Also, €2 million from this package will be dedicated to the support of Palestinian refugees in Jordan. 

Terrorism
27 – Kenitra: Euromed Police hold a workshop on online terrorist investigation. In the Moroccan city Kenitra, ten countries participated in the Euromed Police Action targeting terrorist investigation in the cyberspace. The workshop that lasted for three days, has allowed experts from partner countries to share their experience concerning investigation techniques on the Internet and social media on all the aspects and steps of a terrorist investigation online: from open source intelligence methods, the work of undercover agents to the ways of processing the information collected. Judicial protocols for the admissibility of the information in court were also discussed. The experts voiced their common challenges and how to overcome them through promoting transborder cooperation. 

Migration
29 – Brussels: After a nearly 10-hour long session that ended just before sunrise in Brussels, EU leaders come up with an agreement on migration policies. They agree there should be a common effort in order to alleviate the burden on southern European Countries, but “only on a voluntary basis,” thereby eliminating the refugee redistribution quota system under great pressure from many European countries. The geographical and ideological divisions have been exposed again on the occasion of this summit. Still, some concrete ideas have been put on the table. The EU has decided to foster the creation of new migrant centres for housing and processing asylum petitions along the rim of the Mediterranean Sea, but a number of questions
remain on their location and how they would be implemented. Some EU leaders raised the possibility of implementing these migrant processing centres in North Africa under EU funding and upon African countries’ consent, but these have already on several occasions expressed their total opposition.
https://www.euromesco.net/news/european-council-on-migration/

Infrastructures
29 – Khalladi: The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development launches a private renewable project in Morocco. The inauguration of the Khalladi wind farm in Morocco on 29 June marks the official launch of the EBRD’s first private renewable project financed in the country. In 2015, the EBRD, the Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur (BMCE) and the Climate Investment Funds’ Clean Technology Fund (CTF) extend a loan of €120 million to the project company ACWA Power Khalladi, without state support. The funding goes towards the development and construction of the wind farm, which began generating power in December 2017 and is now fully operational.

July

Migration
6 - Brussels: The EU allocates additional €90.5 million for migration-related programmes in North Africa. On 6 July, the European Commission has approved new programs under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, aimed at solving a number of migrant-related problems and totalling more than €90 million. This money will contribute to three main actions. First, through the programme on border Management for the Maghreb, the EU will help the authorities of Morocco and Tunisia to strengthen maritime border management. Second, the EU will reinforce its support to the protection of refugees and migrants in Libya, including the development of labour opportunities. Third, providing support to the 2014 Moroccan National Strategy on migration, the European Union will increase its assistance to vulnerable migrant groups.

Police
19 - Brussels: The Council extended the mandate of EUPOL COPPS until 30 June 2019. The Mission is mandated to assist the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of a future state of Palestine in the areas of policing and criminal justice since January 2006. Through its contribution to security and justice sector reform, the Mission supports efforts to increase the security of the Palestinian population and to reinforce the rule of law. The Mission’s budget for the period between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019 amounts to €12.667 million.

Business
23 - Brussels: July 2018, the Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises (BUSINESSMED) and the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA), sign a Memorandum of Understanding in the framework of the project “Enhancing Business Support Organisations and Business Networks in the Southern Neighbourhood” (EBSOMED). The purpose is to enhance the Euro-Mediterranean business ecosystem and to support the social and economic development of the economic stakeholders. EBSOMED is co-funded by the European Commission and is aimed at boosting the Mediterranean business ecosystem promoting an inclusive economic development and job creation, by enhancing private sector organizations in the Southern Neighbourhood countries.

August

Palestine
2 - Brussels: The European Union and the Netherlands make a contribution of 10 million euros and 0.62 million euros respectively to the Palestinian Authority’s payment of nearly 55,000 Palestinian civil servants and pensioners in the West Bank.

Social Dialogue
23 – Beirut: The European Union finances a seminar to promote social dialogue in Lebanon. An EU-funded seminar under the project “Technical Assistance to Support the Promotion of Social Dialogue in Lebanon” on the role of the Ministry of Labour as a key element in the promotion of social dialogue in Lebanon is attended by more than 50 representatives of the social partners in the Saida Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.

September

Palestine
27 – New York: In the UNWRA ministerial meeting, held in New York on 27 September, the European Commission proposes additional €40 million to allow the agency to keep providing access to education, primary healthcare and assistance to Palestinian refugees. The additional amount of €40 million brings the overall European Commission contribution to UNRWA to €1146 million in 2018.

Community
19 – Brussels: The European Union and the Netherlands make a contribution of €177 million to the 2014-2020 Urban Community Programmes in the Arab world.

Social Dialogue

Migration
23 – New York: The European Commission approved the 2014 Moroccan National Strategy on migration, the European Union will increase its assistance to vulnerable migrant groups.
allows authorities to send back 45 people to Tunisia per week. Salvini also met with Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi. http://www.arabnews.com/node/1379421/middle-east

October

Pre-accession

2 – Brussels: MEPs cut support to Turkey by €70 million. The European Parliament decides to cancel €70 million in pre-accession funds earmarked for Turkey, as conditions to improve the rule of law were not met. Last year, during the budgetary negotiation, the EC and the EP agreed to reserve €70 million in the pre-accession instrument under the condition that “Turkey makes measurable, sufficient improvements in the fields of rule of law, democracy, human rights and press freedom, according to the annual report of the commission.” This report was published in April 2018 and states clearly that “Turkey has been significantly moving away from the EU, in particular in the areas of the rule of law and fundamental rights and through the weakening of effective checks and balances in the political system.” Therefore, MEPs consider that the condition set by the budgetary authority has not been met. The Commission proposes to transfer the amount earmarked for Turkey “to cover actions linked to the central Mediterranean migratory route and full part of the EU pledge for Syria.” http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180926IPR14407/turkey-meps-cut-support-by-EU70m-due-to-no-improvement-in-respect-for-eu-values

Union for the Mediterranean

8 – Barcelona: III Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean. The Third Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Regional Forum, entitled “10 years: Building together the future of regional cooperation” is held in Barcelona on 8 October, coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the institution. The ministerial meeting on foreign affairs coincided with a dialogue session on the UfM youth occupation initiative as part of the Med4Jobs initiative. This Regional Forum was hosted by Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell and UfM Secretary General Nasser Kamel, and was chaired by HR/VP Federica Mogherini and Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi as co-presidencies of the UfM. It was attended by high representatives of the 43 member-states of the UfM, including 13 at minister or vice-minister level. https://ufmsecretariat.org/regional-forum-2018/

Migration

19 – Vienna: The 3rd Vienna Migration Conference (VMC), “From Crisis Management to Future Governance,” organized by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), takes place on 18-19 October. This year, the conference focuses on two priority areas for migration partnerships where political progress is needed the most and where a comprehensive debate can contribute towards substantial gains: regulation in addressing the global refugee crisis and ensuring access to international protection on the one hand, and building a system of functioning labour migration on the other. Attendees of this year’s conference include a high number of ministers from Europe and neighbouring countries, as well as other high level panellists. https://www.euromesco.net/news/the-3rd-vienna-migration-conference/

Refugees

22 – Brussels: The European Union supports the economic integration of refugees in Morocco. A project co-funded by the EU (with a rate of 75%), Switzerland, Monaco and Japan aim to facilitate the economic integration of refugees in Morocco. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), leader of the project, signs a Convention, on 22 October, together with the Moroccan Association of Support to the Promotion of Small Business (AMAPPE), the National Agency for Promotion of Employment and Skills (ANAPEC) and the Office for the Development of Cooperation (ODCO) to allow refugees to benefit from integrated access to the services of these agencies, an unprecedented step towards the development of entrepreneurship initiatives and cooperatives among refugees in Morocco. The support to the development of entrepreneurship and cooperative projects among refugees in Morocco has a duration of two years, February 2018 - January 2020, for a total amount of €828,000. https://www.euoneighbours.eu/en/south-stay-informed/news/european-union-facilitate-economic-integration-refugees-morocco
November

Immigration
14 – Brussels: Council of the EU decides to improve coordination between EU immigration liaison officers in third countries. Almost 500 immigration liaison officers are deployed by Member States and the EU in order to maintain contacts with the authorities of third countries on migration issues, such as prevention and combatting of illegal migration, return facilitation or managing legal migration. The EU aims to strengthen the cooperation and coordination between liaison officers. To do so, the proposal to improve the functioning of the existing European network of immigration officer, agreed on 14 November by EU ambassadors, includes provisions such as introducing a steering board at EU level to strengthen the management of the network and the coordination of liaison officer, strengthening the role of liaison officers in combating migrant smuggling as well as making available funds in support of activities of immigration officers that will be allocated in agreement with the steering board.


Energy
20 – Algiers: The European Union and Algeria strengthen their energy partnership. The EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Cañete visits Algeria on 20 November for a high level meeting to relaunch the energy partnership between the EU and Algeria, where he meets with Mustapha Guotouni, Algerian Energy Minister. The energy dialogue between both countries covers natural gas, renewable energy and energy efficiency, and the common objective is to improve the legislative and regulatory framework for gas to make it more attractive to investors, and to diversify the energy sources.


EU – Turkey
22 – Ankara: On Thursday 22 November, HR/VP Federica Mogherini and Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, are in Ankara for the High Political Dialogue between EU and Turkey. Among other topics, they exchange views with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlut Çavuşoğlu on issues such as cooperation on migration and counter terrorism, energy, economy, and transport.

https://www.euromesco.net/news/eu-turkey-high-political-dialogue/

EU – Iran
26 – Brussels: EU - Iran High Level Political Dialogue. On 26 November, the European External Action Service’s Secretary General, Helga Schmid, and the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, hold the fourth meeting of the High Level Political Dialogue, in Brussels, with the presence of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Gilles De Kerchove. The meeting focuses on bilateral issues, such as trade, energy, environment, drug policy, as well as counter-terrorism and regional issues, notably Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Afghanistan. In parallel, discussions on human rights are held, as an integral part of EU Iran political dialogue and as a continuation of similar exchanges held in November last year and in February 2016. The meeting coincides with the third EU-Iran High Level Seminar on International Nuclear Cooperation which focuses on aspects of civil nuclear cooperation in line with Annex III of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.


December

Blue Economy
4 – Algiers: WestMED Conference on blue economy. The Ministerial conference on cooperation on blue economy in the western Mediterranean takes place in Algiers on Monday 4 December. The ministers from the countries participating in the WestMED initiative (Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia) adopt a declaration in which they commit to strengthen maritime regional cooperation. The idea is to generate growth, create jobs and provide a better environment for Mediterranean populations, at the social level while preserving its ecosystem.


Palestine
11 – Brussels: The EU, Finland and Spain make a €12.6 million contribution (€10 million, €1.6 million, and €1 million respectively) to the Palestinian Authority for the payment of social allowances to poor families in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The aim is to provide an inclusive and equitable social system for Palestinians, and it is expected to cover the social allowances of around 62,000 families, of which 80% live in the Gaza strip. Since February 2008, over €2.5 billion have been disbursed through PEGASE (“Mécanisme Pales- tino-Européen de Gestion de l’Aide Socio-Economique”), the Direct Financial Support to the Palestinian Authority Reform and various National Development Plans.

https://www.euromesco.net/news/eu-finland-and-spain-to-provide-e12-6-million-for-the-payment-of-social-allowances-to-palestinian-families/
Migration

15 – Brussels: The European Union has reinforced its support to Morocco to address irregular migration by bringing the total amount mobilized in 2018 under the EU emergency Trust Fund for Africa to €148 million. “The additional funding adopted under the EU emergency Trust Fund for Africa will bring the overall migration related assistance to Morocco to €148 million in 2018,” according to a European Commission’s press release. The new funding, which is part of the EU’s “continuous support” for Morocco’s National Strategy on Migration and Asylum, “helps step up the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings, while improving the Moroccan authorities’ capacity to manage their borders,” notes the Commission, adding that the EU is intensifying its support to the kingdom to address irregular migration “in response to increased migratory pressure along the western Mediterranean Route.”


Energy resources

20 – Beersheba: The 5th Trilateral Summit: Israel, Greece and Cyprus. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades, and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, hold on Thursday 20 December the 5th trilateral meeting in Beersheba, southern Israel. Few inter-governmental agreements are signed, such as the laying of the East Med gas pipeline which is expected to facilitate the export of gas from Israel through Cyprus and Greece to [the rest of] Europe, cyber-security, disaster relief and environmental protection. On the bilateral level, Israel signs an agreement with Greece on cooperation in satellites and their applications, and with Cyprus on technical cooperation in meteorology and exchanges of information and they make a joint declaration on the mutual desire to enter into negotiations on a framework agreement between the governments. In recent years, Israel, Greece and Cyprus have increased geo-strategic cooperation in many fields.

Chronologies

Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

1. NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

Instability in the Mediterranean region is important to NATO Allies and partners both for humanitarian and geopolitical reasons as security in the Middle East and North Africa is organically related to security in Europe. NATO has developed a network of partnership with seven southern Mediterranean countries under the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), as well as with four countries of the Gulf region through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). Within these frameworks, these countries: share insights on areas of common interest or concern through political consultation and intelligence sharing; participate in exercises and training for future missions; contribute to current operations; support research on new capability development; integrate gender perspective into security and defence; fight against corruption in the defence sector; enhance efforts to destroy or control arms. The MD started in 1994 with five participating countries, which included Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, followed a few years later by Algeria and Jordan. The Dialogue has the following features: it is progressive in terms of participation and content; it is generally bilateral in the NATO+1 format but also admits multilateral meetings in the NATO+7 format; the same basis is offered to all the partners according to a non-discrimination principle; however each country can decide to intensify its own participation in the spirit of self-differentiation through an Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) and NATO will not impose the extent of the cooperation; it is complementary to other regional or international initiatives; it has both a political and practical dimension. Until 2011, the overall responsibility for the MD fell to the Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG), established at the Madrid Summit in 1997. It was then replaced by the Political and Partnerships Committee, which is responsible for all partnerships. The Committee meets at the level of Political Counsellors on a regular basis to discuss all matters related to the Dialogue including its further development. At the 2004 Istanbul Summit, NATO’s Heads of State and Government elevated the MD to a genuine partnership through the establishment of a more ambitious and expanded framework, which considerably enhanced both the MD’s political and practical cooperation dimensions. Consultations of the 29 Allies (Montenegro became NATO’s 29th member on 5 June), and seven MD countries take place on a regular basis on a bilateral and multilateral level, at ministerial, ambassadorial and working level formats. The political dimension also includes visits by NATO Senior Officials, including the Secretary General (SG) and the Deputy SG, to MD countries. The main purpose of these visits is to conduct high-level political consultations with the relevant host authorities on the way forward in NATO’s political and practical cooperation under the Dialogue. The new Strategic Concept, adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2011, identifies cooperative security as one of three key priorities for the Alliance. Practical cooperation in the MD includes seminars, workshops and other practical activities in the fields of modernization of the armed forces, civil emergency planning, crisis management, border security, small arms & light weapons, public diplomacy, scientific and environmental cooperation, as well as consultations on terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The military dimension of the practical cooperation includes invitations to Dialogue countries to observe – and in some cases participate – in NATO/PfP military exercises, attend courses and other academic activities at the NATO School (SHAPE) in Oberammergau (Germany) and the NATO Defense College in Rome (Italy), and visit NATO military bodies. The Individual and Partnership Cooperation Programme (IPCP), which replaces the previous Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) framework document, is aimed at enhancing bilateral political dialogue as well as tailoring cooperation with NATO according to key national security needs. Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia have all agreed tailored ICPs with NATO. At the 2014 Wales Summit two important initiatives were endorsed: the Partnership Interoperability Initiative and the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative. The first provides measures to ensure that the connections built up over years of operations and exercises will be deepened so that partners will contribute to future NATO-led operations (currently only Jordan has access to enhanced cooperation). The DCB Initiative is demand-driven and aims at NATO’s commitment to partners. This package includes: seven areas of cooperation (cyber defence, military exercises, Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices cooperation, border security…); the in-
Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

The Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme is a policy tool that enhances cooperation and dialogue with all partners, based on scientific research, innovation, and knowledge exchange. It provides funding, expert advice, and support to security-relevant activities. More than 30 SPS activities are held with MD countries covering areas such as cyber-defence training for Morocco, the implementation of a cyber-defence strategy in Jordan, the development of advanced security technologies in Israel and the creation of a regional crisis management centre in Mauritania. Unlike the MD, the ICI only focuses on practical cooperation and it was launched in 2004. It is addressed to the Gulf Countries and, as it stands, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have all joined the Initiative. Based on the principle of inclusiveness, the Initiative is, however, open to all interested countries of the broader Middle East region who subscribe to its aims and content, including the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Initiative offers bilateral activities that countries can choose from, which comprise a range of cooperation areas: tailored advice on defence transformation; military-to-military cooperation to contribute to interoperability through participation in selected military exercises and through participation in selected NATO and PIP exercises and in NATO-led operations on a case-by-case basis; cooperation in the fight against terrorism, including through intelligence sharing; cooperation regarding border security in connection with terrorism, small arms and light weapons and the fight against illegal trafficking; and civil emergency planning.

With the approval of the new partnership policy at the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Berlin in April 2011, all NATO partners will have access in principle to the same range and number of activities. This will dramatically expand the number of activities accessible to ICI countries. ICI partners have also increasingly demonstrated their readiness to participate in NATO-led operations, acting as security providers. Today, several ICI partners actively contribute to the NATO ISAF operation in Afghanistan. Following the launch of Operation Unified Protector (OUP) in Libya, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates promptly provided air assets to the operation and were recognized as contributing nations, playing a key role in the success of the operation. Finally, within the Parliamentary dimension of NATO a Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM) was created in 1996 as a forum for parliamentarians of NATO and the MENA region to discuss security issues. The GSM conducts seminars, bringing together parliamentarians from NATO countries with their counterparts in the region, to explore specific topics and to consider the annual GSM Report. The Group also undertakes an annual visit to a country in the region.

Main Events in 2018

- 16 January, Brussels, Belgium: Qatar and NATO sign a security agreement in a ceremony attended by Brigadier General Tariq Khalid M. F. Alabaidli, Head of the International Military Cooperation Department, Armed Forces of the State of Qatar, and NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller. The security agreement provides the framework for protecting the exchange of classified information.

- 22–23 January, Kuwait City, Kuwait: NATO and Gulf partner countries hold the fourth ICI Policy Advisory Group meeting for the first time in the recently inaugurated NATO-ICI Regional Centre in Kuwait. Participants from NATO and ICI countries as well as representatives from Saudi Arabia, Oman and the Gulf Cooperation Council meet to discuss the achievements of their cooperation and how to further enhance it, recognizing the interlink of the security and stability between the Gulf region and the Euro-Atlantic area.

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- 23 January, Istanbul, Turkey: Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller, in a two-day visit to Turkey, highlights the vital role of the country in NATO in a conference given at the National Defence University in Istanbul. Gottemoeller thanks Turkey for its contributions to the alliance, including counterterrorism expertise, deployments to Afghanistan and Kosovo and support to Ukraine. Besides this, she points out the ways in which NATO is contributing to Turkey’s security, namely, missile batteries for air defence, AWACS surveillance flights and increased naval presence in the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean. Mrs. Gottemoeller also visits some of NATO facilities and meets with Turkey’s Deputy Foreign Minister, Ambassador Ahmet Yildiz; General Ümit Dündar, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, and other high-level officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence.


- 28–30 January, Tel Aviv, Israel: NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, Ambassador Alejandro Alvaragonzalez, visits Israel in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue Partnership. During the visit, he meets with senior civilian and military officials at the Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministries, with whom he discusses the practical cooperation between NATO and Israel and the current developments in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. He also meets with several Israeli MPs.


- 13 February, Kuwait City, Kuwait: The NATO-ICI Regional Centre hosts the first training course on the protection of critical energy infrastructure with the attendance of 30 participants. During one week, the participants explore threats critical to energy infrastructure and resilience measures through lectures by internationally renowned experts. Among the topics addressed are evolving cyber threats to energy infrastructure, NATO’s and national approaches to resilience, the link between energy and geopolitics, and methodologies for risk analysis and mitigation. The course has been organized by Kuwaiti authorities, the NATO School in Oberammergau, the US Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excel-
facilitating NATO missions and operations in the region, including the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.


12 March, Brussels, Belgium: Health and civil protection experts from Mauritania, France and Romania discuss ways for boosting NATO’s support to Mauritania’s ability to plan for civil emergencies and telemedicine. In a meeting at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, the experts discuss how to develop new civil emergency units in remote areas. Through its Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme, NATO has already supported crisis management centres in Nouakchott and three other regions of the country, helping national authorities to quickly respond to crises and coordinate an appropriate response.


19-20 March, Algiers, Algeria: NATO’s Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, Ambassador Alejandro Alvarazgonzalez, visits Algeria on 19 and 20 March in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue. During the visit, he meets with Foreign Minister Mr. Abdelkader Moussa, with the Inter-Ministerial Committee in charge of bilateral cooperation between Algeria and NATO as well as the Permanent Committee for Military Cooperation with NATO. The meetings focus on the state of Algeria-NATO’s cooperation and how to further enhance political consultations and practical cooperation, including through establishing a new IPCP.


21-23 March, Rabat, Morocco: NATO’s Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, Ambassador Alejandro Alvarazgonzalez, visits Morocco on 21-23 March, in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue. During the visit, Ambassador Alvarazgonzalez meets with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nasser Bourita, the Minister Delegate for National Defence, Abdellatif Loudiyyi, the Foreign Policy Advisor of the King of Morocco, Amb. Youssef Amrani and other senior officials. The discussions focus on the state of Moroccan-
• 10-13 July, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Brussels Summit takes place between 10 and 13 July. Regarding the Mediterranean region, decisions are taken to establish a new NATO Mission in Iraq and a Package on the South is agreed. In addition, leaders decide to strengthen the support for Afghanistan, to develop accession talks’ with Skopje and to increase cooperation with the EU.

• 13 July, Brussels, Belgium: The German Marshall Fund (GMF) presents a study on NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue partnership programme under the title of “The Future of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue: Perspectives on Security, Strategy and Partnership” to an audience of experts, academics, journalists and NATO officials. The study constitutes an independent assessment of the value and prospects of this programme in light of recent changes in the security environment of the region and is based on interviews with officials and experts from the MENA region and NATO.

• 14 September, Brussels, Belgium: An inter-ministerial delegation from the Kingdom of Bahrain visits NATO Headquarters to discuss with NATO Political Affairs and Security Policy Division the development of an IPCP and find areas of cooperation relevant to both sides.

• 17-18 September, Brussels, Belgium: A high-level inter-ministerial delegation from Qatar visits NATO Headquarters to discuss the renewal of the NATO-Qatar IPCP. Headed by Abdulrahman al-Khulaifi, Head of the Mission of the State of Qatar to NATO, and Nicola de Santis, Head of the NATO Middle East and North Africa Section of the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, the delegations discuss the future development of their joint cooperation by identifying new areas.

• 30 September-1 October, Kuwait City, Kuwait: NATO and Kuwait hold the first annual review of activities at the NATO-ICI Regional Centre. The inter-ministerial delegation from the State of Kuwait acting as focal point for the implementation of NATO-ICI Regional Centre’s Action Plan meet with their counterparts from NATO International Staff divisions, International Military Staff and Strategic Commands. The meeting serves the purpose of reviewing the outcomes of the activities taking place at the centre, identify specific activities to be carried out the following year and ways to enrich the cooperative learning environment.

• 8 October, Zagreb, Croatia: NATO Secretary General (SG) Jens Stoltenberg meets with the President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, and Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, during a visit to the country. The SG praises Croatia’s contribution to the alliance, such as Croatian troops serving in Lithuania and Poland and in NATO missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan as well as in Operation Sea Guardian. They also discuss the security situation in the Western Balkans.

• 8-9 October, Brussels, Belgium: NATO hosts Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) experts from seven Mediterranean partner countries for a two-day seminar aimed at promoting regional and bilateral cooperation. The event allows discussions on challenges emanating from SALW proliferation and illicit trafficking in the region and to identify future ways for cooperation between NATO and its partners to counter this phenomenon.

• 20-21 November, Brussels, Belgium: The NATO Joint Intelligence and Security Division hosts Intelligence experts from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania and Morocco at the 16th Annual NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue Conference. The event provides a forum for exchanging views and insights on the challenges in the Mediterranean region. The aim is to reinforce relations between NATO and Mediterranean partners in the field of intelligence, building personal links and relationships within the intelligence community. NATO understands that Transatlantic and Mediterranean security are inextricably linked and is determined to implement a 360-degree approach to security.

2. OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation

The relationship between the OSCE and its MPCs dates back to the Hel-
sinki Final Act in 1975, which recognized that security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole. Immediately after Helsinki, Mediterranean non-participating states were invited to a specific meeting on Mediterranean issues related to economic, social, environmental, scientific and cultural topics. It was at the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council meeting when Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia requested a closer cooperation and finally became partners for cooperation in 1995 (Jordan joined in 1998). In 1994 an informal contact group of experts met to conduct a dialogue with MPCs to facilitate the exchange of information of mutual interest and generate ideas: the Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG). Within the political framework of this relationship, besides the MCG, the main elements are: the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, certain annual OSCE events, the OSCE PA Mediterranean Forum and the visit by the Secretary General (SG). The OSCE Mediterranean Conference is generally attended by international organizations, parliamentarians, academics and NGOs, and it provides a place for the exchange of ideas and exploring new ways to enhance cooperation. At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, partners engage in high-level meetings with the OSCE Troika (incoming, current and past Chairmen-in-Office) and the OSCE SG. In 2003, OSCE participating states decided to extend the fields for cooperation with partners (counterterrorism, border issues, economic and environmental activities, trafficking in human beings, election observation, media freedom) besides encouraging them to voluntarily implement OSCE commitments. Since 2007, a special fund has been created to attend to Partners’ needs to participate in specific activities. The wave of upheavals that swept across the southern Mediterranean as of 2011 confirmed the need to reinforce and adapt the Partnership to assist Partners on their way to democracy and stability. The Contact Group serves at the main venue for regular dialogue with the Partners. It generally meets seven times a year at ambassadorial level and its chairman is generally the incoming chair of the OSCE. It discusses topics relevant to OSCE Partners or members in the three OSCE dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental and human. Since 2011, Partners have deployed a readiness to share relevant information and developments within the group while OSCE participating states have reaffirmed their support to share their expertise, experience and OSCE toolbox for democratic transition. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) enhances relations between participating states and MPCs from a parliamentary perspective. MPCs are invited to participate in OSCE PA conferences, and also to country observation missions offering them the opportunity to study best practices and democratic processes.

2018 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, 17th Winter Meeting

- 22-23 February, Vienna, Austria: The 17th Winter Meeting takes place in Vienna with the participation of 240 parliamentarians from 53 countries. The event consists of meetings of the Assembly’s Standing Committee and the General Committees and two joint sessions of the General Committees. In the first joint session, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli appeals to revive “the spirit of détente and dialogue” at the basis of the founding of OSCE in 1975. Vincenzo Amendola, Italy’s Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, calls for finding a solution to the crisis in Ukraine and to all protracted conflicts. Finally, OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger shares his intentions and views on making the OSCE “fit for purpose.” Hakim Benchamach, Speaker of the House of Council of the Kingdom of Morocco stresses his country’s cooperation with the OSCE and its commitment to this partnership. The Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions holds a debate on “Upholding democracy in an age of ‘fake news’” while the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment holds another on the theme “Climate crisis: Developing long-term strategies to tackle climate change and its global consequences.” The Commi-

tee on Political Affairs and Security debates “Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation: Challenges and opportunities for the OSCE area” and addresses other topics such as cybersecurity, confidence building measures, terrorism and its links with organized crime, and the situation of minorities. On the margins of the meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration and the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism meet to discuss ongoing and upcoming work.


27th Annual Session of the OSCE PA

- 7-11 July, Berlin, Germany: The 27th Annual Session of the OSCE PA features the theme “Implementing OSCE Commitments: The Role of Parliaments.” The meeting sees the attendance of 300 parliamentarians from North America, Europe, Asia and North Africa. The main result of the assembly is the adoption of the Berlin Declaration with recommendations to national governments, parliaments and the international community in the fields of political affairs, security, economics, environment and human rights. Three resolutions and 16 supplementary items are adopted by the Assembly, addressing topics such as counter-terrorism, human trafficking, migration, security sector governance, gender-based violence, and countering propaganda. In addition, George Tsereteli is elected Assembly President until the end of the 2019 Annual Session and Peter Bowness, Kari Henriksen, Kristian Vigenin and Pascal Allizard are elected Vice-Presidents. During plenary sessions, reports are heard from OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry, OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger. Lastly, the ad hoc committees on migration and terrorism meet on the margins and side events are held on topics including election observation, corruption and the environmental impacts of armed conflict.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YyGcCexzhYTEPBfsl49-O0h6Lzca3W1/view

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2018 Autumn Meeting of the OSCE PA and the Mediterranean Forum

• 3-6 October, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: The Autumn Meeting is attended by 300 delegates, including 160 OSCE parliamentarians, and is held under the theme of “Promoting Security Dialogue in Central Asia and Beyond.” The OSCE PA’s Standing Committee of heads of national delegations meets on 5 October, with the attendance of OSCE PA President George Tsereteli, President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sooronbay Jeenbekov as well as other Kyrgyz high-level officials. Topics covered during the meeting include combating trafficking in human beings along migration routes, tackling the trafficking of illicit drugs, preventing the spread of terrorism, fighting corruption, the work of OSCE field operations in Central Asia, combating violence and discrimination against women, increasing youth and minority participation in public life, and promoting open government initiatives. Participants have stressed that responding to common transnational threats has had the effect of strengthening ties between the Central Asian countries and that cross-border cooperation in the region has helped build security for the whole OSCE area. They also discuss the ways that Central Asian and Mediterranean regions can learn from each other in many respects.


• 4 October, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: During session two of the Parliamentary Conference the Mediterranean Forum takes place, under the theme “Geopolitics of Central Asia and the Mediterranean: Addressing Migration, Trade and Environmental Challenges.” The forum gathers representatives from Algeria, Israel, Morocco and the Palestinian Legislative Council and is chaired by OSCE PA Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs Pascal Allizard. Among the priority issues for the OSCE and its Mediterranean partners addressed are combating human smugglers and traffickers, the fight against radicalization and violent extremism and migration management. Ambassador Katarina Zakaova reports on the activities carried out by the Contact Group, including the celebration of five meetings in 2018 addressing issues such as energy security, cybersecurity, education and security sector governance and reform. Representatives from the Mediterranean partners express their concern over the security situation in the region, with special attention to ongoing conflicts. The Algerian Delegation offers to share practices on counter-terrorism and violent extremism, based on principles of solidarity and social justice. The Israeli Delegation questions the special status of Palestinian refugees and their right of return, urging a uniform treatment of all internationally recognized refugees. The Moroccan Delegation underlines the need to strengthen cooperation in the security area through multilateral policies and finding long-term solutions to common problems. Finally, the Palestinian Legislative Council representative, Abderahim Barham, discusses the current situation of Palestinians and urges the holding of meaningful talks between both sides to advance the peace process. During the Open Debate, all delegates discuss issues such as counter-terrorism, climate change, promotion of stability in Syria, Libya and Iraq, and a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict. They also address the issue of migration and establishing links between humanitarian aid and development as well as the question of the Cyprus conflict.

2018 OSCE Mediterranean Conference

• 25-26 October, Malaga, Spain: The conference is held under the topic of “The importance of energy for economic growth and co-operation in the Mediterranean.” The theme responds to the consideration that guaranteeing sustainable and reliable energy at affordable prices is the precondition for prospering economies and peace and security throughout the OSCE region. They also state that the energy domain is crucial and that indivisibility of Euro-Mediterranean security is more consequential for stability. Other issues being discussed are challenges such as blackouts due to extreme weather conditions, terrorist and cyber-attacks on physical and digital infrastructure and a changing energy mix.

https://www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/375676

• 7 May, Vienna, Austria: The Mediterranean Contact Group meeting conducted under the 2018 Slovakian Chairmanship addresses energy security, the protection of critical energy infrastructure, the development and integration of renewable energy and the best use of digitalization for energy security. The representatives of the different OSCE Mediterranean partner countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) point to a sustainable and reliable energy at affordable prices as a precondition for prospering economies and peace and security throughout the OSCE region. They also state that the energy domain is crucial and that indivisibility of Euro-Mediterranean security is more consequential for stability. Other issues being discussed are challenges such as blackouts due to extreme weather conditions, terrorist and cyber-attacks on physical and digital infrastructure and a changing energy mix.

https://www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/380050
Ministers dealing with security and stability, as well as economic integration, it later expanded to include other spheres, such as Education, the Environment and Renewable Energies, Home Affairs (since 1995), Migration (since 2002), Inter-parliamentary Relations (since 2003), Defence (since 2004), Tourism (since 2006) and Transport (since 2007). Due to its practical and operational nature, it is a forum for the exchange of ideas and the launch of new initiatives. It can also capitalize on its restricted geographical scope, which is limited to the western Mediterranean. This initiative has encouraged the insertion of Libya and Mauritania in the regional context.

Main meetings in 2018

Foreign Affairs

- 21 January, Algiers, Algeria: The 14th Conference of Foreign Ministers of the 5+5 Dialogue takes place under the chairmanship of Abdelkader Messahel and Jean-Yves Le Drian, Algerian and French Foreign Ministers respectively. Apart from the remaining 5+5 Foreign Ministers, the conference also includes on the participation of Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner on Neighbourhood Policy, Fathallah Sijilmassi, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, Taieb Baccouche, Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union and Elisabeth Guigou, President of the Anna Lindh Foundation. The conference addresses the theme “Western Mediterranean: promoting a shared, sustainable and inclusive economic and social development face to the common challenges in the region.” In this context, topics discussed include migration, youth employment, mobility, training, female entrepreneurship, urbanization, climate change impact, and the threats posed by terrorism, radicalization and organized crime.


Research, Innovation and Higher Education

- 18-19 October, Trieste, Italy: The Italian National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (OGS) hosts the 6th GSO Meeting of the 5+5 Dialogue for Research, Innovation and Higher Education. The delegates discuss the implementation steps of the current work plan which was approved in Tunis in 2017 for the biennium 2017-2018. They also begin the preparation of the forthcoming ministerial conference that will take place in Italy in the spring of 2019.

http://www.fiveplusfiveihe.org/post/55-dialogue-gso-meeting

Transport

- 12 December, Nouakchott, Mauritania: The Ministers of Transportation of the 5+5 countries meet in Mauritania in the framework of the 9th Ministerial meeting of transportation in the Western Mediterranean (GTMO 5+5). The ministers have decided to continue participating in the UIM Regional platform for transports connectivity and to invest more efforts to develop the multimodal central network of GTMO 5+5, paying especial attention to more disconnected countries such as Libya and Mauritania. They have also taken decisions to better study transport in the region and to distribute the results of those studies, to improve road security in the western Mediterranean, to develop modern logistics infrastructures, to promote the establishment of effective and sustainable maritime connections, to improve the quality of public transportation, to ensure funds for the different projects to be implemented, to include environment sustainability as a cross-cutting issue and to keep an eye on the initiative of building a fixed connection between both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar. Finally, it is decided to meet again in 2020 under the new Maltese chairmanship.


3. 5+5 Dialogue

The 5+5 Dialogue comes from a French proposal and was set up on 10 October 1990 during a ministerial meeting in Rome. It gathers the ten countries of the western Mediterranean Basin: five countries from the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Libya and Tunisia) and five members of the European Union (France, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Malta who joined in 1991). The 5+5 Dialogue has a flexible and informal nature. Over the years, it has been transformed from a merely political forum to one for strengthened regional and multidisciplinary cooperation in the western Mediterranean. Its flexibility and informality have enabled a gradual opening up, and the participating ministers and senior officials now meet to discuss an increasing number of issues. Originally just a political compromise between Foreign
operation under the WestMED initiative. This Declaration of Algiers includes a roadmap to develop sustainable blue economy in the region to generate growth, create jobs and provide a better living environment. It also identifies the key programme initiatives to contribute to the WestMED cooperation strategy by learning from previous experiences. In addition, the European Commission and the French-Algerian co-presidency of the WestMED Initiative organized a stakeholder conference named “Towards concrete blue actions in the Western Mediterranean,” gathering over 300 participants. Cooperation and funding opportunities in the blue economy sector are presented and has been a great exchange of project ideas among regional maritime stakeholders, including businesses, researchers and institutes, national and local authorities.

http://www.fivemorefive.org/post/westmed-cooperation-strategy

Defence

- 12 December, Rome, Italy: Italy chairs the 14th 5+5 Defence Initiative Ministerial Meeting. The Ministers of Defence take stock of the effects of their cooperation and conduct high-level analysis of security threats and challenges in the Mediterranean, paying particular attention to illegal trafficking and terrorism and areas such as the Sahel, from where many of these threats stem. In recent years, the 5+5 Defence Initiative has focused on strengthening the relations and cooperation in the sector of counter-terrorism, maritime surveillance, search and rescue and the use of military assets for civil protection purposes. There has also been space for joint training and mentoring activities in order to improve and standardize the operational procedures of all member countries. During 2018, 45 activities have taken place, 19 of which have been conducted under Italian leadership.

https://www.difesa.it/EN/Primo_Piano/Pagine/woh%C3%B2p.aspx

4. Adriatic Ionian Initiative

After the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the fragmentation of the former Yugoslav and the growing tensions among ethnic, cultural and religious groups in the Balkan area, the EU, in its attempts to cope with these crises, promoted the “Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe” for south-eastern European countries hoping to join the Union in the future. Within this treaty, at the Finnish EU Summit in 1999, the Italian Government presented the “Adriatic Ionian Initiative.” The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AI) was established at the Summit on the Development and Security of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) in May 2000. At the end of the Conference, the Foreign Ministers of the participating countries, Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia signed the “Ancona Declaration” in order to strengthen regional cooperation to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration. Today, the AI has eight members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The initiative’s Chairmanship rotates every May/June according to alphabetical criteria. The Chairmanship of Greece started in June 2016 and ended in May 2017, with Italy taking over from June 2017 until May 2018. Following the recent EU approach to support multilateral sub-regional cooperation, the AI started working, in 2010, on the idea of a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian Region. Since then the All Participating states, started raising awareness regarding the need to establish a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian basin. The European Council has given a mandate to the EU Commission to present a new “Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region” (EUSAIR) by the end of 2014. The EUSAIR has been endorsed by the Council on 24 October 2014 and is now in its implementation phase. Many years after the establishment of the AI, the geopolitical environment has deeply changed. Slovenia in 2004 and Croatia in 2013 entered the EU. The other Adriatic-Ionian Eastside coastal Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), even if with different timeframes and conditions, are gradually approaching the EU within the Stabilization and Association Process framework, as a prelude to future EU membership. After the overhaul of the All Round Tables approved in 2015, the highest political body of the AI was also reformed. For the first time in Dubrovnik (12-5-2016) a double hat “Adriatic and Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting” was held within the EUSAIR Forum. This now makes the two exercises (AI and EUSAIR) inseparable from each other and mutually beneficial. The All focus for 2017 was on stakeholders and civil society with the ultimate goal of bringing them into the picture and making the subsidiarity principle work. The AI is going to foster this process in two ways: firstly, by strengthening All Round Tables and connecting them strictly with the EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs). In order to make them effective, the All-PS finances the participation of selected experts coming from Adriatic and Ionian Civil Society (universities, NGOs, associations, chambers of commerce) and from local administrations; and, secondly, by connecting the All Round Tables with the EUSAIR Stakeholders Platform, as soon as it is fully operational.

Main Events during the Italian Chairmanship

Italy takes over the All Chairmanship as well as the Chairmanship of the EUSAIR in June 2017, in the framework of the Hellenic Chairmanship with the All/EUSAIR Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs that takes place within the EUSAIR Forum of Ioannina, and remains in this charge until June 2018. In this capacity, Italy seeks to further strengthen the All’s role as an “essential instrument for fostering regional cooperation.” In this regard, it seeks to complete Round Tables’ progressive alignment to EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups and to strengthen policy dialogue and cooperation among All Member States, as well as with other regional cooperation fora, such as the Central European Initiative (CEI). In addition, attention is paid to strengthen dialogue with civil society through cooperation with the Adriatic-Ionian Fora (Cities, Chambers, Universities) as well as to enhance inter-parliamentary cooperation.

- 27–28 March, Brussels, Belgium: The 7th Meeting of the Governing Board of
the EUSAIR takes place in Brussels. National Coordinators hold discussions on the implementation of the Presidency Programme, including activities carried out until the moment and the preparation works for the next EUSAIR Forum that will take place in Catania on May 2018. They also discuss the situation of Thematic Steering Groups works and the support to key implementers by the EUSAIR Facility Point as well as on the next call of the Transnational ADRIION Programme. In addition, the All Committee of Senior Officials is also held on 27 March. There, senior officials discuss All support to the contribution of stakeholders for implementing EUSAIR, the activities under the Italian Chairmanship and the next All/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting.


• 3 May, Podgorica, Montenegro: The All Permanent Secretariat, represented by Secretary General Amb. Castellaneta, visits Montenegro on the occasion of the incoming Montenegrin All/EUSAIR Chairmanship that will start after the upcoming All/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting of Catania in May. All SG meets with Srdan Darmanovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro to discuss the priorities of the Montenegro Chairmanship and possibilities of cooperation.


• 24-25 May, Catania, Italy: The Italian city hosts the 3rd Forum of EUSAIR under the slogan “Our region, our future.” The event is attended by ministers from the eight EUSAIR countries, EU Commissioners, representatives of other EU institutions, regional and local governors and key implementers of the strategy. The forum focuses on topics such as connectivity, challenges and opportunities for transport and energy networks, funding mechanisms for the four strategic pillars (blue growth, connecting the region, environmental quality and sustainable tourism) as well as EUSAIR cross-cutting issues. The main purpose of the event is to reinforce collaboration and partnership among all stakeholders active in the region. In parallel, the All/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting also takes place. At the end of the forum, the Catania Declaration is issued, where signing countries call for a stronger EU Cohesion Policy and more support to EUSAIR, on national governments to establish new programmes and frameworks that ensure the needed funds for implementing the strategy and to invest more in public goods. Finally, the Declaration approves the All enlargement to FYROM.

http://www.aii-ps.org/about/working-structures?task=document.viewdoc&id=273

Main Events during the Montenegrin Chairmanship

Montenegro takes over the Chairmanship in June 2018 and remains in this position until June 2019. During its presidency, it seeks to complete the alignment of common stances through the All Round Tables initiated by Italy as well as to strength ties within All countries and those seeking to become members of the organization. It also puts special attention on the promotion of EU standards and values and continues to support the European integration aspirations of Western Balkan countries.

The activities planned during the one-year presidency are oriented towards developing the project-oriented dimension of the initiative in areas of common interest on the regional level, especially in the blue growth sector, transport and energy connections, sustainable tourism and culture, environmental and civil protection as well as inter-university cooperation. The priorities of the Montenegrin Chairmanship are: 1. Tourism; 2. Culture; 3. Environment 4. Blue growth; 5. Research and innovation; 6. Connectivity in the field of transport; 7. Civil protection; 8. Inter-university cooperation; 9. Regional youth cooperation in the fields of education, culture, youth policy and sports.

• 17-22 September, Ancona, Italy: The first UNIADRION – Adriatic Ionian Week takes place with a series of events, including the 1st Edition of UNIADRION Summer School "Migration issues in the Balkans," SUNBEAM (Structured University Mobility between the Balkans and Europe for the Adriatic-Ionian Macroperegion – Erasmus Mundus Project) and its final conference as well as UNIADRION General Assembly.


• 3-4 October, Podgorica, Montenegro: The first All Committee of Senior Officials is celebrated on 3 October. The All Permanent Secretariat Programme of Activities and the Priorities and indicative calendar of events of the Montenegrin Chairmanship are presented, putting emphasis on the connection and integration with the EUSAIR strategy. Other topics discussed are the state of the inclusion of North Macedonia in the organization and the appointment of its representative, Amb. Jon Ivanovski. During the 3 and 4 October the 8th Meeting takes place of the EUSAIR Governing Board where members discuss common future developments. They also discuss the outcome of the technical meeting of Pillar Coordinators, reporting on the OECD Seminar on Strengthening National Coordination Mechanisms for EUSAIR, EUSAIR Facility Point state of play, state of play and events of both ADRION Program and AI-NURECC Initiative and report of All Secretary General, Amb. Castellaneta, on the meeting of the CSO.


• 16-18 October, Split, Croatia: The first joint conference-fora of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, Cities and Universities takes place in Croatia under the theme “Roots and paths - Past, Present and Future for the Adriatic-Ionian region.” It represents an important step forward in building and consolidating the relationships between civil society, local, national and European institutions. More than 120 institutions from the three civil society sectors take part in the event, with the aim of strengthening connectivity networks and creating greater prosperity by working in areas of mutual interest identified in EUSAIR Strategy. Participants discuss seven different thematic groups, namely blue growth, connecting the region, environmental quality and agriculture, sustainable tourism, wom-
Chapter 3. Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean has been a region of cultural, economic, and political significance for centuries. The Mediterranean Yearbook 2019 highlights various initiatives aimed at promoting cooperation and development in the region.

**Appendices**

### Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

- **3-4 December, Zagreb, Croatia:** The Heads of Government of the CEI member states meet for their annual summit to discuss current challenges in the region under the topic “Building security, boosting economy, enabling prosperity.” All participants in the event through its Secretary General Amb. Giovanni Castellana, who highlights the evident room for synergies and information and experiences exchange between intergovernmental and multilateral initiatives in issues such as migration and unaccompanied children following a bottom-up process. Other issues discussed include the question of Ukraine, brain drain or climate change, and the need to address them through “regional cooperation.”


### 5. The League of Arab States

The League of Arab States is an association of 22 countries established in 1945 with the aim of improving coordination among its members on matters of common interest. The founding members of the League (Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Yemen) agreed to seek closer cooperation on issues regarding economics, communication, culture, nationality, social welfare and health. The LAS traditionally embodies both the idea of Pan-Arabism (the principle of an Arab homeland) and Arab nationalism (respect of each member state’s sovereignty). Among LAS’ main achievements the 1950 Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation Treaty; 1995 Draft Agreement on turning the Middle East into a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction; and the 1999 Arab Agreement on Combating Terrorism, should be mentioned. The highest body of the League is the Council, composed of representatives of member states, generally Foreign Ministers. Each member state has one vote, regardless of the size of the country. The Council meets twice a year, in March and September but it may also convene a special session at the request of two members. The General Secretariat runs the daily activities of the League. It is the executive body of the Council and administrative body of the League. The current SG is the Egyptian Ahmed Aboul Gheit since July 2016, who succeeded Nabil el-Abdy. The Arab league struggles with dysfunction and disunity among its members. In 2002 it achieved remarkable consensus on the Arab Peace Initiative. The 2011 Arab revolts in Middle East and North Africa offered an occasion to propose actions and initiatives: it backed the UN action against Gaddafi’s forces in Libya and sent, for the first time in history, a mission of observers to Syria (after suspending its membership in the League).

Further information: [www.lasportal.org/en/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.lasportal.org/en/Pages/default.aspx)

### Main Events in 2018

- **7 March, Juba, South Sudan:** South Sudanese authorities state their will to become an observer member of the League of Arab States. The country intends to take part in the vital issues of Arab countries, although it will not pay membership fees and will not decide upon the issues not affecting them directly. The South Sudanese ambassador to Egypt will also act as representative of the country before the League of Arab States.

- **9-15 April, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia:** The 29th Ordinary Session of the Council of the League of Arab States at Summit Level, also called “Jerusalem Summit,” takes place with six countries sending non-presidential level representatives. Issues such as Syria and the conflict within the Gulf Cooperation Council are left out of the discussions, focusing instead on Palestine. Among the topics addressed in the political level are the following: question of Palestine, situation in Libya and Yemen, support to Sudan, Somalia and Comoros, Iran’s interference in Arab affairs, support to IDPs in Iraq, development of Arab counter-terrorism system, reform of the League of Arab States or support to Morocco’s hosting of the 2026 World Cup. Among the economic and social affairs addressed are the implementation of the 3rd Arab Development Economic and Social Summit Resolutions, the Greater Arab Free Trade Area and developments of the Arab Customs Union.
The session focus is on UNRWA and how to support it both politically and financially. Another issue addressed is the crisis with Iran.
http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1732

- 25 September, New York, United States: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, SG of the League of Arab States meets with Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Policy Security on the margins of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Topics discussed include the Palestinian issue and other conflict scenarios in the region. The SG expresses appreciation for the EU position in the question on Palestine and its adherence to the two-state solution as well as for its support to the UNRWA. Lybia’s situation is also discussed, pointing to the importance of fostering the work of the International Quartet to seek a political solution to the conflict.

The SG also participates in the Consultative Meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers to exchange views on the most important topics on the agenda of the current session of the UNGA and how to achieve Arab interests and priorities as well as securing as much international support as possible for Arab visions, especially in the UN Security Council.
http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1746

- 28 September, New York, United States: In the framework of the 73rd session of the UNGA Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, SG of the League of Arab States, meets with Mr. Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy and enlargement negotiations. The meeting addresses opportunities and areas for developing cooperation relations between Arab and European sides. Hahn points to the need of reviewing the current cooperation to encourage a more political collaboration and the support for existing agreements with these countries as well as to enhance regional cooperation in issues such as migration flows and stability. The SG also meets with the UNSG Antonio Guterres to discuss the most pressing issues in the region, with especial attention to the question of Palestine and the needed international efforts to implement the relevant UN resolutions.

- 29-30 October, Athens, Greece: The third EU-Arab World Summit “Shared Horizons” takes place on the initiative of the Greek government to provide a representative and dynamic platform for debating strategies of Euro-Arab cooperation and partnership between the two major economic and political blocs. The summit brings together leaders, ministers and other high-ranking state officials from EU and Arab States, European Commission representatives as well as speakers and delegates from 30 countries. The topics address joint challenges faced by both sides, including the migration crisis, European and Arab policies in the Mediterranean, Africa and the Middle East, and environmental and energy issues.

- 14 December, Cairo, Egypt: The Arab Parliament urges the League of Arab States to reinstate Syria’s membership in the organization, a movement that needs the consensus of all the member states.

6. Summit of the Southern European Union Countries

The 1st Mediterranean EU Countries’ Summit took place in September 2016 in Malta, with the aim of enhancing their cooperation and to contribute to the dialogue on the future of the EU. The recovery from the crisis, high migration flows, the instability in the southern Mediter-
European, as well as Brexit and Euro-skepticism need a united response from southern European countries. With the Athens Declaration, the Heads of State and Government (HoSG) of the Republic of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain underline their strong commitment to European unity. They are convinced that the EU needs fresh energy in order to address the common challenges the Member States are facing and uphold its values of freedom, democracy and rule of law, as well as tolerance and solidarity. The countries therefore propose the following priorities and measures: ensuring the internal and external security of Europe, reinforcing cooperation in the Mediterranean and with African countries, fostering growth and investment in Europe, strengthening programmes for youth, and addressing the challenge of migration.


**Main Meeting during 2018**

- 10 January, Rome, Italy: The 4th Southern EU Countries Summit takes place in Rome. A declaration is issued after the summit under the title of “Bringing the EU forward in 2018.” Some of the questions that the Heads of State and Government agree on are the need for a “more sovereign, social and democratic Europe” that can address the citizens’ needs; to keep working on the issues established in the Agenda in Rome 2017; to complete the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in a more resilient, growth-friendly and democratic way with the final objective of making it a tool for sustainable and socially inclusive growth; to focus on EU policies identified as core priorities for action by citizens, including efficient functioning of the internal market as well as economic, territorial and social cohesion, a new approach on European public goods, joint management of migration, a European Defence strategy, permanent investment in innovation and completion of the Single Market, the Innovation Union, the Digital Union, the Energy Union and the Capital Market Union; the need to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights; to increase responsibilities in security matters, including the fight against terrorism and addressing regional and global challenges with a special focus on the Mediterranean, Eastern neighbourhood and Africa; to find a viable comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem; commitment for a common European migration policy to prevent irregular flows as well as to address the root causes of mass migration in dialogue and cooperation with the countries of origin and transit; and, lastly, to support the implementation of citizens’ consultations on core priorities for the EU future as well as transnational lists for the EU Parliament.

https://www.southeusummit.com/about/rome-declaration/
This chapter provides details of the results of presidential and legislative elections that took place in 2018 in independent states, presented in circum-Mediterranean order. The list also includes referenda and those elections held in autonomous entities or in any other relevant territory that are of particular political significance.

**Principality of Monaco**

**Legislative elections**

11 February 2018

Previous elections: 10 February 2013

Monaco is a constitutional monarchy. It has a unicameral National Council (Conseil National) with 24 seats. 16 members are elected by majority vote in multi-member constituencies and eight members are elected through an open-list proportional representation system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primo i Priorité Monaco (liberalism)</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizon Monaco (liberalism, national union)</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Monégasque (fiscal liberalism, social conservatism, monarchism)</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turnout: 70.4%

**Italy**

**Legislative elections**

4 March 2018

Previous elections: 24 February 2013.

Italy is a unitary parliamentary republic with a perfectly bicameral legislature.

In the Chamber of Deputies (Camera dei Deputati) 630 members, of which 618 are elected from Italian constituencies (232 in single-member constituencies, by plurality; 386 in multi-member constituencies, by national proportional representation) and 12 from Italian citizens living abroad by proportional representation, are elected to serve five-year terms. In the Senate (Senato della Repubblica), 315 members of which 116 are elected in single-member constituencies, by plurality; 193 in multi-member constituencies, by regional proportional representation and six are elected from Italians living abroad to serve five-year terms.

**Chamber of Deputies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Proportional</th>
<th>First-past-the-post</th>
<th>Italians abroad</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centre-right coalition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lega Nord (federalism, regionalism, euro scepticism, anti-globalization. catch-all-party)</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forza Italia (liberal conservatism, Christian democracy. centre-right)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fratelli d’Italia (national conservatism, Christian democracy, liberalism. right)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Us with Italy–UiC</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento 5 Stelle (populism, anti-establishment, euro-scepticism, direct democracy. catch-all)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Centre-left coalition                                                  |              |                     |                 |       |
| Democratic Party (social democracy, Christian left. centre-left)       | 88           | 28                  | 6               | 122   |
| More Europe (pro-europeanism)                                          | 86           | 21                  | 5               | 112   |
| Together (centre-left)                                                 | 0            | 2                   | 1               | 3     |
| Popular Civic List                                                      | 0            | 1                   | 0               | 1     |
| South Tyrolean People’s Party (SVP)- Trentino Tyrolean Autonomist Party (regionalism, autonomism. centre-left) | 2            | 2                   | 0               | 4     |
| Free and Equal (social democracy)                                      | 14           | 0                   | 0               | 14    |
| Associative Movement Italians Abroad                                   | 0            | 0                   | 1               | 1     |

| South American Union Italian Emigrants                                  | 0            | 0                   | 1               | 1     |

Turnout: 72.94
Slovenia

Legislative elections

3 June 2018
Previous elections: 13 July 2014
Slovenia is a parliamentary republic. It has a bicameral legislative system, where the National Assembly (Drzavni Zbor) counts with 90 seats to serve a four-year term. Of those, 88 deputies are elected through an open-list proportional representation system, and the other two are elected by the registered members of the Italian and Hungarian minorities. The constitution establishes a 4% threshold.

### Parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) (conservatism)</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Marjan Šarec (liberalism)</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Democrats (SD) (social democracy)</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Centre Party (SMC) (social liberalism)</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Left (eco socialism)</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Slovenia – Christian Democrats (NSI) (social conservatism)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Alenka Bratušek (ZaAB) (liberalism)</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Pensioners’ Party of Slovenia (DESUS) (single-issue)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slovenian National Party (nationalism) 4.2 4

Minorities (Hungarian and Italian minorities’ interests) 2

Turnout: 52.6%

### Bosnia

Presidential elections

7 October 2018
Previous elections: 12 October 2014
Bosnia and Herzegovina is a parliamentary republic. The presidency is composed by three members elected through a plurality voting system, each belonging to the three ethnic communities. The Bosniak and Croat representatives are elected by citizens from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Serb is elected from the Republika Srpska. The three of them serve a four-year term, although the chairmanship of the presidency rotates among them every eight months.

#### Bosniak representative

**Candidates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sejfik Džaferović, Party of Democratic Action (SDA) (centre-right)</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denis Bećirović, Social Democratic Party (SDPBiH) (social democracy)</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Croat representative

**Candidates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Željko Komšić, Democratic Front (DF) (social democracy)</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragan Covit, Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ BiH) (conservatism)</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana Zelenika, Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ-1990) (conservatism)</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borislav Falata, Our Party (social liberalism)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerko Ivanković-Lijanović, People’s Party for Work and Betterment (social-liberalism)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Serb representative

**Candidates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milorad Dodik, Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (Serbian nationalism)</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mladen Ivanić, Alliance for Victory (conservatism)</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirjana Popović, Serb Progressive Party of Republika Srpska</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gojko Ključković, First Serb Democratic Party</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General turnout: 54.0%
Legislative elections

7 October 2018
Previous elections: 12 October 2014
Bosnia and Herzegovina is a parliamentary republic. It has a bicameral legislative system, where the House of Representatives (Predstavnički dom / Zastupnički dom / Представнички дом) has 42 seats which are elected through an open-list proportional representation system to serve a four-year term. 28 deputies are elected by citizens from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 14 by citizens from the Republika Srpska. A 3% threshold is established.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>% Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party of Democratic Action (SDA) (Bosnian nationalism, centre-right)</td>
<td>17.0 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) (Serbian nationalism, social democracy, separatism)</td>
<td>16.0 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) (Serbian nationalism)</td>
<td>9.8 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Democratic Party of BiH (SDP) (social democracy)</td>
<td>9.1 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (HDZ BiH) and allies (Croatian nationalism, conservatism)</td>
<td>9.1 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Front (DF) (social democracy)</td>
<td>5.8 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Democratic Progress (PDP) (Serbian nationalism, Conservatism)</td>
<td>5.1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic People’s Alliance (DNS) (Serbian nationalism, conservatism)</td>
<td>4.2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union for a Better Future (SBB) (conservatism)</td>
<td>4.2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Party (social liberal)</td>
<td>2.9 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Bloc (conservatism)</td>
<td>2.5 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement of Democratic Action (Bosnian nationalism, conservatism)</td>
<td>2.3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
<td>1.9 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Democratic Activity (ASDA) (Bosnian nationalism, conservatism)</td>
<td>1.8 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turnout: 63.9% for the second round.

Montenegro
Presidential elections

15 April 2018
Previous elections: 7 April 2013
Montenegro is a Parliamentary Republic in which the President is directly elected using the two-round system to serve a five-year term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>% Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milo Đukanović (Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro)</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mladen Bojanić Independent</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragan Vuksanović (Social Democratic Party)</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marko Miločić (True Montenegro)</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turnout: 83.9%.

FYROM
Referendum

30 September 2018
A referendum was held with voters asked whether they supported EU and NATO membership by accepting the “Prespa agreement” between FYROM and Greece, which aimed to settle the 27-year naming dispute, which had prevented FYROM from joining both the European Union and NATO. Voter turnout was required to be over the 50 percent threshold to validate the result.

The text of the question was: Are you in favour of European Union and NATO membership by accepting the agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Greece?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>% Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>94.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5.82</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Turnout: 36.89%.

Republic of Cyprus
Presidential Elections

28 January 2018 and 4 February 2018
Previous elections: 17 February 2013 and 24 February 2013
Presidential Republic, the President is elected by absolute majority vote through a two-round system to serve a five-year term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>% Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nikos Anastasiades (Democratic Rally)</td>
<td>53.51 55.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stavros Malas (Progressive Party of working People)</td>
<td>30.24 44.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolas Papadopoulos (Democratic Party)</td>
<td>25.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christos Christou, (National Popular Front (ELAM))</td>
<td>5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giorgios Lillikas (Citizens’ Alliance)</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turnout: 71.88% (1st round) and 73.97% (2nd round).

Turkey
Presidential elections

24 June 2018
Previous elections: 10 August 2014
Turkey is a presidential republic, following the constitutional changes in 2017, the elected President will be both the head of state and head of government of Turkey. The President is elected by absolute majority vote through a two-round system to serve a five-year term. A second round was not necessary due to one of the candidates achieving an absolute majority in the first round.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>% Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tayyip Erdoğan, Justice and Development Party (AKP) (conservatism)</td>
<td>52.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muharrem Ince, Republican People’s Party (CHP) (social democracy)</td>
<td>30.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selahattin Demirtaş, Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) (left-wing, minority rights)</td>
<td>8.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meral Akşener, Iyi Party (IYI)</td>
<td>7.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turnout: 86.24%.

Legislative elections

24 June 2018
Previous elections: 1 November 2015
Turkey is a presidential republic. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi) is composed of 600 seats. The members are elected by party-list proportional representation in 87 electoral districts. In order to gain a seat in Parliament, a party must obtain at least 10% of votes cast in the Parliamentary elections nationwide, the
The parliamentary threshold does not apply to independents. With the approval of the election alliance law in early 2018, parties were given the ability to contest the election under formal alliances as a means of jointly surpassing the election threshold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>% Seats</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People’s Alliance</td>
<td>53.66 344</td>
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<tr>
<td>Justice and Development Party (AKP)</td>
<td>42.56 295</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)</td>
<td>11.10 49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nation Alliance</td>
<td>33.94 189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican People’s Party (CHP)</td>
<td>22.64 146</td>
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<tr>
<td>İYİ Party</td>
<td>9.96 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Democratic Party (HDP)</td>
<td>11.70 67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turnout: 86.23%

Lebanon

Legislative Elections

6 May 2018

Previous elections: 7 June 2009

Lebanon has a unicameral National Assembly (Majlis al-Nuwab) with 128 seats. The deputies are elected by a plurality vote in multi-member constituencies, based both on geography and religion, to serve a four-year term. Seats are equally divided between Christian and Muslim members. The voting system is based on proportional representation in 15 multi-member constituencies with confessional distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alliances and parties</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amal-Hezbollah and allies</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hezbollah (Islamist) and</td>
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<tr>
<td>pro-Hezbollah independents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amal Movement and pro-Amal independents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syrian Social Nationalist Party</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dignity movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al-Anbash</td>
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<td>Union Party</td>
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<td>Popular Nasserist Organization</td>
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<td>Independents</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alliances and parties</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free Patriotic Movement and allies</td>
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<td>Free Patriotic Movement (centrist)</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>and pro-FPM independents</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian Revolutionary</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federation (socialist)</td>
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<td>Lebanese Democratic Party</td>
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<td>Independence Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement of the Future (liberal) and allies</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese Forces (Christian democrat)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>and allies</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Socialist Party (social democrat)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azm Movement</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kataeb Party (Christian democrat)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marada Movement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murr Bloc</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Dialogue Party</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Khazen Bloc</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saaba Party</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Turnout: 49.68%

Egypt

Presidential elections

26 and 28 March 2018

Previous elections: 26 May 2014

Egypt is a presidential republic. The President is elected by absolute majority vote through a two-round system to serve a four-year term. A second round was not necessary as only two candidates ran for election.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>% 1st round</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdel Fattah al Sisi</td>
<td>97.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moussa Mostafa Moussa, El-Ghad Party</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turnout: 41.05%

Sources

- Electoral Calendar
  www.mherrera.org/elections.html
- Electoral Geography 2.0
  www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/
- Fondation Robert Schuman
  www.robert-schuman.eu
- Freedom House
  https://freedomhouse.org
- Inter-Parliamentary Union – PARLINE database on national parliaments
  www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp
  www.electionguide.org
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
  www.idea.int
- National Democratic Institute
  www.ndi.org
- Observatory on Politics and Elections in the Arab and Muslim World (OPEMAM)
  www.opemam.org
- Parties and Elections in Europe
  www.parties-and-elections.eu
- Psephos Adam Carr’s Election Archive
  http://psephos.adam-carr.net
- Project on Middle East Democracy
  http://pomed.org
### TABLE A1

**Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries Financed under the European Commission Budget and the European Development Fund (EDF) in 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Commitments</th>
<th>Payments</th>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo (Res.1244 of the UNSC)</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>66</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1,918</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
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<td>Israel</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
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<td>Morocco</td>
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<td>213</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>33</td>
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</table>


---

### CHART A1

**Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries Financed under the European Commission Budget and the European Development Fund (EDF) in 2017**

### Table A2: European External Assistance in the Mediterranean Countries by Country and Instrument** - Commitments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>ENI</th>
<th>DCI - Geo</th>
<th>DCI - Thema</th>
<th>EIDHR</th>
<th>ICSP</th>
<th>INSC</th>
<th>CFSP</th>
<th>IPA 2</th>
<th>HUMA</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>EDF</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kosovo*</td>
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<tr>
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### Table A3: European External Assistance in the Mediterranean Countries by Country and Instrument** - Disbursements

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Country/ Region</th>
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<th>DCI - Thema</th>
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<th>INSC</th>
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<th>HUMA</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<th>Grand Total</th>
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<tbody>
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### TABLE A4 European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) 2014-2020

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** Period 2017-2020.

### TABLE A5 Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) - 2016-2017

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*Own production. Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/overview_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/overview_en)*
### TABLE A6
Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), Indicative allocations for the Period 2014-2020

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### TABLE A7  European Investment Bank Loans toward Mediterranean Countries in 2017

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### TABLE A8  Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO)

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<th>Funding Allocations in Mediterranean Areas</th>
<th>Millions of euros</th>
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### TABLE B1  Breakdown of Net Spanish Official Development Assistance in the Mediterranean Region

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<th>2015-2016</th>
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<td></td>
<td>€</td>
<td>%</td>
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### CHART B1  Breakdown of Spanish Gross Development Aid in the Maghreb and the Middle East by Sector (2017)

- Emergency Aid: 12%
- Other Social Infrastructure and Services: 4%
- Multi-Sector: 2%
- Productive Sectors: 2%
- Economic Infrastructure and Services: 1%
- Governance and Civil Society: 10%
- Health: 5%
- Education: 7%
- Aid for refugees: 51%

### Chart B2
**Breakdown of Spanish Gross Development Aid in the Balkans and Turkey by Sector (2017)**

![Chart B2](image)


### Table B2
**Breakdown of Spanish Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region by Aid Type (2017)**

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Budget support</th>
<th>Core contributions to multilateral institutions</th>
<th>Contributions to specific-purpose programmes and funds managed by international organisations</th>
<th>Project-type interventions</th>
<th>Donor country personnel and other technical assistance</th>
<th>Scholarships for training / research (in Developing Countries)</th>
<th>Scholarships and student costs in donor countries</th>
<th>Administrative costs not included elsewhere</th>
<th>Development awareness</th>
<th>Refugees in donor countries</th>
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TABLE C1
Number of Foreigners from MPCs in the European Union by Nationality

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<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Syria</th>
<th>Jordan</th>
<th>Lebanon</th>
<th>Palestine</th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Libya</th>
<th>Euromed immigrants</th>
<th>Total non EU-28 immigrants</th>
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<td>687</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>8,039</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>17,114</td>
<td>199,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>3,056</td>
<td>9,589</td>
<td>5,053</td>
<td>6,328</td>
<td>99,352</td>
<td>3,943</td>
<td>26,461</td>
<td>5,825</td>
<td>2,641</td>
<td>46,909</td>
<td>2,720</td>
<td>211,877</td>
<td>1,217,102</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21,993</td>
<td>35,765</td>
<td>5,415</td>
<td>39,980</td>
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<td>5,182</td>
<td>14,043</td>
<td>16,077</td>
<td>75,791</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,603,241</td>
<td>2,532,868</td>
<td>578,610</td>
<td>288,993</td>
<td>236,597</td>
<td>35,591</td>
<td>210,466</td>
<td>9,839</td>
<td>70,643</td>
<td>2,668,743</td>
<td>67,727</td>
<td>8,303,318</td>
<td>34,400,284</td>
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</table>

TABLE C2 Remittances in Mediterranean Non-EU Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inflows € in millions</td>
<td>% from EU</td>
<td>% other</td>
<td>Inflows € in millions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>1,517</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>2,657</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>25,999</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>20,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>4,917</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>9,891</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>8,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
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<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>2,156</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>3,043</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2,604</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1,499</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1,548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own production. Source: European Commission. Atlas of Migration, 201

CHART C1 Regularization of Foreigners in Morocco

Total of applications Total of regularizations


CHART C2 Evolution of Foreigners Stock in Morocco

On 30 January 2017, Morocco rejoined the African Union (AU).


On 09 September 2016, National Strategy about Immigration and Asylum (SNIA).

2007: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 600 refugees recognized.

2003: Law No. 02-03 on the entry and residence of foreigners in the Kingdom of Morocco, and on illegal emigration and immigration.

2018: Establishment of the AU African Observatory for Migration, based in Rabat.

2013: Joint declaration establishing a mobility partnership between Morocco and the EU and its Member States.

2007: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 600 refugees recognized.

2002: Law No. 11-03 on the entry and residence of foreigners in the Kingdom of Morocco, and on illegal emigration and immigration.

2009: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 200 refugees recognized.

2004: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 500 refugees recognized.

2006: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 1,000 refugees recognized.

2008: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 3,000 refugees recognized.

2010: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 5,000 refugees recognized.

2014: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 10,000 refugees recognized.

2016: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 15,000 refugees recognized.

2018: Signature of a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR - 20,000 refugees recognized.

Own production. Sources: CARM and Ministère délégué chargé des Marocains Résidant à l’Etranger et des Affaires de la Migration.
## TABLE D1

### Merchandise Trade between Mediterranean Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importers</th>
<th>Algeria</th>
<th>Tunisia</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Morocco</th>
<th>Greece</th>
<th>Cyprus</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Jordan</th>
<th>Lebanon</th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Palestine</th>
<th>Syria</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>EU 28</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Portugal</strong></td>
<td>187,199</td>
<td>782,870</td>
<td>858,127</td>
<td>3,422,001</td>
<td>268,029</td>
<td>223,043</td>
<td>87,417</td>
<td>90,436</td>
<td>334,967</td>
<td>374,476</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
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<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spain</strong></td>
<td>237,451</td>
<td>858,127</td>
<td>3,422,001</td>
<td>268,029</td>
<td>223,043</td>
<td>87,417</td>
<td>90,436</td>
<td>334,967</td>
<td>374,476</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
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<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France</strong></td>
<td>237,451</td>
<td>858,127</td>
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<td>268,029</td>
<td>223,043</td>
<td>87,417</td>
<td>90,436</td>
<td>334,967</td>
<td>374,476</td>
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<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
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<tr>
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<td>237,451</td>
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<td>223,043</td>
<td>87,417</td>
<td>90,436</td>
<td>334,967</td>
<td>374,476</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
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<td>521,125</td>
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<td>1,663,384</td>
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<tr>
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<td>87,417</td>
<td>90,436</td>
<td>334,967</td>
<td>374,476</td>
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<td>1,663,384</td>
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<td>87,417</td>
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<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
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<td>1,663,384</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EU 28</strong></td>
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<td>268,029</td>
<td>223,043</td>
<td>87,417</td>
<td>90,436</td>
<td>334,967</td>
<td>374,476</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
<td>521,125</td>
<td>1,663,384</td>
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<td>521,125</td>
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</table>

### Import Ratio from EU and from the Mediterranean, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>EU/tot imports</th>
<th>Med/tot imports</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU 28</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>97.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
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<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Med/tot imports:** For each country: total imports from Mediterranean partners over total imports. **EU/tot imports:** For each country: total imports from EU 28 partner countries over total imports. These ratios show the importance for each country of two areas of trade, the Mediterranean and the EU. Own production. Source: UNCTAD.
### Natural Text

#### Importers
- Portugal: 16,298
- Spain: 48,095
- France: 54,207
- Italy: 105,361
- Malta: 19
- Slovenia: 6,591
- Bosnia & Hertegovina: 2,986
- Serbia: 6
- Montenegro: ... (data unavailable)
- North Macedonia: 210
- Albania: 46
- Greece: 3,798
- Cyprus: 576
- Turkey: 1,364,612
- Syria: 197,777
- Lebanon: 269,665
- Jordan: 44,634
- Israel: 8
- Palestine: 148
- Egypt: 121,946
- Libya: 8,650
- Tunisia: 22,395
- Algeria: 6,536
- Morocco: 49,485
- EU28 (EU): 605,621
- World: 5,237,384

#### Exporters
- Portugal: 15,707
- Spain: 47,699
- France: 58,922
- Italy: 105,361
- Malta: 19
- Slovenia: 6,591
- Bosnia & Hertegovina: 2,986
- Serbia: 6
- Montenegro: ... (data unavailable)
- North Macedonia: 210
- Albania: 46
- Greece: 3,798
- Cyprus: 576
- Turkey: 1,364,612
- Syria: 197,777
- Lebanon: 269,665
- Jordan: 44,634
- Israel: 8
- Palestine: 148
- Egypt: 121,946
- Libya: 8,650
- Tunisia: 22,395
- Algeria: 6,536
- Morocco: 49,485
- EU28 (EU): 605,621
- World: 5,237,384

### Data from 2017, thousands of dollars, merchandise trade only. Own production. Source: UNCTAD. (..) Data unavailable.

#### CHART D2

**Export Ratio from EU and from the Mediterranean, 2017**

- **Med/tot exports**: For each country: total exports to Mediterranean partners over total exports.
- **EU/tot exports**: For each country: total exports to EU28 partner countries over total exports. These ratios show the importance for each country of two areas of trade, the Mediterranean and the EU.

**Med/tot exports**: 64.8% for the Mediterranean; 35.2% for the EU

**EU/tot exports**: 41.2% for the Mediterranean; 58.8% for the EU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>EU/tot exports</th>
<th>Med/tot exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
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<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia &amp; H.</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EU28 (EU)**: 58.8% for the EU; 41.2% for the Mediterranean

**Med/tot exports**: 54.1% for the Mediterranean; 45.9% for the EU

**EU/tot exports**: 45.9% for the Mediterranean; 54.1% for the EU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>EU/tot exports</th>
<th>Med/tot exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Bosnia &amp; H.</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
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<td>North Macedonia</td>
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<td>Albania</td>
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<td>Turkey</td>
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<td>Lebanon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**World**: 45.9% for the Mediterranean; 54.1% for the EU

**EU28 (EU)**: 54.1% for the Mediterranean; 45.9% for the EU
### TABLE D2
**Export disaggregation (%), 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Food and live animals</th>
<th>Beverages and tobacco</th>
<th>Chemicals and related products n.e.s.</th>
<th>Manufactured goods</th>
<th>Machinery and transport equipment</th>
<th>Miscellaneous manufactured articles</th>
<th>Crude materials, inedible, except fuels</th>
<th>Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials</th>
<th>Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes</th>
<th>Manufactured goods</th>
<th>Manufactured goods</th>
<th>Manufactured goods</th>
<th>Manufactured goods</th>
<th>Manufactured goods</th>
<th>Manufactured goods</th>
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### CHART D3
**Trade Openness (Trade as % of GDP), 2017**

### CHART D4
**Percentage of Services in Total Export and Total Import, 2017**

### CHART D5
**Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) of Geographical Concentration in the Mediterranean, 2017**

The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) is calculated as $HHI = \sum_{i=0}^{N} s_i^2$, where $s_i$ is the share of each import (export) flows of country $i$ in total imports (exports) of country $i$. The HHI is an index of concentration and ranges from 0 to 1. Values closer to 1 indicate highly concentrated flows. Here it is calculated with Mediterranean trading partners only. Own production. Source: UNCTAD.
The IRTS (intra-regional trade share) \( \frac{T_{i}/T_i}{T_i/T_w} \) is the share of intra-regional trade to total trade of the region. \( T_{i} \) is the sum of exports and imports of region \( i \) with region \( i \). \( T_w \) is the sum of imports and exports of region \( i \) vis-à-vis the rest of the world. The IRTII (intra-regional trade intensity index) is calculated as \( \frac{T_{i}/T_i}{T_i/T_w} \), where \( T_w \) is the sum of world exports and imports. If it is greater than 1, flows are greater than expected.

Own calculations using UNCTAD data. An IRTII larger than 1 indicates shares that are greater than expected. Own production. Source: UNCTAD.
TABLE E2
Multilateral Treaties on Labour Rights (year of ratification)

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Source: ILO.

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Croatia
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Serbia
Montenegro

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TABLE E4

Multilateral Disarmament Treatiesa
Geneva
Protocolc

Nuclear
weaponsd

Date of adoption

1925

1968

1972

1980

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Portugal
Spain
France
Italy
Malta

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Slovenia
Croatia
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Serbia
Montenegro

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Albania
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Turkey

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Syria
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Israel
Palestine

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2017
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Egypt
Libya
Tunisia
Algeria
Morocco

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UN

UN

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UN

Source:

2006

Bacteriological
weaponse

Conventional
weapons f

Chemical
weaponsg

1981b

Nuclear
testingh

Antipersonnel
minesi

431

Source:

Desertificationf

Ozone
Layerh

Control of
Hazardous Wastes
and their Disposali

Kyoto
Protocolb

Appendices

Persistent
Organic
Pollutantsg

Climate
Changea

Signature of Multilateral Treaties and Conventions

Multilateral Environmental Treatiesj

2017

1999
2001
UN

a. Ratification, acceptance, approval, accession or succession. b. Signature. c. Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of
Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook 2019

TABLE E3


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Own production. Source: UNDP. * Data refer to 2017 or the most recent year available. ** Average number of years of education received by people aged 25 and older. *** Number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive.

### CHART F1: Years of Schooling, 2017*

![Chart showing years of schooling for various countries in 2017*](chart.png)

Own production. Source: UNDP. * Data refer to 2017 or the most recent year available.
### TABLE F2  
**Population: Demography**

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total population 2017</th>
<th>Estimated population for 2050</th>
<th>Crude birth rate per 1,000 people</th>
<th>Crude death rate per 1,000 people</th>
<th>Average annual population growth %</th>
<th>Total fertility rate per woman</th>
<th>International migrant stock thousands</th>
<th>Net number of migrants thousands</th>
<th>Net migration rate per 1,000 population</th>
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Own production. Source: WB, UNPOP.

---

### CHART F2

**Difference between the Population Estimated for 2050 and the Population in 2017 in Mediterranean Countries (in thousands)**

[Graph showing the difference in population between 2017 and 2050 estimates for various Mediterranean countries.

Own production. Source: UNPOP.]
### TABLE F3: Population: Structure and Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population age composition</th>
<th>Rural population</th>
<th>Population in urban agglomerations of more than 1 million</th>
<th>Population located on the Mediterranean coastal regions</th>
<th>Urban population living in slums</th>
<th>Population density</th>
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<td>%</td>
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Note: Own production. Source: WB. a. Latest data available from this period. b. Own production according to National Statistical Offices data. c. Data from 2016. d. Data from 2014. e. Data from 2008. (..) Data unavailable.

### CHART F3: Population Aged 65 and above, by Sex (2017)

Population Ages 65 and above in the Mediterranean Countries

- **Female**
- **Male**

Own production. Source: WB.
### TABLE F4  Education and Training of Human Capital

#### Net enrolment rate

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Primary 2016/17</th>
<th>Primary 2016/17</th>
<th>Primary pupils per teacher</th>
<th>Duration of compulsory education</th>
<th>R&amp;D personnel headcount</th>
<th>R&amp;D expenditures % of GDP</th>
<th>Public expenditure on education % of GDP</th>
<th>Pre-primary and primary % of all levels</th>
<th>Secondary and post-secondary % of all levels</th>
<th>Tertiary % of all levels</th>
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#### CHART F4  Pupil-teacher Ratio in Primary Education (2015-2017*)

*Latest data available from this period. Own Production. Source: UNESCO.
### TABLE F5  Health and Survival

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Child mortality rate*</th>
<th>Maternal mortality ratio</th>
<th>People living with HIV/AIDS</th>
<th>Prevalence of smoking</th>
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Own production. Source: CME CME WB UNAIDS UNAIDS WHO WHO

* Estimates generated by the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) in 2018. Medium estimation. (..) Data unavailable.

### CHART F5  Probability of Dying among Children Aged 5-14 (1990-2017)

![Probability of Dying among Children Aged 5-14 (1990-2017)](image-url)

Own production. Source: WB and UNDP.
### TABLE F6 Nutrition and Food Security

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<th>Country</th>
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<th>Exports</th>
<th>Children underweight</th>
<th>Children overweight</th>
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**Own production. Source:** FAO

\(^a\) Latest data available for this period. (..) Data unavailable.

### CHART F6 Cereal Trade (2016)

**The Top Five Cereal Importers**

- **Indonesia**
- **Saudi Arabia**
- **Mexico**
- **Japan**
- **China**

**Imports** - Orange bars
**Exports** - Blue bars

**Own production. Source:** FAO
## TABLE F7 Access to Health Resources

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<tr>
<th>Population using safely managed drinking-water service</th>
<th>Population using safely managed sanitation services</th>
<th>Physicians per 10,000 population</th>
<th>Percentage of married or in-union women of reproductive age</th>
<th>Contraceptive prevalence, any method</th>
<th>Births per 1,000 women ages 15-19</th>
<th>Adolescent fertility rate</th>
<th>Current health expenditure % of GDP</th>
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*Latest data available for this period. (..) Data unavailable.

## CHART F7 Contraceptive Prevalence, by Method (2017*)

![Contraceptive Prevalence](chart.png)

TABLE F8  Gender: Social Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth</th>
<th>Adult literacy rate</th>
<th>Combined gross enrolment ratio, primary to tertiary</th>
<th>Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>women years</td>
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<td>% of females 15+</td>
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* Referring to the first year appointed in the current parliamentary system. b. The date refers to the first year in which a woman was nominated to Parliament. c. First partial recognition of the right to vote or stand for election. d. Situation as of 1 January 2017. e. The values shown refer to lower or single chamber. f. Latest data available from this period. g. Data unavailable.

CHART F8  Cumulative Drop-out Rate to the Last Grade by Level (2014-2016)

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Data: WB, UNESCO, IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook 2019

IEMed. Mediterranean in Brief

Appendices
### TABLE F9: Technology and Communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fixed-telephone subscriptions</th>
<th>Mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions</th>
<th>Fixed-broadband subscriptions</th>
<th>Active mobile-broadband subscriptions</th>
<th>Proportion of households with computer</th>
<th>Proportion of households with internet access</th>
<th>Internet users</th>
<th>Share of ICT goods as percentage of total trade</th>
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<td>total per 100 inhabitants</td>
<td>total per 100 inhabitants</td>
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<sup>a</sup> Latest data available for this period. <sup>b</sup> 2016. <sup>c</sup> 2014. (..) Data unavailable.

### CHART F9: Percentage of Individuals Using Internet, by Gender (2017)

![Chart showing the percentage of individuals using the internet by gender for various countries in the Mediterranean region.](chart.png)

- **Female**
- **Male**

Own production, Source: ITU.
### TABLE F10  Security and Military Expenditure

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<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Conventional arms transfer</th>
<th>Security and Military Expenditure</th>
<th>Refugee</th>
<th>Internally displaced people</th>
<th>by country of asylum</th>
<th>by country of origin</th>
<th>Total armed forces</th>
<th>exports</th>
<th>imports</th>
<th>Military expenditure</th>
<th>% of GDP</th>
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Own production. Source: UNHCR. *Includes Kosovo. 

### CHART F10  Asylum Applications in the Mediterranean Countries, First Half 2018

- **Country of Asylum**: Other, Israel, France, Greece, Turkey, Spain
- **Country of Origin**: Other, Syria, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Serbia*

Own Production. Source: UNHCR. *Includes Kosovo.
### TABLE F11: Economic Structure and Production

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<th>GDP per capita, current prices 2017 $</th>
<th>GDP growth annual %</th>
<th>Share in GDP by sector % agriculture</th>
<th>% industry</th>
<th>% services</th>
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Own production. Source: IMF.

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Note: Agricultural area is divided into ‘arable land and permanent crops’ and ‘permanent meadows and pastures’. (..) Data unavailable.

### CHART F12: Employment by Sex and Sector (in %), 2017

- **Female Agriculture**
- **Male Agriculture**
- **Female Non-agriculture**
- **Male Non-agriculture**

Own production. Source: ILO.
### TABLE F13: Livestock

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Own production. Source: FAO, UNCTAD.

a. Included bovine, caprine, ovine and buffalo livestock.  
b. Includes chicken, hens, ducks, turkeys and geese.  
c. Includes horses, asses, mules and camels.  
( .. ) Data unavailable.

### CHART F13: Natural Honey Production (2017)

**Natural Honey World Production**

- **Others**: 37%
- **China**: 30%
- **Turkey**: 6%
- **Argentina**: 4%
- **Iran**: 4%
- **USA**: 3%
- **India**: 3%
- **Russia**: 3%
- **Australia**: 3%
- **Mexico**: 3%
- **Brazil**: 3%

- **Natural Honey Production 2017 (Tonnes)**
  - **Turkey**: 114,471
  - **Syria**: 21,230
  - **Israel**: 15,647
  - **Palestine**: 121,688

Own production. Source: FAO.
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<th>Country</th>
<th>2017 Total</th>
<th>2017 Mediterranean and Black Sea catches</th>
<th>2017 Aquaculture production</th>
<th>2017 Trade in fish and derivative products</th>
<th>2017 Fish and seafood supply kg/capita</th>
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Own production. Source: FAO.
TABLE F15  
**Employment and Unemployment**

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<th>Employment by economic sector</th>
<th>Unemployment rate</th>
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Own production. Source: ILO.

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CHART F15  
**Youth Inactivity and Unemployment (2017)**

Own production. Source: ILO.
### TABLE F16

#### Income Distribution

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<th>second 20%</th>
<th>third 20%</th>
<th>fourth 20%</th>
<th>highest 20%</th>
<th>Richest 10% to poorest 10%</th>
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Own production. Source: WB.

Data unavailable. (..)

#### CHART F16

Share of Income or Consumption

* Own production. Source: WB.
### TABLE F17: Gender: Economic Activity

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Own production. Source: ILO.

(.) Data unavailable.

### CHART F17: Incidence of Part-time Employment by Sex (%)

Countries with Highest Incidence of Part-time Employment, by Sex (%)

- Female
- Male

Own production. Source: ILO.
### TABLE F18  Production and Energy Consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Energy production</th>
<th>Energy use per capita</th>
<th>GDP per unit of energy use</th>
<th>Net energy import</th>
<th>Share of total primary energy supply</th>
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<td>millions mt oil eq</td>
<td>kg oil eq % of energy use</td>
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*Latest data available for this period. Negative values indicate that the country is a net exporter. Includes hydroelectric, biofuels, and waste and geothermal, solar and wind. Data unavailable.

### CHART F18  Share of Total Primary Energy Supply (2016)

**Northern Mediterranean Countries**

- Coal 9%
- Natural Gas 22%
- Nuclear 20%
- Other 15%

**Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries**

- Oil 42%
- Natural Gas 36%
- Nuclear 5%
- Other 14%

**World**

- Coal 27%
- Natural Gas 22%
- Oil 32%
### TABLE F19  Production, Consumption, and Access to Electricity

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<th>Sources of electricity</th>
<th>Population with access to electricity</th>
<th>Electricity production</th>
<th>Electricity consumption per capita</th>
<th>Sources of electricity</th>
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<td>billion kWh</td>
<td>kWh</td>
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Own production. Source: WB. IEA WB WB WB WB WB WB WB

\(a\) Excluding hydroelectric. (..) Data unavailable.

---

### CHART F19  Evolution of the Percentage of Electricity Produced by Renewable* Sources

*Excluded Hydroelectric. Own production. Source: WB.
### TABLE F20 CO₂ Emissions

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<th>CO₂ emissions</th>
<th>Emission intensities by GDP</th>
<th>CO₂ emissions by sector</th>
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<td>per capita</td>
<td>world participation</td>
<td>industry and construction</td>
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<td>mt</td>
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<td>kg CO₂ / PPP $</td>
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Own production. Source: IEA<sup>a</sup> IEA<sup>b</sup> IEA<sup>c</sup> IEA<sup>d</sup> IEA<sup>e</sup> IEA<sup>f</sup> IEA<sup>g</sup> OICA<sup>h</sup>

<sup>a</sup> This does not include motorcycles.
<sup>b</sup> Own production according to IEA data.
<sup>c</sup> Own production according to OICA data.
<sup>d</sup> Data unavailable.

### CHART F20 CO₂ Emissions (difference between 2016 and 2005)

**World Evolution of CO₂ Emissions (2005-2016)**

- **USA, Japan, Russia, India, China, Rest of World**
- **Change in million tonnes**
- **% of change**

Own Production. Source: IEA.
### TABLE F21  Water

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Renewable Water Resources (10^9 m³/year)</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>Industrial</th>
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<th>by sector</th>
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Source: FAO. A. Latest data available for this period. (..) Data unavailable.

### CHART F21  Water Resources per Capita

**Total Renewable Water Resources (10^9 m³/year)**

- **Egypt**: 126.6 m³/year
- **Greece**: 24.3 m³/year
- **Portugal**: 23.1 m³/year
- **France**: 22.4 m³/year
- **Spain**: 21.6 m³/year
- **Serbia**: 15.1 m³/year
- **Italy**: 14.0 m³/year
- **Turkey**: 10.6 m³/year
- **Morocco**: 6.9 m³/year
- **Libya**: 4.5 m³/year
- **Syria**: 3.3 m³/year
- **Lebanon**: 3.2 m³/year
- **Jordan**: 1.9 m³/year
- **Israel**: 1.8 m³/year
- **Palestine**: 1.6 m³/year
- **Egypt ( Others)**: 200 m³/year

**Ownership**
- **Egypt**: 13%
- **Greece**: 15%
- **Portugal**: 15%
- **France**: 15%
- **Italy**: 15%
- **Turkey**: 15%
- **Morocco**: 12%
- **Libya**: 12%
- **Syria**: 12%
- **Lebanon**: 12%
- **Jordan**: 12%
- **Israel**: 12%
- **Palestine**: 12%

*Own production. Source: FAO.*
### Environment

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### National Protected Areas

- **Marine areas (% of territorial waters)**
- **Terrestrial areas (% of land area)**

*Own production. Source: WB.*

---

*For these groups there are still many species that have not been assessed. The figures presented should be interpreted as the number of species known to be threatened within those species that have been assessed to date. (..) Data unavailable.*

---

*Own production. Source: WB.*
### TABLE F23 International trade

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Exports(^a)</th>
<th>Imports(^a)</th>
<th>Coverage ratio</th>
<th>Trade balance</th>
<th>Current account balance</th>
<th>Workers' remittances(^b)</th>
<th>Foreign direct investment</th>
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*Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

\(^a\) Percentage of exports and imports of goods and services.  
\(^b\) Personal transfers and compensation of employees.  
\(^c\) Own production using UNCTAD data.  
\(^d\) Only refers to goods.  
\(^e\) Data unavailable.

### CHART F23 Worker’s Remittances in % of GDP (2017)

**Countries with the Highest Receipts from Workers’ Remittances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>In millions $</th>
<th>In % GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Own production. Source: UNCTAD.*
### TABLE F24 Exports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All food items</th>
<th>Agricultural raw materials</th>
<th>Fuels</th>
<th>Manufactured goods</th>
<th>Minerals and metals</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Export concentration index</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.2</td>
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<td>5.5</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12.4</td>
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<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
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<td>83.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<td>10.7</td>
<td>67.2</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8.6</td>
<td>67.7</td>
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<td>69.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>12.4</td>
<td>28.8</td>
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<td>60.6</td>
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<td>16.5</td>
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<td>59.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>76.6</td>
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Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

### CHART F24 Services Exports by Service-Category (2017)

![Services Exports by Service-Category (2017)](image)

Goods-related services, Transport, Travel, Other services

Own production. Source: UNCTAD.
### TABLE F25

**Imports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All food items</th>
<th>Agricultural raw materials</th>
<th>Fuels</th>
<th>Manufactured goods</th>
<th>Minerals and metals</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Import concentration index</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
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<td>68.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<td>9.7</td>
<td>76.7</td>
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<td>0.070</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
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<td>69.8</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
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<td>1.8</td>
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<td>1.7</td>
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<td>55.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>4.2</td>
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<td>14.5</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

### CHART F25

**Services Imports by Service-Category (2017)**

- **Goods-related services**
- **Transport**
- **Travel**
- **Other services**

Own production. Source: UNCTAD.
### TABLE F26  Tourism in the Mediterranean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inbound tourists</th>
<th>Outbound tourists</th>
<th>International tourism receipts</th>
<th>Tourism expenditure in other countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>exchange rate</td>
<td>% in the</td>
<td>% of exports</td>
<td>% of imports</td>
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<td>15.3</td>
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<td>573</td>
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<tr>
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Own production. Source: UNWTO WB WB WB WB WB WB WB

a. Value calculated using WB data. b. Data from 2016. (..) Data unavailable.

### CHART F26  International Tourism in Mediterranean Countries (1995-2017)

![Chart showing international tourism in Mediterranean countries from 1995 to 2017](chart.png)

Number of arrivals (thousands)

Receipts (Millions $)


Number of arrivals (thousands)

Receipts (Millions $)
### Official Development Assistance (ODA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Official Development Assistance by Donor Countries</th>
<th>Official Development Assistance by Recipient Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>millions $</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>1,888</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Own production. Source: OECD. a Data from 2015. b Value calculated using OECD data. c Data from 2016. Data unavailable.

### Official Development Assistance in Mediterranean Countries (donors and recipients), 2017

**Official Development Assistance (millions $)**

**Official Development Assistance per capita ($)**

Own production. Source: OECD.
### TABLE F28  
**External Debt**

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Own production. Source: WB.

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### CHART F28  
**External Debt (2017)**

[Graph showing external debt stocks for different countries, with emphasis on the investment characteristics and economic integration among Mediterranean countries.]

Own production. Source: WB.
Adolescent fertility rate
Number of births per thousand women aged between 15 and 19.

Agricultural land area
Land surface area made up of arable and permanently cultivated lands and by permanent meadows and pastures.

Annual population growth rate
Exponential change in the growth of the population during the period indicated.

Aquaculture production
Includes marine, freshwater and diadromous fish, molluscs and crustaceans cultivated in marine, inland or brackish environments.

Arable lands and permanent crops
Agricultural surface area that groups the data on arable or farm land and land used for permanent crops. Arable and farm land is land given over to temporary crops (those giving two yields are only counted once) temporal meadows for cutting or grazing, land dedicated to commercial vegetable gardens or orchards and land temporarily fallow for a period of less than five years. The term does not include land that has been abandoned as a result of migratory cultivation. Land destined for permanent crops refers to land dedicated to crops that occupy the terrain during long periods and that do not need to be replanted after each harvest, such as cacao, coffee and rubber. It includes land occupied by bushes destined to flower production, fruit trees, walnut trees and vineyards, but excludes land planted with trees destined to the production of firewood or wood.

Armed forces
Strategic, land, naval, aerial, command and support forces. It also includes paramilitary forces, such as the gendarmerie, the customs service and the border guard if they are trained in military strategy.

Births attended by skilled health personnel
Percentage of births attended by health personnel (physicians, nurses and midwives) that are trained in the care, supervision and counselling of women during pregnancy, birthgiving and puerperium, and who can also deliver babies and assist them on their own.

Broadband Subscriptions (Fixed and Mobile)
Number of active (fixed or mobile) subscriptions to high speed access to the public Internet.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions
The emissions of carbon dioxide produced in the burning of all fossil fuels used by a country.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by sector
Shows the proportion of carbon dioxide emissions produced by the burning of fossil fuels in the sectors of transport, industry and electricity production. The transport sector includes emissions produced by all forms of transport by road, rail and air, including agricultural vehicles travelling by road. International journeys by boat or aeroplane are excluded. The industrial and construction sector includes emissions produced by all types of industry and construction. The electricity sector includes emissions produced by the generation of electricity for public use, including thermal power stations.

Cereal production
The figures for cereal production only refer to harvests of dry grain. Crops harvested for hay, unripe foodstuffs, forage and silage, or are used for grazing, are therefore excluded.

Cereal production yield
The outputs per hectare have been calculated using the data on surface area and production.

Cereal trade
The figures obtained by the FAO, have been supplied by the respective governments in the questionnaires sent out by the FAO.

Children overweight
Percentage of overweight (weight-for-height above + two standard deviations of the WHO Child Growth Standards median) among children aged 0-5 years.

Children underweight
Percentage of underweight (weight-for-age less than two standard deviations of the WHO Child Growth Standards median) among children aged 0-5 years.

CO₂ emissions intensity by GDP
Average quantity of CO₂ emitted per unit of income generated by a particular economy.

Consumer price index
Reflects changes in the cost, for an average consumer, in the acquisition of a basket of goods and services that can
be fixed or can change at specific intervals; for example annually. The Laspeyres formula is normally used.

**Contraceptive prevalence rate**

Percentage of women who are married or in a relationship who report using at least one method of contraception.

**Crude birth rate**

Number of births per year per thousand inhabitants. An estimate is made in the middle of the current year.

**Crude death rate**

Number of deaths per year per thousand inhabitants. An estimate is made in the middle of the current year.

**Current account balance**

The sum of the net exports − exports minus imports − of goods and services, incomes and net transfers.

**Debt service**

The sum of the main payments and interest payments made for long-term debts, interest paid on short-term debts and repayments (redemption and charges) to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

**Desalinated water production**

Amount of water produced by elimination of salt from salt water using a variety of techniques, including reverse osmosis. Most of this water is used for domestic purposes.

**Duration of compulsory education**

Number of years, within a determined age group, that children and young people are legally obliged to attend school.

**Ecological footprint**

Measurement of the use of renewable natural resources by humanity. For a given population it is defined as the total area of biologically productive land and water required to produce the resources consumed, to maintain energy consumption, to make way for infrastructures and to absorb the waste generated by the population. The unit used to measure the ecological footprint is the global hectare and is defined as a hectare of biologically productive space, equal to the world average.

**Economically active population in agriculture**

Part of the economically active population engaged in or seeking work in agriculture, hunting, fishing or forestry.

**Electricity consumption per capita**

Refers to the gross production per inhabitant and includes the consumption of auxiliary stations and the losses in the transformers considered an integral part of the central station. It also includes the total electricity produced by pumping stations, without deducting the electricity absorbed by the pumps.

**Electricity production**

Measured in the alternating equipment terminals of electric power stations. Also includes hydroelectric, coal, oil, gas and nuclear energy sources and generation by geothermal, solar, wind, tidal and marine energy, as well as renewable residues and fuels.

**Electricity sources**

Refers to the energy sources used to generate electricity: hydroelectric, coal, oil, gas and nuclear.

**Employed population**

Proportion of the economically active population that is employed. When adding the employed population to the unemployed the result is the whole economically active population or labour force.

**Employment by sector**

According to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), the Agriculture category also includes hunting, fishing and forest exploitation; the Industry category includes mining, extraction activities (including oil production), manufacturing, construction and public services (electricity, water and gas); the Services category includes the wholesale and retail trades, restaurants and hotels, transport, storage services, communications, financial services, insurance, real estate, business services, as well as community, social and personal services.

**Employment rate**

Percentage of population in work relative to the total population of working age.

**Energy use**

Energy use refers to use of primary energy before transformation to other end-use fuels, which is equal to indigenous production plus imports and stock changes, minus exports and fuels supplied to ships and aircraft engaged in international transport.

**Energy production**

Primary energy forms − oil, natural gas, coal and its derivatives and renewable fuels and residues − and primary electricity, all converted into equivalents of oil. The renewable fuels and residues refer to solid and liquid biomass, biogas and industrial and municipal residues.

**Expected years of schooling**

Number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates were to stay the same throughout the child’s life.

**Export/Import concentration index**

The Herfindahl–Hirschman Index is used, in a normalized version, to obtain values between zero and one (maximum concentration). It measures the degree of market concentration and the calculation takes into account the different product groups exported, according to the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC).

**Exports**

The value of all goods supplied by an economy to the rest of the world. It excludes labour and income in concept of property, as well as transfer payments.

**External debt**

The sum of the national debt, with public guarantee, private unsecured long-term debt, credit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and short-term debt.

**Fertility rate**

Number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end
GDP per capita (see Gross Domestic Product per capita)

GDP growth rate
Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency.

GDP per unit of energy use
Indicator of energy efficiency. The temporary differences and entire countries partly reflect, structural economic changes, changes in the efficiency of particular sectors and differences in the use of fuels. The GDP has been converted into 2005 international dollars.

Gender inequality index
The Gender Inequality Index (GII) reflects women’s disadvantage in three dimensions—reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market—for as many countries as data of reasonable quality allow. The index shows the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in these dimensions. It ranges from 0, which indicates that women and men fare equally, to 1, which indicates that women fare as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions.

Gini index
Measure of greater or lesser inequality in the distribution of income and consumption, considering a state of perfectly equal distribution. A value of zero represents perfect equality and a value of one hundred total inequality.

GNI (see Gross National Income)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
The sum of the added value by all the resident producers in an economy, plus any tax on the product (without taking into account the subsidies). The added value is the net profit of an industry after adding together all the profits and subtracting the intermediate contributions.

Gross Domestic Product by sector
The contribution of the distinct economic sectors in the GDP is determined according to the added value determined by the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC).
their usual residence, for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose main purpose in visiting is other than an activity remunerated from within the country visited.

**Infant mortality rate**
Shows the number of deaths of infants under one year of age per thousand live births.

**Internally displaced people**
As a result of armed conflicts or human rights abuses, some 25 million people live as internally displaced population. These people were forced to flee from their homes for fear of losing their lives, but unlike refugees, they were displaced within their country’s borders. Even though internally displaced people are twice as many as refugees, their situation receives less international attention.

**International tourism receipts**
Income received in a given country from visitors, including payments made to national freight companies for international freight. It also includes the prepayment of goods and services received in the destination country. It can include the income from single day visitors. The percentage it represents with respect to exports is calculated as a ratio of the exports of goods and services.

**Internet users**
The estimated number of internet users out of total population. This includes those using the Internet from any device (including mobile phones) in the last 12 months.

**Labour force participation rate**
The labour force participation rate is defined as the ratio of the labour force to the working-age population, expressed as a percentage. The labour force is the sum of the number of persons employed and the number of persons unemployed.

**Land area**
Refers to the total surface area minus the surface covered by inland waters. Inland waters are defined in general as rivers and principal lakes.

**Land under cereal production**
The figures related to cultivated crop surface areas generally refer to the area harvested, although those corresponding to permanent crops can refer to the total planted area. The figures for the cultivated cereal area only refer to harvests of dry grain. Crops harvested for hay, unripe foodstuffs, forage and silage, or used for grazing, are therefore excluded.

**Life expectancy at birth**
The number of years that a new-born infant would live if prevailing patterns of mortality at the time of its birth were to stay the same throughout its life.

**Literacy rate**
Total is the percentage of the population aged 15 and above who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life. Generally, “literacy” also encompasses “numeracy”, the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.

**Live animal stock**
The data on stock covers all domestic animals regardless of age, location or final purpose. Estimates have been made for countries that have not supplied data, as well as for countries supplying partial statistics.

**Live animal trade**
Enormous quantities of unregistered animals cross the borders of some countries. In order to obtain more representative international trade figures of live animals, the FAO has incorporated estimates of the unregistered trade.

**Long term external debt**
Debt that has an original or extended maturity of more than one year. It has three components: public, publicly guaranteed and private non guaranteed debt.

**Maternal mortality ratio**
Annual number of deaths of women owing to causes related to pregnancy, for every 100,000 live births.

**Mean years of schooling**
Average number of years of education received by people aged 25 and older in their lifetime based on education attainment levels of the population converted into years of schooling based on theoretical durations of each level of education attended.

**Mediterranean and Black Sea catches**
Fishing catches for commerce, industry or subsistence (including recreational catches where the data is available). The data refers to the catch by the fleet of a country in the Mediterranean and/or in the Black Sea.

**Military expenditure**
Total expenses effected by the Ministry of Defence and other ministries on the recruitment and training of military personnel, as well as the manufacture and acquisition of military supplies and equipment. Military assistance is included in the expenses of the donor country.

**Mobile cellular telephone subscriptions**
Refers to the subscriptions to a public mobile telephone service and provides access to Public Switched Telephone Network using cellular technology.

**Net energy import**
Shows the amount of energy use by an economy and to what extent it exceeds its domestic production.

**Net enrolment ratio**
Number of students enrolled in a level of education who are of the official school age for that level, as a percentage of the total of the population of official school age for that level. The figures are shown for primary and secondary education.

**Net migration rate**
Net number of migrants divided by the average population of the receiving country within the period considered.

**Net number of migrants**
The entry of immigrants into a given country minus the outgoing emigrants of the same country.

**Official Development Assistance (ODA)**
The net payment of donations and loans granted under advantageous financial
terms by official boards of partner countries of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as international organizations, with a view to promoting economic development and wellbeing, including co-operation and technical assistance.

Oil equivalent
All the values of energy production and consumption presented in this classification are calculated and published by the International Energy Agency (IEA) which uses the equivalent metric tonne of oil based on the calorific content of the energy products as the unit of measurement. An equivalent metric tonne of oil is defined as 107 kilo calories or 11,628 gigawatts per hour (GWh). This amount of energy is practically equal to the amount of energy contained in a tonne of crude oil.

Outbound tourists by country of origin
Number of trips that travellers make to a given country from their normal country of residence, for a period of less than one year, for any other reason than to undertake a paid activity in the country visited.

Passenger cars
Road motor vehicles, other than two-wheelers, intended for the carriage of passengers and designed to seat no more than nine people (including the driver).

Permanent pasture
Refers to land used permanently (five years or more) for herbaceous fodder, whether cultivated or uncultivated (meadows or uncultivated land for grazing).

Physicians
Number of medical doctors (physicians), including generalist and specialist medical practitioners, per 10,000 members of the population.

Population density
The result of dividing the average annual population of a country by its land surface area expressed in square kilometres.

Population in urban agglomerations of more than 750,000 inhabitants
Percentage of the population of a country living in metropolitan areas, that in 2005 had a population of more than 750,000 people.

Population located on the Mediterranean coastal regions
Population living in the Mediterranean coastal regions of the Mediterranean countries.

Population living with HIV/AIDS
Estimated number of people of any age infected with HIV or AIDS. Includes the whole living infected population at the end of 2003, regardless of whether or not they have developed the disease. It shows the actual figure and the percentage in respect of the population of the country.

Population using safely managed drinking-water service
The percentage of population using safely managed drinking water services, which is defined as the population using an improved drinking water source which is located on premises, and available when needed, and free of faecal and priority chemical contamination.

Population using safely managed sanitation services
Percentage of population using “safely managed sanitation services.” For having a safely managed sanitation service, people should use improved sanitation facilities which are not shared with other households, and the excreta produced should either be treated and disposed in situ, stored temporarily and then emptied and transported to treatment off-site, or transported through a sewer with wastewater and then treated off-site.

Population with access to electricity
Refers to the number of people with access to electricity as a percentage of the total population.

Prevalence of smoking
The percentage of men and women who smoke cigarettes. The age range varies between countries, but in general it is 15 years of age or above.

Primary pupil-teacher ratio
Number of pupils registered in primary schools divided by the number of teachers in primary schools.

Proportion of households with a computer
Number of households which declare to have access to a computer at home. A computer includes: a desktop, portable or handheld computer (e.g. a personal digital assistant). It does not include equipment with some embedded computing abilities such as mobile phones or TV sets.

Proportion of households with internet access
Number of households which declare to have access to the Internet at home. The Internet is a world-wide public computer network. It provides access to a number of communication services including the World Wide Web and carries email, news, entertainment and data files. Access is not assumed to be only via a computer - it may also be by mobile phone, digital TV etc.

Protected areas
Areas of land or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biodiversity, natural and associated cultural resources and managed through legal and other instruments. According to The World Conservation Union (IUCN) it includes the total area of all natural reserves, virgin areas, national parks, natural monuments, management areas of habitats and species, as well as protected land and sea areas in each country.

Public expenditure on education
Composed of capital expenses (construction, renovation, major repairs and purchase of heavy equipment or vehicles) and running costs (goods and services consumed during the current year and that need to be renewed the following year). It covers expenses such as salaries and rendering of services, contracted or acquired services, books and didactic material, social welfare services, furniture and equipment, minor
repairs, fuel, insurance, rent, telecommunications and travel.

**Public health expenditure**
Refer to the recurring and capital expenses in government budgets (central and local), loans and external concessions (including donations from international agencies and non-governmental organizations) and social or compulsory medical insurance funds.

**R & D expenditures**
The current and capital expenses of creative and systematic activities that increase the stock of knowledge. Includes basic and applied research and experimental development work that leads to new devices, products or processes.

**R & D personnel**
All persons employed directly on R&D, as well as those providing direct services such as managers, administrators, etc., expressed as a proportion of a population of one million.

**Refugees**
People who have been forced to flee their country for fear of persecution owing to reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinions or membership of determined social groups and who are unable or unwilling to return. The asylum country is the country in which the refugee has requested asylum, but has not yet received a response, or where he or she has been registered as an asylum seeker. The country of origin refers to the nationality of the seeker or to the country in which he or she is a citizen.

**Rural population**
The estimated population at the midpoint of the year in areas defined as rural, as a percentage of the total population of the country.

**Sectorial distribution of the active population**
Shown by the percentages of the workforce employed in the different economic sectors: agriculture, industry and services.

**Share of income or consumption**
In the questionnaires carried out in homes in diverse countries to determine the distribution of income, they make five divisions (or quintiles) from the lowest to the greatest incomes. The two lower quintiles (40%) are considered the poorest. A relation is also established between the richest 10% and the poorest 10%, in order to establish the degree of inequality in incomes.

**Share of ICT goods as percentage of total trade**
Share of ICT goods imports and exports as a percentage of total imports and exports for every economy for which this information is available. The list of ICT goods is defined by the OECD, and was revised in 2010. This new list consists of 95 goods defined at the six-digit level of the 2007 version of the Harmonised System.

**Short-term external debt**
Debt owed to non-residents having an original maturity of one year or less and interest arrears on long-term debt.

**Surface area**
Refers to the extension of the country in its totality, including the surface area occupied by inland waters.

**Threatened species**
Includes all the species classified by The World Conservation Union (IUCN), as “vulnerable, in danger, or in critical danger,” but excludes all introduced species, species whose status is not sufficiently known, extinguished species and those still without an assigned status.

**Total area equipped for irrigation**
Area equipped to provide water (via irrigation) to crops. It includes areas equipped for full and partial control irrigation, equipped lowland areas, pastures, and areas equipped for spate irrigation.

**Total catches**
Fishing catches for commerce, industry or subsistence (including recreational catches where the data is available). The data refers to the catch by the fleet of a country in any part of the world. Marine fishing is practiced in seas or oceans, while freshwater fishing takes place in rivers, wetlands and inland lakes.

**Total health expenditure**
Funds mobilized by the system. Sum of general government and private expenditure on health.

**Total population**
Includes all of the residents of a country or territory with the legal status of citizen, except refugees settled in a country of asylum, who are generally considered as part of the population of their country of origin. Values for 2005 and projections for 2050 are shown.

**Tourism expenditure in other countries**
The expenditure in other countries of travellers from a given country, including the payments to national freight companies for international freight. It can include the expenses of single day travellers. The percentage it represents in respect of the exports, is calculated as a ratio of the exports of goods and services.

**Trade balance**
Account that holds the imports and exports of an economy during a certain period of time with the purpose of reflecting the corresponding balance. The negative values indicate a deficit in the trade balance.

**Trade in fish and derivative products**
Expresses the value associated to the exports and imports of live, fresh, frozen, chilled, dried, salted, smoked and tinned fish and derivative products. Includes fresh and salt water and aquaculture fish, molluscs and crustaceans.

**Under-five mortality rate**
Probability of death between birth and reaching five of age, expressed per thousand live births.

**Unemployment rate**
Percentage of the active population without work, but available for and seeking employment.

**Urban population living in slums**
A place of precarious settlement is a group of individuals who live under the same roof and lack one or more of the
following conditions: secure tenure (state protection against illegal eviction), access to drinking water, access to basic healthcare, structural dwelling quality and sufficient vital space. In accordance with the situation of the city in which the precarious settlement is found, this concept can be locally adapted.

**Water consumption**
Total water used by humans in a year, without taking into account the losses due to evaporation in reservoirs. Includes water from non-renewable underground sources, from rivers coming from other countries and from desalinated plants.

**Water dependency**
Percentage of water available in one country, coming from another.

**Water resources**
Refers to the total renewable resources, covering the watercourses of the country (rivers and underground rainwater reserves) and the watercourses originating in other countries.

**Women in parliamentary seats**
Refers to the percentage of seats occupied by women in a lower or single chamber, or in a higher or senate, according to each case. In the case where there are two chambers, the data refers to the weighted average of the participation of women in both chambers.

**Wood fuel production**
Includes wood from trunks and branches, used as fuel for cooking, heating or producing energy.

**Workers’ remittances**
According to the definition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Balance of Payments Manual, workers’ remittances are goods and financial assets transferred by immigrants living and working in an economy (where they are considered residents) in favour of the residents of their former country of residence. An immigrant must live and work in the new economy for more than one year to be considered a resident there. The transfers made to the immigrants own accounts abroad are not considered transfers. Moreover, all those derived from the possession of a business by an immigrant are only considered to be normal transfers to the country of origin.

**Year when women obtained the right to stand for election**
The dates refer to the year when the universal and equal right to stand for election was recognized. In the cases when two years appear, the first refers to the first partial recognition of the right to stand for election.

**Year when women obtained the right to vote**
The dates refer to the year when the universal and equal right to vote was recognized. In the cases when two years appear, the first refers to the first partial recognition of the right to vote.
List of the Organisms Consulted for Drawing Up Tables, Graphics and Maps

CITES, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
www.cites.org

EIB, European Investment Bank
www.eib.org

Europeaid, Development and Cooperation
europa.eu/europeaid

EUROSTAT, Statistical Office of the European Commission
europa.eu/eurostat

FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
www.fao.org

GFN, Global Footprint Network
www.footprintnetwork.org/

IDMC, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
www.internal-displacement.org

IEA, International Energy Agency
www.iea.org

IGME, UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, Child Mortality Estimates
www.childmortality.org

ILO, International Labour Organization
www.ilo.org

IOM, International Organization for Migration
www.iom.int

IMF, International Monetary Fund
www.imf.org

IPU, Inter-Parliamentary Union
www.ipu.org
List of In Organisations Consulted

ITU, International Telecommunication Union
www.itu.int

IUCN, World Conservation Union
www.iucn.org

Med.Cronos
www.iemed.org

Millennium Development Goals Indicators
http://mdgs.un.org

OECD, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
www.oecd.org

OICA, International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers
www.oica.net

Psephos Adam Carr’s Election Archive
psephos.adam-carr.net

SIPRI, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
www.sipri.org

UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
www.unaids.org

UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
www.unctad.org

UNDP, United Nations Development Programme
www.undp.org

UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme
www.unep.org

UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
www.unesco.org

UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund
www.unfpa.org

UN-Habitat - United Nations Human Settlements Programme
unhabitat.org/

UNHCR, United Nations Refugee Agency
www.unhcr.ch
UNHCR The Refugees Operational Portal - Mediterranean

UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response
http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php

UNICEF, United Nations Children’s Fund
www.unicef.org

United Nations Treaty Collection
untreaty.un.org

United Nations Population Information Network (POPIN)
esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm

UNPOP, United Nations Population Division
www.unpopulation.org

UNRWA United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
www.unrwa.org

UNSTAT, United Nations Statistics Division
unstats.un.org

UNWTO, World Tourism Organization
www.unwto.org

WB, World Bank
www.worldbank.org

WEF, World Economic Forum
www.weforum.org

WHO, World Health Organization
www.who.int
## Country Abbreviations in Graphics and Maps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country Abbreviation</th>
<th>Country Name</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area</td>
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