



Harvard Journal of Middle
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Harvard Kennedy School of Government

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Letter from the Editors

By Jennifer Rowland and Nada Zohdy

We are thrilled to present the fourth edition of the *Harvard Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy* (JMEPP). JMEPP's mission is to provide cutting-edge analysis on issues of policy relevance to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Our Spring 2015 volume captures the troubling developments of the past year in the Middle East and North Africa. In 2014, the Syrian conflict that has so beguiled the international community spilled over into Iraq, with the swift and shocking rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). ISIS is causing the ever-complex alliances in the region to shift in peculiar ways. In Iraq, US airstrikes provide cover for Iranian-backed militias fighting ISIS; while in Yemen, the United States supports a Saudi intervention against a different Iranian-backed armed group that has taken control of the Yemeni capital.

Meanwhile, simmering political disputes in Libya escalated into a full-blown civil war, sparking concern in neighboring Egypt, where the old authoritarian order remains in control despite the country's popular revolution. The Gulf countries contemplate their responses to record-low oil prices, continuing negotiations between the United States and Iran, and the threat of ISIS. And Tunisia remains one of the region's only bright spots. In November, Tunisians voted in the country's first free and fair presidential elections. This year's Journal brings new analysis to many of these complex events and broader regional trends.

We begin with the positive: an exclusive interview with former Tunisian Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa. In this year's feature articles: **Brian Katulis** zooms out to assess the Obama administration's record in the Middle East over the past six years; **Michael Wahid Hanna** refutes the notion that the Iraqi and Syrian borders will need to be redrawn as a result of

ISIS' takeover; and **Faysal Itani** analyzes the US coalition's strategy to defeat ISIS, arguing that it cannot succeed without empowering Sunni civilians. **Muhammed Idris** and **Joelle Thomas** turn to economics in an assessment of the United Arab Emirates' efforts to go green. **Tamirace Fakhoury** points out a blind spot in the study of the Middle East and North Africa: how large diaspora communities affect political dynamics in their home countries. **Farouk El-Baz** takes us to Egypt, where he proposes a grand economic plan to pull the country out of poverty and set it on a path toward long-term growth. From Egypt, we move west to the oft-neglected country of Algeria, where **Kheireddine Bekkai** argues for more inclusive education policies on national identity. Finally, **Amira Maaty** comments on the region's desperate need for robust civil societies, while **Sarah McKnight** calls for improvements in Jordan's water policies.

Given the enormity of the challenges facing the Middle East today, we at JMEPP feel it is both an obligation and a privilege to view the contemporary policy challenges and opportunities facing the region from new perspectives, with the strength and credibility of voice that comes from using the platform of the Harvard Kennedy School.

We invite you to read, comment, and contribute in the coming weeks, months, and years. Only through active debate and constructive engagement will we move toward sound policies capable of overcoming the momentous challenges facing the region. It is an exciting time here at the Journal, and we hope you will join the conversation. If you like what you see, please subscribe to future editions through our website: www.hksjmepp.com.

Jennifer Rowland & Nada Zohdy
Editors-in-Chief
Cambridge, MA, April 2015



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Leading From Crisis: An Exclusive Interview with Former Tunisian Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa

Interviewed by Nada Zohdy

JMEPP: Thank you for meeting with us Prime Minister Jomaa. Tunisia, of course, has been widely praised as a successful example of an Arab democracy. But what do you think is the single greatest challenge facing Tunisia's nascent democracy now that it has completed its democratic transition?

JOMAA: I think first is our economic challenge. As we succeeded in our political transition, we must also succeed in making an economic transition as well. We have to make many reforms, and you know it's not simple to make economic reforms. And it's less simple when you know that we are again in a period of transition, but we have to find enough courage to do it. It is mandatory for us to do this because the revolution that happened in Tunisia was for freedom as well as for more jobs, more opportunities, and more balanced [regional] development. We have a

big [development] gap between the inland and coastal areas of the country, and we must address that. We can't address these social and development imbalances and other issues without making fundamental economic reforms.

JMEPP: We know that Tunisia is seen as a model for democracies in the Middle East, but who do you look to? What country do you see as a model for your democracy?

JOMAA: I think we are not a model for anyone actually. Maybe we are an example, but we don't like to say model because we have our specificities and certain things cannot be replicated anywhere. But it's an experience in creating hope and that could inspire other countries. And it's good for the young people. Similarly, we don't have a single model to follow, every country has its own specificities. But we share many of the fundamental values that

are included in our constitution, like freedom of expression, freedom of belief, and many other universal values that do not come from one specific country but are common values.

JMEPP: During your year as Prime Minister, what was the most important decision you made, given the political crisis that was the backdrop of how you came to office?

JOMAA: The first thing was how we managed the political crisis and security situation, in order to bring about stability and allow for free and fair elections in a safe environment. We also prioritized the fight against terrorism. We put a lot of energy into this and achieved a great success. Tunisia is now safer, and we have more protected boundaries from all the threats coming from outside or inside.

JMEPP: Was there a particularly important decision for enforcing the security?

JOMAA: Yes, there were many that we made. We laid out the concept of a “crisis cell,” and I consulted on these decisions around the table with leaders in the different ministries, interior, police departments, etc. It’s an organization that helped us make decisions quickly but also [was] based on the right inputs and information. We call this our “crisis cell,” but it’s really a crisis management committee. It allowed us to face the decisions we needed to make in a quick manner and efficient way, and we see now some other countries are also doing this, which is really good.

JMEPP: So, Tunisia as a model for other countries (laughs). Tunisia is also a major source of foreign fighters for the Islamic State, ISIS. Do you think the move to democracy

has contributed to this problem, and what do you think is necessary to solve it?

JOMAA: I don’t think the move to democracy produced combatants. No, first we must say no more, because this happened just after the revolution when the state was weak. As you know, the aim of the revolution was to shake the [foundation

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but the lack of the state
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fighters].”
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of] the state, throughout the regime. The police at that time were seen as the tool of repression of the regime. And so [extremists] took advantage of that, and some of [these fighters] immigrated to other countries in the Middle East. Since that time, things have changed a lot. We now control our land, we control our country, we control our boundaries, and we cut the flow. So, it wasn’t democracy but the lack of the state [that contributed to the emergence of foreign fighters]. That was the challenge caused by the revolution. I think things are better now, but the problem now is how to deal with the people coming back from Syria and Iraq. But it’s not a question that we have to face on our own—many other countries, even in Europe now and throughout the world, are facing this question, and we are working in collaboration with these other countries to address this issue.

JMEPP: The next question is with regards to your personal plans now that you have just left office. You came to office as an apolitical, technocratic

candidate, but over the last year, you have become a very popular public figure. Even though you don't have a history in traditional politics and political parties, do you think this is something you might do in the future?

JOMAA: In the near future, I think I will first recover and resume having a civil, normal life. In the future, it depends on if the country has any need for me and my team. If so, we will serve in any position, either political or not, as we have the qualifications to help support this country and continue to contribute. Anyhow, I will not set up a political party today, and we will see for the future. I can't forecast really.

JMEPP: Politics in the United States especially is very polarized, and compromise is very hard. But you came to power as Prime Minister as the result of a remarkable compromise. Why do you think compromise has been successful in Tunisia, and what will help make it successful in the future?

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And when you look at the history of Tunisia, you see that every time we had a big crisis, the exit was compromise. It is inherent and inherited from our history and tradition.

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JOMAA: I think it's the history of Tunisia. It's a country with 3,000 years of history based on tolerance and compromise. And when you look at the history of Tunisia, you see that every time we had a big crisis, the exit was compromise. It

is inherent and inherited from our history and tradition. That's the first point which is important. Second, we have a good civil society, which exerted a lot of pressure on political parties to push them to find an agreement and compromise. It was very important that we have a very active civil society, and women in the civil society are more active than men. If you know Tunisia, you know how present women are, and that's one of the key factors of Tunisia's success.

—

Nada Zohdy is a graduating Master in Public Policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Harvard Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy.

Mehdi Jomaa served as Prime Minister of Tunisia from January 2014 to February 2015. He was chosen to lead an independent, technocratic government and guide Tunisia towards its first general elections under the new constitution. His appointment was the result of a compromise between Tunisia's primary political factions after months of acute political crisis. Prior to his appointment as head of government, Jomaa served as Minister of Industry in the cabinet of Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh from March 2013. His previous career was in the aeronautics industry.

Obama's Middle East Report Card

By Brian Katulis

Abstract

Heading into his last year and a half in office, President Obama faces a challenge in leaving behind a successful legacy in the Middle East. In his tenure, Obama delivered on ending the expansive US military presence in Iraq and protecting the homeland from major terrorist attacks. Yet, the Obama administration has not gained a solid footing on how to adapt to the 2011 Arab revolts and the continued aftermath, a sea change in a struggle for power within the region. Although Al-Qaeda may be a shadow of its former self, a more formidable Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) is taking its place and drawing the United States back into turmoil in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Iran's rivalry and proxy wars are claiming more countries like Syria and Yemen. President Obama's Middle East policy in his final two years will be judged by his ability to coordinate between two efforts: to wage a successful campaign against ISIS and to deliver on a deal with Iran that prevents it from acquiring nuclear weapons while assuaging the fears of Israel and America's Gulf allies. The United States must also learn from the mistakes of the recent past and reinvigorate its investment in smart power policy tools that can meaningfully handle the constant shifts in Middle East dynamics.

President Obama's Middle East policy record in his first six years in office was mixed and lacked significant achievements. Overall, Obama's approach was cautious, as the United States reacted to fast-moving events. Obama's strategy predominantly focused on degrading terrorist networks, such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Penin-

sula (AQAP), to prevent a major attack on the United States and avoiding making the same strategic blunders as his predecessor. Attempts to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace fell short twice, and efforts to broker a peaceful settlement to Syria's vicious civil war have not succeeded. Furthermore, America's response to the ongoing political

shifts of the Arab uprisings has been uneven.

Obama's strategic approach has placed the United States in a bystander role in some of the biggest shifts and dynamics in the region, including the 2011 Arab uprisings and their aftermath. The administration's overall framework—of reducing America's commitments in the region in order to rebalance or pivot to other regions of the world—was partially overtaken by events in 2014, including the rise of the ISIS.

Looking ahead to his final two years in office, Obama faces a challenging regional landscape. At the start of 2015, the two top priorities are addressing the threats posed by terrorist networks, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) and AQAP, and dealing with Iran's nuclear program. Reaching a deal with Iran on its nuclear program is still possible. But with or without a deal, the repercussions of Iran's influence and role in the region will be a major issue for President Obama and his successor for years to come. The campaign against ISIS will face significant challenges in both Iraq and Syria in Obama's last two years. How this campaign and the efforts to engage Iran are managed together will have a major, long-lasting impact on the trajectory of US policy in the Middle East.

Looking Back on Obama's Middle East Record: Hesitant Responses to Surprising Transformations

President Obama entered office promising a new style of engagement with the Middle East. He set a new tone in a series of speeches and media appearances in his first year in office and vowed to fulfill his campaign promise of ending America's involvement in the war in Iraq.

Obama signaled early on a strong focus on Middle East peace by appointing a prominent envoy in former Senator

George Mitchell, and he extended an offer of engagement with Iran. The administration's engagement on Iran yielded more fruit than the efforts on the peace process front. The international framework for en-

Obama's strategic approach has placed the United States in a bystander role in some of the biggest shifts and dynamics in the region, including the 2011 Arab uprisings and their aftermath.

gaging and containing Iran on the nuclear front opened the door to renewed negotiations in Obama's second term that may yield some significant results. By contrast, two separate efforts to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace talks—one led by Mitchell at the start of Obama's first term and a second spearheaded by Secretary of State John Kerry at the start of Obama's second term—collapsed in the face of differences between the two parties and divisions within both camps.

The regional, social, and political upheaval that began in Tunisia at the end of 2010 forced the administration to reprioritize the Middle East and North Africa. The power shifts that toppled leaders in four countries—Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen—had significant reverberations not only in those countries but across the region. In each country, the United States struggled to adapt its forms of engagement to meet the new social, economic, and political challenges. For all of the talk about “smart power” and the need to use other components of US power in foreign policy, the United States was slow to respond

with a meaningful set of policy tools that were relevant to the challenges facing each of these countries. For example, the Obama administration made public announcements about new types of assistance to smooth the economic and political transitions in key countries in efforts such as the Deauville Partnership announced with other G8 countries in 2011. However, not much of this promised aid was delivered, and it was ultimately dwarfed by the massive infusions of aid that Gulf countries in the region delivered to countries like Egypt.

Furthermore, the new regional competition for power and influence that emerged in this period from 2011 to 2014 among different power centers in the region complicated Obama's engagement on the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Turkey were all adopting more assertive stances on the political transitions in other countries. After a few months of being more vocal and active in response to changes in the region—including America's direct military intervention in Libya in 2011—the Obama administration became more cautious and tentative by 2012.

At the same time, the Obama administration was continuing its efforts to end America's combat role in Iraq. US troops withdrew from Iraq in 2011, but until the summer of 2014, the administration was disinclined to use diplomatic leverage to shape Iraq's internal politics. The growing authoritarianism of former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the increased sectarianism in Iraq contributed to the reemergence of violent extremism and terrorist groups such as ISIS. By early 2014, the situation had spiraled out of control inside of Iraq, and the dynamics started to mix with the combustible violence in Syria's civil war next door.

Syria will perhaps be viewed by historians as the greatest shortcoming of Obama's

Middle East policy. President Obama's reluctance to intervene in the conflict, especially early on, was reasonable and understandable. In retrospect, however, dynamics spiraled out of control and spread

In its last two years, the administration will have two major priorities when it comes to the Middle East: the campaign against ISIS and Iran's nuclear program.

across Syria's borders. The September 2013 nonstrike event—when the Obama administration did not follow through on exacting a cost on the Assad regime for its use of chemical weapons—created confusion in the region about America's overall role. It also produced incentives for regional actors to become deeply involved in Syria's civil war. By the start of 2015, the conflict in Syria had taken an estimated 200,000 lives and uprooted nearly a third of the country.¹

Heading into his last two years in office, President Obama has closed down three embassies in Syria, Libya, and Yemen due to security threats. Similarly, America is slowly increasing its military footprint in Iraq and embarking on a rebel train-and-equip exercise in Syria and Iraq to deal with the ISIS threat.

Looking Ahead to Obama's Last Two Years: Investing in Regional Stability

In its last two years, the administration will have two major priorities when it comes to the Middle East: the campaign against ISIS and Iran's nuclear program. Without a change of government in Israel and a major shift in Palestinian dynamics, it is unlikely that the administration will

invest significant time or energy in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Political change has stalled out in Egypt, and chaos in Syria is likely to make the region as a whole more resistant to challenges to current rulers.

The campaign against ISIS will be a major focus, even in the absence of an overall strategy for Syria. The Obama administration must maintain coalition unity in this campaign, though ISIS' recent atrocities have made this task less difficult. Moreover, the administration has greater clarity on the Iraq side of this strategy than on the Syria side. Its plan to train a Syrian opposition force to fight ISIS lacks urgency, and it is far from clear whether the size of the proposed force—5,000 fighters trained a year—will be sufficient to hold territory seized from ISIS.

Iran and the P5+1 appear closer to a deal over Tehran's nuclear program than at any point in recent memory after the unveiling in April 2015 of the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action"² that paves the way to a finalized agreement. However, this appearance could prove deceiving, and even if a final deal is signed, the regional reverberations will be difficult for the United States to manage. Israel and Gulf Arab countries have expressed their extreme reservations about a possible deal with Iran. Offering reassurances and enduring support to those partners will be important for any possible deal with Iran to have staying power. Furthermore, the Obama administration should be clear-eyed and realistic about the possibilities and limits of US-Iran cooperation in the region, particularly on the anti-ISIS campaign. For example, in the campaign to degrade ISIS, the United States has already found limits to how much the forces in Iraq backed by Iran are willing to actively cooperate with the efforts of the US-led coalition against ISIS. This became apparent in March 2015 in the initial failed efforts to retake Tikrit by Shiite rebels guided by the IRGC (Iranian Rev-

olutionary Guards Corps) from which the United States was absent due to reservations over providing air cover to hostile elements which had also rejected US involvement. Furthermore, the active support Iran provides to Hezbollah in Lebanon, a terrorist group that has actively threatened the United States and its allies, is deeply problematic.

It is unlikely that the anti-ISIS campaign or Iran diplomacy will produce complete results by the end of Obama's time in office, but tangible steps forward on these two top priorities could strengthen overall stability in the region. Indeed, mishandling policy on these two fronts could lead to a wider conflagration and tensions. For example, if a nuclear deal with Iran moves forward, this will likely heighten the sense of insecurity and feelings of abandonment already expressed by Gulf countries and Israel after an interim deal in the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) was announced in November 2013 and the continued Shia-Sunni sectarian tensions across the region. The United States will need to offer reassurances to Israel and key Gulf partners that will continue to remain vigilant about the problematic role Iran plays in the region.

In addition to these central challenges of Iran and ISIS, there is a structural challenge that the United States and other outside actors face in the Middle East: how to respond more effectively to the ongoing political, social, and economic shifts in the region. The 2011 popular uprisings and their aftermath were the symptoms of longer-term challenges that do not appear to be going away anytime soon. Nevertheless, US engagement with the region remains heavily weighted towards the work of its military and intelligence agencies. For the United States to have a more effective policy towards the Middle East, it will need to revisit the aspirations of smart power and make more significant investments in the diplomatic, economic, and political en-

agement tools that can have a meaningful impact on a wider range of countries in the Middle East for years to come.

Brian Katulis is a senior fellow at American Progress, where his work focuses on US national security policy in the Middle East and South Asia. Katulis has served as a consultant to numerous US government agencies, private corporations, and non-governmental organizations on projects in more than two dozen countries, including Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Egypt, and Colombia. From 1995 to 1998, he lived and worked in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Egypt for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. Katulis received a master's degree from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and a BA in history and Arab and Islamic studies from Villanova University. In 1994 and 1995, he was a Fulbright scholar in Amman, Jordan, where he conducted research on the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. Katulis has published articles in several newspapers and journals, including *The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Baltimore Sun*, and *Middle East Policy*, among other publications. He is coauthor of *The Prosperity Agenda*, a book on US national security published by John Wiley & Sons in 2008. Katulis speaks Arabic.

Endnotes

1 "Syria Death Toll Now Exceeds 210,000: Rights Group," Reuters, 7 February 2015.

2 "Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program," US Department of State, 2 April 2015.

The Line in the Sand: Is Sykes-Picot Coming Undone?

By Michael Wahid Hanna

Abstract

The current state of de facto fragmentation in both Iraq and Syria will endure for the foreseeable future, particularly in Syria, which has long since ceased functioning as a unitary state. But the current catastrophe also offers a roadmap for eventual political equilibrium: greater decentralization that does not seek to reconstitute the dysfunctional political order represented by the status quo ante. Creating a sustainable model of governance for both Iraq and Syria will require recognition of both the current reality of sectarian and ethnic polarization and the role of overly centralized repressive modes of governance in fuelling those conflicts. For outside parties seeking to formulate coherent policy responses, an assumption of continued fragmentation is a must, while advocating formal partition is a mistake.

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As civil strife and conflict have curtailed the reach of Baghdad and Damascus, a popular notion has emerged suggesting that the artificial colonial-era boundaries of Iraq and Syria are collapsing. The popular and mistaken refrain is that the Sykes-Picot Agreement is unraveling. This has engendered a number of misguided suggestions that the borders of the Arab state system are the principal drivers of conflict and now require significant overhaul along sectarian

and ethnic lines.

Despite this moment of undeniable fragmentation and violence, however, these predictions of partition are untenable, have limited organic traction, and misunderstand the processes and ramifications of state formation. Further, and most importantly, they propose unnecessarily radical solutions to the familiar crises of governance that plague the entire Arab world, irrespective of the nature of the states of

the region and the process by which their borders were demarcated.

The current state of de facto fragmentation in both Iraq and Syria will endure for the foreseeable future, particularly in Syria, which has long since ceased functioning as a unitary state. But the current catastrophe also offers a roadmap for eventual political equilibrium: greater decentralization that does not seek to reconstitute the dysfunctional political order represented by the status quo ante. Creating a sustainable model of governance for both Iraq and Syria will require recognition of both the current reality of sectarian and ethnic polarization and the role of overly centralized repressive modes of governance in fuelling those conflicts.

For outside parties seeking to formulate coherent policy responses, an assumption of continued fragmentation is a must, while advocating formal partition is a mistake.

Decentralization, Not Partition

Even absent the specter of conflict-induced fragmentation and increased sectarian and ethnic polarization, the option of greater decentralization and devolution of power to subnational levels would be desirable. Autocratic forms of governance are marked by their high levels of centralization, and this is particularly so in the Arab world, which lags behind other regions of the world with respect to levels of decentralization. Instead, much of the region is marked by “deconcentration,” whereby authority, management, and responsibilities are distributed among the various levels of a central government, as opposed to sharing such duties and tasks with autonomous subnational governments. In addition to historical administrative antecedents, as a recent report by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) notes, “political elites in the region have continually exploited nationalism and periods of regional and internal

conflict to justify the need for a strong centralized state.”¹

International IDEA suggests four basic advantages flowing from decentralization, namely, improving service delivery; addressing neglect of marginalized areas; promoting democratic citizenship; and

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Importantly, the discourse of partition is largely external to these conflicts and of ten originates in the West.
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preserving national unity and stability.² The theoretical benefits of decentralization in an autocratic and poorly governed Arab world should be clear. However, the issue of decentralization is a fraught one in the Arab world and is continuously informed by the legacy of imperialism and the lingering suspicions of the intentions of outside actors. For example, a September 2013 op-ed that merely contemplated the possibility of a remapped Middle East, which included a map delineating “How 5 Countries Could Become 14,”³ spawned a heated and conspiratorial reaction in the region that framed the exercise as an expression of strategic intent.⁴ Similar reaction greeted the July 2011 independence of South Sudan.⁵

The traumatic experience of decolonization in the Arab world has produced an abiding fear that the devolution of power within states will lead to the eventual fracture and potential partition of the states of the region—a fear that has been ably exploited by abusive and centralizing rulers. This has stunted the development of public discourse on the issue throughout the region and has fueled demagogic mischaracterizations of efforts to push for greater devolution and decentralization. This has

been exacerbated in recent years by the chronic and burgeoning violence and instability that have overtaken wide swaths of the region.

While the theoretical benefits of decentralization mesh with the objective realities of war-torn Iraq and Syria, the current setting of zero-sum military conflict and ingrained suspicion has limited the ability of well-intentioned actors to formulate rational policy responses. The differing trajectories and legal architectures in place also mean that any formalized decentralization process will necessarily proceed on quite different timelines.

Importantly, the discourse of partition is largely external to these conflicts and often originates in the West. Separatism has not been a core goal of most of the major combatant factions save for certain key exceptions, and the identity of those exceptions limits the possibilities of success for separatist efforts. The most prominent such exception is the Islamic State (IS), also known as ISIS or ISIL, which has adopted transnational goals aimed at erasing regional borders and establishing a caliphate. The spectacular and gratuitous violence of the group, coupled with its openly revisionist efforts to overturn the international order, undermine the breadth of appeal of such efforts and blunts the possibilities for cultivating support in the international community. Jabhat al-Nusra, the official al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, shares similar transnational, long-term objectives but has largely focused its efforts inside Syria.

The only responsible actor advocating separatism is Iraqi Kurdistan, but any bid for independence by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is much more difficult to envision than is popularly understood, as will be discussed further below.

Among mainline Arab actors in Iraq and Syria there is also a notable lack of separatist sentiment. The outside advocates of

soft partition or outright secession overlook the reality of state formation and the durability of national identity despite horrific violence and civil strife.⁶

While much focus has been given to the colonial provenance of borders in the Arab world and their supposed arbitrary character, the drawing of borders and the creation of national identities is never a self-evident process. The intervening years have produced nationalist attachments, and such forms of identity have proven resilient. The bloody struggles for power and the calcification of sectarian and ethnic identity have fueled conflict and bloodshed but have not created significant momentum for secessionism among mainstream actors. Instead, even in the context of vicious, and at times zero-sum, struggles for power, the combatant factions have largely assumed the continued territorial integrity of Iraq and Syria.

A recent assessment of public opinion in Syria noted that “almost all [respondents] rejected the division of Syria,” although “most Syrians in this study want and expect their side to prevail in the conflict and are willing to come together, as long as reconciliation is on their terms.”⁷ Similarly, aside from the fundamental rejections of any form of conventional state sovereignty by IS, no mainline Arab political actors have advocated formal partition in Iraq, and even milder forms of ethnosectarian federalism and soft partition have never gained a critical mass of popular support.

Furthermore, despite war-induced demographic shifts in Iraq and Syria, many mixed areas of the country remain, and any new efforts to draw hard internal partitions would be a spur for renewed sectarian and ethnic violence. Lastly, the crude ethnosectarian logic of such partitions would mar notions of citizenship and undermine the possibilities for heterogeneous and pluralistic societies.

The impulses and necessity for decen-

tralization, on the other hand, are acute. Long-running conflict and fragmentation have changed the internal boundaries of Iraq and Syria and, particularly in the case of Syria, fundamentally altered the political economy of those areas outside the control of the central state. While Syria's strategic stalemate has not produced static internal boundaries as the conflict remains tactically fluid, certain outlying areas have effectively been ceded by the Assad regime.

When this practical reality is coupled with the intractable political and identity crises facing each country, it becomes clear that overly centralized outcomes will only perpetuate grievance and conflict, as Baghdad and Damascus have proven unable to govern effectively and fairly even prior to the much more challenging polarized context. Forcing centralized outcomes will ensure that current crises are institutionalized and further complicate the possibilities for negotiated de-escalation.

An eventual political settlement in each country will require some form of accommodation between the center and outlying areas. Enduring stability is unlikely to emerge without political compromises on the issue of centralization, particularly as devolution of powers and authority remains one of the few paths to dealing with the intractable set of problems presented by demography and the hardening of sectarian and ethnic identities. In short, neither a majoritarian government in Iraq nor a minoritarian government in Syria will have the wherewithal to pacify, let alone govern effectively and equitably, Sunni-majority and Kurdish areas without political compromise on the question of subnational authorities and power.

Finally, for outside actors, partition would represent a disastrous precedent in an already unstable region. The lack of organic constituents for partition and secession would also mean that any such process imposed by the outside would lack legiti-

macy and further fuel suspicions regarding the intentions of outside actors.

Iraq's Path to Decentralization

In contrast to Syria, decentralization is already formally underway in Iraq and is taking place within a constitutional framework. The exact parameters of the accommodation between Baghdad and Iraq's regions, however, remain contentious and unresolved. Iraq's flawed 2005 constitution itself reflects Iraq's underlying and ongoing political and identity crises. Based on Iraq's recent experience and "given the strong association between federalism and the Kurds' ultimate desire for statehood, almost any exploration of greater local autonomy by the provinces raises suspicions of a partitionist agenda."⁸ To move beyond this current impasse, any enduring dispensation will have to contend with the reality and irreversibility of Kurdish autonomy while understanding the undesirability of formalizing similar ethnosectarian arrangements for other parts of the country.

The politics of decentralization in Iraq have changed dramatically since the country adopted its constitution. While Sunni-majority regions in Iraq have more recently come to see the potential benefits of decentralization, Iraq's Sunni Arab political leaders were previously opposed to any forms of decentralization. The psychology underlying this rejection was complex, bound up with the intractable disputes regarding territorial boundaries with the Kurds and the difficulty in accommodating to the demographic and political reality of a Shia-led political order. Simply put, important strands among Iraq's Sunnis had grown accustomed to ruling Iraq from the center and were not yet ready to concede that future prize. Incidentally, this same rejectionist attitude continues to be an animating rationale for IS and its recruitment. Conversely, "during the writing of the 2005 constitution—a period of intense

civil strife—a powerful group of Shia Islamists openly championed the Kurdish-inspired model of ethnosectarian federalism as a hedge against the return of a Sunni strongman such as Saddam Hussein.”⁹ In the ensuing years, that model of ethnosectarian federalism has never gained widespread traction beyond the KRG, but many of Iraq’s Sunni political leaders have come to see decentralization as a buffer between

The centrality of oil to this arrangement means that ‘a relatively equitable distribution of this wealth will be key to future stability,’ but this ‘will also require a relatively strong Baghdad.’

Sunni-majority areas and a Shia-led central state. This process accelerated after the US withdrawal and as power was increasingly concentrated in the person of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

As former US military officer and official Douglas A. Ollivant notes, there is an inherent tension in the push for greater decentralization by Iraq’s Kurds and Sunnis: “On the one hand, they want a Baghdad that cedes power, one that is weak enough not to interfere with their regional arrangements. On the other hand, they also want a strong Baghdad, one that has the ability to pull oil revenue from Basra province (the source of about 80 percent of Iraq’s oil income) and distribute it throughout the country.”¹⁰ As he further explains, “oil nationalism is the fundamental arrangement underlying the Iraqi state.”¹¹ This redistributive model and the inequitable geographic dispersion of natural resources will create a formidable check against separatist ambitions among the Kurds and the drive for

greater autonomy on the part of Sunni-majority provinces. This check is further strengthened by the utter devastation that has been wrought in many of the country’s Sunni-majority areas, a devastation that has only accelerated in the wake of IS’ military campaign, territorial acquisition, and persistent terrorism. The centrality of oil to this arrangement means that “a relatively equitable distribution of this wealth will be key to future stability,” but this “will also require a relatively strong Baghdad.”¹² This suggests that full implementation of the constitutional arrangements for decentralization would prove unworkable and counterproductive in practice; country-wide regionalization, including Basra and the South, would likely set in motion powerful interests and forces that would undercut the economic viability of the Iraqi state. But it is also clear that the current political order is unable to provide equitable and fair governance to all its citizens. While claims that Sunni marginalization is the prime driver of the rise of IS are misguided and hyperbolic, it is undoubtedly true that Iraq’s Sunni citizens have legitimate grievances based on the actions of Baghdad.

In this light, “a system of asymmetric federalism may be the most practical solution for the problems that Iraq faces because it most accurately reflects the country’s enduring ethnic and political realities.”¹³ In this case, an asymmetric outcome would recognize the special status of the KRG while allowing for further and necessary decentralization in other parts of the country. As Hiltermann, Kane, and Alkadiri further highlight, “no other model is likely to enable the country to reach an acceptable solution for Kurdistan while at the same time ensuring that the central government in Baghdad is viable enough to function.”¹⁴

Reaching a settlement along these lines previously eluded Iraq’s political class, even at a time of decreasing violence and insta-

bility. With the rise of IS and the loss of significant territory to that group, sectarian and ethnic polarization, and the further deterioration of trust among communities, have undermined the prospects for reaching such an accommodation. Nonetheless, the instability of the current juncture renders such political steps imperative. However, the trauma of IS' dramatic territorial expansion and unmitigated violence has had appreciable effects on Iraq's political leaders and creates a potential basis for new and necessary accommodations.

The most immediate concern in this regard is bound up with the institutionalization of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and the manner in which the central government interacts with and supports such local forces in Sunni-majority areas in the future. The complex dynamics undergirding this issue can be seen in microcosm in the approach of Iraq's political factions to the legislative issue of a National Guard force, which is understood by Sunnis as a necessary step for challenging IS and liberating IS-controlled territory in Sunni-majority areas. Further, the presence of Iranian proxy groups within the broad array of mobilized militias and fighters has heightened sectarian tensions on this issue, particularly with the specter of future military offensives in Sunni-majority areas.

Perhaps most importantly for Iraq's Sunnis, the PMF issue will go a long way in determining whether the community can have any confidence in functional decentralization. That confidence will be dependent on whether the central government can allow for provincial-level control of PMFs while properly and proportionately resourcing those forces. In return, provincial leaders will have to allow the central government an oversight and collaborative role. The precedent established by the PMF issue will have a disproportionate role in clarifying the political incentives for many Sunni leaders, and a positive resolu-

tion could encourage the mobilization of a critical mass of Sunni fighters, who will be indispensable in degrading IS military power and reach. These steps would alter Iraq's polarized sectarian political and security dynamics.

For much of the Shia base and political class, the issue is seen through the lens of suspicion surrounding the ultimate loyalties and intentions of Iraqi Sunnis and the belief that not insignificant portions of the community colluded with or acquiesced to the rise and spread of IS. These suspicions extend beyond Iraq's Shia, and all of "these other communities in Iraq believe—correctly—that at least a minority of Iraq's Sunni citizens have provided and will provide shelter to ISIL because . . . they fundamentally reject the post-2003 political order in which Sunni Arabs have only the power their demographics can democratically generate."¹⁵

It remains the case that the PMF issue will serve as a litmus test for the willingness and ability of Iraq's political class to cobble together a practicable resolution that incentivizes cooperation between Baghdad and the provinces. Further afield, successful decentralization in Sunni-majority areas of Iraq could provide a model for such efforts in Syria.

To create a sustainable asymmetric structure will also require the normalization and stabilization of Baghdad-KRG ties, which remain strained despite interim arrangements to halt further deterioration. As Joost Hiltermann points out, "Baghdad and Erbil are being pushed apart by the way one of the two main Kurdish parties has openly called for Kurdish independence (while the other has not excluded it), by unilateral moves in the disputed territories, and by an ongoing quarrel over oil and money."¹⁶ For Iraq's Kurds, the prospect of independence remains an ultimate goal, and many believed those hopes were buoyed by the territorial gains made in the

wake of the collapse of the Iraqi security forces, particularly as much of those gains happened in disputed territories such as the symbolically potent city of Kirkuk. Furthermore, generalized international support for potential Kurdish independence is now at an all-time high.

But this popular reading of trends is perhaps misplaced. In fact, for the first time since the era of Saddam Hussein, the security of the KRG has come under serious threat. As Cale Salih points out, “the very real danger ISIS poses to Kurdistan, the complexity of the Kirkuk question, the economic calculations of the KRG, and the regional and international context” demonstrate this threat.¹⁷ Perhaps most significantly, Turkey, which has unexpectedly constructed positive relations with Iraq’s Kurds despite prolonged antagonisms, has come out clearly against the prospects of Iraqi Kurdish independence.¹⁸ There have also been recent positive signals of cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil and a willingness to engage in more serious dialogue.¹⁹

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Without a meaningful resource base and following the destruction of its industrial backbone, no future central government in Damascus will be in a position to easily bring outlying areas under its administrative orbit.

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To institutionalize and safeguard its autonomy, the KRG will have to eschew ad hoc dispensations and seek a more stable and enduring political settlement with

Baghdad. This will require a permanent agreement on oil management and revenue sharing, which would “cement an equitable economic relationship between the central government and its Kurdish counterpart . . . [and] provide the Kurds with the tools they need to build up the region under their own direction and allow it to flourish.”²⁰ It will also require a willingness not to rely on territorial conquest as a means of resolving the open question on disputed internal boundaries; such an approach will ensure renewed future political and potentially military conflict with Baghdad. Finally, and in tension with Iraqi Kurdish aspirations, the KRG should “work to strengthen the Iraqi state as a way of protecting its region from outside attack,” as “[o]nly a state capable of exercising full control over both Shiite and Sunni areas can provide security guarantees to the Kurds.”²¹

The need for a broad accommodation on decentralization remains acute, and as IS loses momentum in Iraq, the need for robust planning for post-IS governance in liberated territories gains greater urgency and would boost the prospects for both the immediate military campaign against IS and other rejectionists and the longer-term viability of Iraq. The crisis posed by IS has also reconfigured the landscape of Iraqi politics, loosening the mainstream Shia commitment to centralization and enabling much greater latitude for serious discussions of administrative decentralization. An asymmetric outcome would also most accurately reflect the existing realities of the country. It would be best accomplished through constitutional revision, but the unlikelihood of that occurring suggests that the most constructive way forward would be through legislative action. Such efforts at legislative reform have failed previously in producing functional outcomes but must again be attempted despite the even more challenging backdrop.

Syria's Indefinite Strategic Stalemate

The prospects for decentralization in Syria are made more challenging by the protracted nature of the Syrian civil war and the near certainty that the military conflict will continue for years to come. As Kheder Khaddour and Kevin Mazur highlight, “[t]he Syrian regime’s militarization of the conflict and the subsequent escalation of the fighting, fueled by a multitude of actors, have set Syrians’ sights even more narrowly on their regions.”²² This loosening of binding ties between the center and opposition-held territory suggests that any eventual political settlement to end the fighting will require some form and degree of meaningful decentralization.

All sides in the Syrian conflict suffer from exhaustion and manpower limitations that undermine the ability of any faction or alignment of factions to end the war militarily. The intervention by US-led military forces against IS has also had a much more limited impact in Syria than Iraq due to the lack of effective coordination with suitable ground forces. The prospects for major shifts in US Syria policy remain unlikely for the remainder of the Obama administration. Coupled with the lack of serious international diplomatic efforts and the continued unwillingness of the Assad regime to negotiate in good faith, there is no reason for optimism over the trajectory of future conflict in Syria.

Without a meaningful resource base and following the destruction of its industrial backbone, no future central government in Damascus will be in a position to easily bring outlying areas under its administrative orbit. This fiscal distress is further exacerbated by new patterns of patronage to satisfy constituencies, such as local militia forces, that have arisen and matured during wartime. These more recent trends build upon longstanding and chronic neglect of rural areas.

The Assad regime itself has also culti-

vated localized pro-regime militia forces, most notably the National Defense Forces. These militias have become centers of authority, and their empowerment will necessitate a reordering of power and patronage relationships within the regime that will further attenuate the center’s control over certain pro-regime areas.

Furthermore, with an inconclusive military conflict and intense enmities and suspicions as a backdrop, it is difficult to imagine the basis upon which a central state could be successfully reconstructed. Similarly, the unlikelihood of regime change suggests that an Alawite-led central state will endure, although in a truncated form. In such circumstances, formalizing decentralization would offer future protection against the depredations of the central government for the country’s aggrieved majority Sunni population. Properly crafted localized forms of administration could also offer protection to concentrated segments of the country’s extensive and vulnerable minority population. Such steps are unlikely to fuel further fragmentation or inspire secessionist intent as a result of the resiliency of Syrian national identity. This is not to suggest uniform notions of Syrian nationalism. In fact, “in contemporary Syria, a central function of national identity for both regime supporters and the opposition is to create a bridge between otherwise unlike groups and to wall off one’s opponents as traitors (*takhwīn*).”²³ This is a testament to the fact that while protracted conflict has fundamentally altered the country’s social fabric, it has still not resulted in the creation of secessionist movements. Nationalism remains a framing mechanism for legitimacy.

The fragmentation of the country has largely evolved in relation to the military conflict, but there are constituencies within Syria who see decentralization as a possible pathway to sustainable politics. Chief among these groups are Syria’s Kurds, who

have never fully integrated into the opposition movement for a variety of reasons and continue to face state hostility and opposition to their efforts for autonomy. Speaking in 2012, Abdul-Hakim Bashar, the president of the Kurdish National Council of Syria, advocated for political decentralization, arguing that “a decentralized political system reassures all parties in Syrian society that the future will be to their liking.”²⁴ While lacking international backing or a hospitable legal environment upon which to pursue autonomy, in contrast to the situation of Iraqi Kurds, Syria’s Kurds have carved out areas of de facto autonomy.

For most other fighting factions, the prospect of negotiation has been so remote and secondary to the all-encompassing military fight that systematic and focused attention to preferred governance structures and frameworks has been far from paramount. However, the reality of enduring de facto fragmentation and the lack of mainstream secessionist intent suggest that Syria’s future will likely depend on accommodating the country’s radically altered shape. Some analysts have suggested that the Syrian regime has also come to a related conclusion. David W. Lesch suggested in 2014 that Syrian regime officials “see decentralization as a strategic necessity. For them, it is the best way for components of the regime to ensure at least some modicum of power and status in the future. The regime has neither the manpower nor money—much less the legitimacy or credibility—to reassert anywhere close to the authority it once enjoyed over the territories it has lost, and even over much of what it nominally controls.”²⁵ Despite the obvious bad faith of the Assad regime, this observation again points to the difficulties in reconstructing a strong centralized state. As a practical matter, the intent of the Assad regime in this regard may be superfluous: recent military developments, such as the March 2015 fall of Idlib to rebel forces

and the unsuccessful regime attempts to encircle and besiege Aleppo, suggest that attrition will effectively limit the territorial ambitions of the regime.

In the interim, while political negotiations aimed at bridging the gap between the Assad regime and the opposition writ large should be pursued if the opportunity arises, this longer-term effort should not come at the expense of bottom-up efforts to reinforce local and subnational administration and governance. Admittedly, building a political track toward decentralization has to date proven fruitless. Attempts at de-escalation through the negotiation and replication of local ceasefires and the subsequent establishment of more formalized local autonomy have failed, largely due to the unwillingness of the Assad regime to negotiate seriously and in good faith. Local ceasefires have come to be seen by the regime as a vehicle for negotiating surrender. Opportunities to reinforce local actors have also been, and will continue to be, limited by the specter of IS, Jabhat al-Nusra, and other Salafi jihadi actors and the ever-present menace of regime airpower. However, such efforts should be periodically revived in the hopes that attrition, both military and economic, will shift the political calculus of the Assad regime and its international backers and force more serious negotiations with non-extremist rebel groups. Even if such de-escalatory steps have future traction, more static conflict and stable lines of territorial control represent the upper limit of achievable, medium-term goals. Nonetheless, such opportunities should be actively pursued and presented as both a precedent and an incentive.

Conclusion

While the reality of fragmentation is well underway in Iraq and Syria, the process of establishing a sustainable political settlement and eventual reconciliation will evolve in radically different settings and

on significantly divergent timelines. Central to any such efforts in either country will be decentralization, which represents an important tool that accommodates the reality and legacy of ethnosectarian conflict without succumbing to the reductive logic of demographic determinism. In contrast, with limited organic support, partition represents a needlessly radical and untenable approach to crisis management. As such, outside actors should aggressively pursue diplomatic openings presented by the fragmented reality of the present. It is through such subnational arrangements and devolved autonomy that sustainable outcomes might emerge.

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The Prospects and Perils of the Coalition's War on ISIS

By Faysal Itani

Abstract

Over the last two years, the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) captured much of and established a proto-state in Iraq and Syria. In September 2014, the United States assembled a coalition to “degrade and eventually destroy” the jihadist group. Because ISIS’ future in Iraq is intimately linked to its position in Syria, defeating it in one but not the other would ensure its survival and may allow it to reemerge in both. This article examines the coalition campaign’s results and prospects in Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, the coalition has made significant progress in blunting ISIS’ momentum and mobilizing its local rivals. Although these successes are limited, reversible, and involve a risky strategy, they could in theory restore basic security in Iraq. In Syria, by contrast, the coalition has failed to significantly weaken ISIS or strengthen its local rivals. Instead, its campaign of air strikes has set in motion local developments among the Syrian insurgency and population that may exacerbate the country’s long-term political and security problems and further empower ISIS. Ultimately, only a strategy that strengthens local Sunni partners with the ability to fight effectively and govern legitimately can defeat ISIS.

Introduction

The Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) is a product of Iraq’s and Syria’s sectarian polarization, political dysfunction, and the alienation of the local Sunni population from the Iraqi and Syrian regimes. The US-led anti-ISIS coalition was triggered by the

jihadists’ capture of Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, in June 2014.¹ While dramatic, this was not ISIS’ first strategic victory in either Syria or Iraq, where for months it had manipulated and outmaneuvered its rivals, gaining resources and recruits. In November 2013, ISIS established full control and

a de facto capital in Raqqa, northern Syria. Control over significant hydrocarbons resources and infrastructure ensured its continued financial self-sufficiency.² Shortly thereafter, it captured Fallujah in Iraq.³

ISIS's success is largely due to its rivals' weakness and passivity and the dysfunction of political regimes, rather than its own size or military capability as a light infantry force. Because Sunni-Shia tensions in Iraq—and Sunni-Alawite tensions in Syria—empower ISIS, non-Sunni efforts against it only reinforce its narrative and appeal. Sunni allies would be the most effective tool against ISIS, and any coalition strategy that does not reflect that is likely to fail. The results in Iraq and Syria indicate as much. The coalition strategy in Iraq does, in principle, involve empowering Sunnis against ISIS and reintegrating them into mainstream politics—though in practice progress on this front has been limited. In Syria, no such strategy exists.

The Coalition Campaign in Iraq

After Mosul fell, the United States increased material support for Iraq's armed forces, deployed several hundred military advisors, and assembled a coalition to launch air strikes on ISIS. The immediate coalition priorities are preventing ISIS from threatening major population zones—including the Kurdish city of Kirkuk and the capital Baghdad—as well as sensitive assets such as the Mosul Dam and the Baiji oil refinery. The campaign also aims to save Iraq's military, on which the United States has spent billions, from collapse, in light of its poor performance against ISIS in June 2014 and systemic corruption and mismanagement in the armed forces.⁴

Officially, the United States has conditioned support for the government of Iraq on political change that addresses Sunni grievances and incentivizes Sunnis to fight ISIS, as they did with much success against Al-Qaeda in Iraq during the Sunni Awaken-

ing.⁵ The United States successfully pushed for replacing Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki with Haider al-Abadi, whom it judged to be less sectarian, hostile, and repressive towards Sunnis—many of whom came to

ISIS has lost some momentum and mobility, but it...still controls much of Sunni Arab Iraq, with the cooperation or tacit acquiescence of Iraqi Sunni tribal and secular insurgent groups who remain skeptical toward the government's promise of political reform.

see ISIS as preferable to the Iraqi security forces. Abadi seems to have some cautious support from certain Sunni forces willing to fight ISIS, on the condition that they receive government support and greater autonomy and economic support from Baghdad in a post-ISIS Iraq.⁶

The coalition campaign in Iraq has had some positive results. ISIS has taken casualties and failed to capture Kirkuk or hold the Mosul Dam, for example. And it has lost control of Iraq's largest oil refinery in Baiji.⁷ Where the coalition has concentrated air strikes, local forces have often blunted or reversed ISIS offensives.⁸ These coalition successes have, to some extent, undermined the perception of ISIS as an unstoppable force—a perception that played a significant role in facilitating ISIS recruitment and psychological warfare. Iraqi government successes against ISIS in Tikrit have further undermined ISIS' image of infallibility.⁹

Despite showing some results and potential, the coalition's strategy for Iraq faces serious challenges and carries high risks. ISIS

has lost some momentum and mobility, but it continues to maneuver and mount offensives that often succeed. It still controls much of Sunni Arab Iraq, with the cooperation or tacit acquiescence of Iraqi Sunni tribal and secular insurgent groups who remain skeptical toward the government's promise of political reform. ISIS also poses a continuing asymmetric threat to the country's stability. Attacks on strategic targets could provoke an all-out sectarian war, as was the case in 2006 when militants bombed an important Shia shrine in Samarra.

There are also formidable political obstacles to accommodating Sunni grievances. First, even if Prime Minister Abadi is sincere in his outreach to Sunnis, he is only one member in a broad, complex, and divided Shia political establishment, which contains some elements who share Maliki's sectarian outlook. Furthermore, Maliki had years to cultivate powerful allies within the Iraqi political and security establishment. If Abadi intends to empower Sunnis, he will need to overcome these entrenched interests, in a context of significant Iranian pressure to limit Sunni power and preserve Shia dominance in Iraq.

Additionally, many Sunnis still perceive Iraq's armed forces as Shia occupiers. As such, a Sunni force would be more likely to secure its coreligionists' support against ISIS and prevent its resurgence in Sunni territory. Yet, due to Shia and Iranian opposition, Abadi has struggled to implement a plan to build a Sunni-led Regional National Guard to fight ISIS.¹⁰ Moreover, Iraq appears to be moving in the opposite direction. Rather than incorporate Sunnis into the effort against ISIS, the fight has been dominated by Shia militias that appear to be committing widespread atrocities against Sunnis.¹¹ These militias are trained, and their operations are led by Iran, whom many Iraqi Sunnis view with deep suspicion.¹² If the militias are not demobilized and replaced by a Sunni-led force, a political reconciliation in

Iraq seems unlikely. Yes, as the Iranian role in and influence over the war effort against ISIS deepens, such a reconciliation becomes more difficult.

Lastly, the coalition's unwillingness to meaningfully weaken ISIS in Syria will necessarily limit the utility of its campaign in Iraq. As long as ISIS can move fighters and goods across the border and as long as they can recruit soldiers and capture equipment in Syria, ISIS can survive, and even thrive, in Iraq. Whatever the coalition strategy's successes in Iraq, it can only generate lasting results if paired with a rational strategy for defeating ISIS in Syria.

The Coalition Campaign in Syria

Despite months of coalition air strikes over Syria, ISIS still controls its core territory in Raqqa, Deir al Zour, and Aleppo provinces and is making inroads around Damascus and into southern Syria. In the areas under its control, ISIS has displaced rival Sunni, non-jihadist Syrian rebel groups, severely repressed local tribal challengers, and is threatening the regime's remaining military outposts. Non-jihadist, nationalist rebel groups demonstrated far greater military success against ISIS in early 2014 than the coalition campaign thus far and, as largely Sunni forces, are best situated to replace them and govern these Sunni territories.¹³ However, these nationalist groups have been weakened significantly in the past year under continuing regime and jihadist attacks.¹⁴

Coalition air strikes against ISIS in Syria have had some limited military success, killing several hundred militants and preventing the group from taking the Kurdish town of Kobane.¹⁵ Coalition air strikes on ISIS' oil and gas assets have likely hurt its finances and therefore its ability to run a proto-state, albeit at the expense of civilians who depended on ISIS for public goods.¹⁶ However, Kobane is not critical to ISIS' plan, and losses there have not visibly affected ISIS' overall military posture or capability in Syr-

ia. Overall, ISIS remains one of the most assertive, effective, and adaptable military actors in Syria.

The coalition does not appear to have a strategy for creating effective Sunni partners against ISIS in Syria. In early 2014, ISIS was forced to cede substantial territory to its rebel rivals but later regrouped, consolidated, and regained the initiative against them. This demonstrated ISIS' ability to recover from temporary military setbacks if local rivals are unable to hold territory, due in large part to unrelenting regime air and artillery attacks. Thus, an air campaign without a ground strategy, without allies to provide reliable intelligence, and without local forces able to hold and govern territory is unlikely to defeat a highly motivated, deeply embedded militant group that controls resources, population zones, heavy weapons, and territory. The US military has admitted as much.¹⁷

President Obama's administration has publicly stated the need for an effective local partner against ISIS and has recognized that the Syrian regime is not such a partner as it is the driver of, rather than an antidote to, Sunni radicalization.¹⁸ It has repeatedly promised to arm and train moderate rebels, but little has been delivered.¹⁹ Even so, as conceived, the White House's proposed train-and-equip program will likely be insufficient to replicate the moderate rebels' battlefield successes against ISIS in early 2014 or fill the governance and security vacuums the jihadists have exploited. The program, which would train 5,000 fighters per year, leaves the rebels vastly outnumbered by regime forces and would take five to six years to match ISIS' current numbers.²⁰

Not only does the coalition lack an effective strategy against ISIS in Syria, but its current strategy has set in motion developments among the Syrian insurgency and population that are likely to exacerbate the country's long-term political and security problems and further empower the extrem-

ists. The air campaign and US government positions and statements on the Syrian conflict threaten the strength and standing of moderate Syrian rebels who are likely the most effective potential tool against ISIS.

From the start, insurgents dependent on US support had been chronically underfunded and underresourced, placing them at a significant disadvantage to extremist groups with more dependable support streams, some of which came from Turkey, Gulf states, and private donors. After announcing its intention to train and equip Syrian fighters, the United States has insisted its mission will be fighting jihadists, not the regime.²¹ Syrian fighters and civilians in opposition-held areas view the regime as the primary threat, not ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN), and would likely see any fighters that target the jihadists but not the regime as mercenaries, not liberators. Already, the United States' failure to confront the regime directly or by proxy, and its insistence that Syrians focus on its enemies, not their own, has created perceptions among civilians and fighters alike that it is aligned with the regime.

In addition, the coalition has carried out air strikes against JAN, making Syria's moderate rebels JAN's enemies by association.²² This helped put these groups in a conflict with JAN that the United States itself had conceded they were not prepared for. JAN recognized that it was a US target, that US-aligned rebels would be forced to contribute to war against it, and that it had better target them before the promised US train-and-equip program materialized. In October 2014, JAN drove US-aligned rebel groups out of their strongholds in Idlib province.²³ Since then, a rebel group, once closely aligned with the United States, has dissolved itself and joined a coalition dominated by Islamists.²⁴

JAN is a jihadist, US-designated terrorist group and not a feasible, long-term Sunni partner against ISIS. However, JAN is a po-

tent enemy of ISIS. Therefore, provoking it to attack Syrian moderates weakens the effort against ISIS. Additionally, targeting JAN without ensuring that moderates are ready to replace it on the ground only serves to make these territories easy targets for ISIS.

Finally, the coalition air campaign has inevitably killed Syrian civilians, whom the regime also regularly targets.²⁵ Thus, from some Syrians' perspectives, the United States is fighting jihadists, wants Syrian moderate rebels to do the same, treats the regime as a marginal problem, and refuses to meaningfully help moderates fight either ISIS or the regime. The United States is fueling Syrian perceptions that it—and the local rebel groups it nominally backs—is helping the Syrian regime.²⁶

The Outlook in Iraq and Syria

The historical records in Iraq and Syria and an analysis of local actors' aims, priorities, and capabilities in both countries indicate that mobilizing and strengthening ISIS' Sunni rivals offers the best chance of weakening and ultimately defeating ISIS, without exacerbating the sectarian tensions that allowed it to emerge and attract recruits. In Iraq, the coalition strategy does, in theory, seek to incentivize and enable Iraqi Sunnis to fight ISIS. Admittedly, the mobilization of Iraqi Shia militias directly undermines this. However, it remains possible that Abadi and his allies could foreseeably grant Sunnis a greater political and economic role in Iraq (perhaps after the ISIS emergency abates) and demobilize some of the Shia militias. Also, the two major international players in Iraq, the United States and Iran (and indeed the Iraqi Shia) have no interest in repeating the ISIS experience in Anbar and Nineveh, though they likely disagree on how best to avoid that. If the dominant forces in Iraq conclude that the solution is greater repression of Sunnis, they are unlikely to defeat the jihadist insurgency.

In Syria, on the other hand, it is not even theoretically possible that the current US strategy would substantially weaken ISIS in the long run or address the root causes of its emergence. ISIS will probably survive

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At present, there does not appear to be an effective US plan to strengthen Syrian Sunnis against ISIS; on the contrary, the coalition campaign is undermining that goal.
—

and perhaps even thrive as long as its Sunni rivals are weak, and the Syrian state is politically toxic to much of the Syrian Sunni population. At present, there does not appear to be an effective US plan to strengthen Syrian Sunnis against ISIS; on the contrary, the coalition campaign is undermining that goal. Any Sunni-led force would need to be able to effectively fight both ISIS and the regime, as fighting one without the other is operationally not feasible. Fighting only one side would inevitably lead to the other side taking advantage of any diversion of rebel efforts and resources, effectively ensuring the moderates' defeat by both.

Options for Syria

Presently, the US policy debate over Syria revolves around three options. The first is the aforementioned train-and-equip program, which in its current proposed form will likely be ineffective. To have results against ISIS, it would need to be substantially augmented and accelerated and should enable rebels to defend themselves against regime air and artillery attacks as well. Also, rather than repeatedly and publicly highlighting the weakness of both the train-and-equip program and the moderate rebels, US officials should boost their allies' credibili-

ty and chances of success by tackling these weaknesses instead. A US-led Military Operations Command (MoC) based in Jordan has had some success in building strong moderate insurgent partners in southern Syria, who have been allowed to fight the regime and contain jihadists. The MoC strategy may be a model for a larger scale train-and-equip strategy at a national level.

The second option, championed by United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, focuses on “freezing” the fighting in Aleppo, where the regime and ISIS threaten to encircle rebel forces. In theory, this freeze would allow humanitarian aid to reach Aleppo’s besieged population and establish a framework for broader cessation of regime–rebel hostilities, freeing both to fight ISIS.²⁷ That is possible, but the regime may simply redeploy forces against rebels elsewhere, leaving them and ISIS to fight one another around Aleppo. If so, a “freeze” in Aleppo would strengthen the regime and weaken the rebellion across Syria. That would ultimately improve ISIS’ position. Rebel forces are therefore insisting that any freeze in Aleppo be accompanied by limits on regime redeployment. It is unclear that the regime would accept such an arrangement. The regime has treated previous ceasefires as localized affairs reached by besieging and starving populations and has simply used them to redeploy resources against rebels elsewhere, rather than as a means to a broader political process and settlement.²⁸

The United States and Turkey have reportedly discussed a third option: creating a “safe zone” along the Syrian–Turkish border, over which regime aircraft could not operate.²⁹ In the short run, this would offer moderate forces relief from regime air strikes and allow them to concentrate their efforts on fighting ISIS. In the longer run, it would allow rebels to establish governing institutions on Syrian territory, safe from the regime air and artillery attacks that undermined such

experiments in the past.³⁰ Ultimately, this is the most effective means of preventing ISIS’ reemergence in rebel territory. The “safe zone” idea is promising, but there is much ambiguity over how, where, by whom, and with which local Syrian partners it would be enforced. It is also not clear that the United States or Turkey would be willing to bear the costs and risks of open hostilities against the Syrian regime. Neither would likely be willing to shoulder the burden without the other’s cooperation.

The strategy most likely to result in the lasting defeat of ISIS in Syria—and therefore in Iraq as well—would combine elements of all three proposals outlined above: a robust, coalition-led train-and-equip and advisory program; a political negotiation track between rebels and the regime; and the creation and enforcement of a safe zone in rebel territory, in which opposition groups can organize, build institutions, govern territory, and present Syrians and the international community with a credible alternative to both the regime and ISIS. All three are prerequisites to a broad, fair political settlement between the regime and Sunni-led opposition. Only such a settlement would allow Syrians to focus on fighting ISIS and, ultimately, addressing the sectarian repression and political dysfunction that gave rise to it.

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Diversifying for a Green Future: The Case of the United Arab Emirates

By Muhammed Y. Idris and Joelle Thomas

Abstract

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is unlike any other Middle Eastern country in its vision for a clean energy future. This paper explores the factors that have contributed to the UAE's successful and burgeoning alternative energy movement. We argue that the abundance of capital from natural resources coupled with the vision of political leadership in the United Arab Emirates provides for an enabling environment in which policies for sustainable diversification away from hydrocarbons can be debated, codified, and implemented. This has led to creative public-private partnerships for power generation, attractive regulations for foreign investment, and an ambitious renewable energy initiative, which are hallmarks of an energy innovation strategy uncommon in settings where oil dominates the economic and political landscape.

Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is unlike any other Middle Eastern country in its vision for a clean energy future. Its status as a top oil producer has not enticed the UAE to rest on its resource-rich laurels. Instead, its creative public-private partnerships for power generation, attractive regulations for foreign investment, and ambitious renewable energy initiative are hallmarks of a national strategy to carve a

global competitive position for the national economy in a setting where oil dominates the economic and political landscape. The UAE government generates 80 percent of its revenue from hydrocarbons, and the country has one of the highest rates of per capita energy consumption in the world. Yet, rapid economic and demographic growth over the past decade continue to strain the country's electricity grid, partly run on imported natural gas. Furthermore,

heavy dependence on oil exports and costly public subsidy programs threaten the stability of federal government revenues. This context creates an environment in which a diversification of energy sources is critical for the UAE's energy security and economic outlook, to which the UAE's alternative energy program offers promising solutions.

This paper explores the factors that have contributed to the UAE's successful and burgeoning alternative energy movement. What factors have contributed to the progression of the UAE into a hub for renewable energy growth in the region? First, we explore the opportunities presented by its natural resource wealth for promoting domestic development in key sectors, including energy. Second, we consider the role of leadership and vision, notably by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan and his descendants, in translating the vision into action. Lastly, we examine elements of an enabling environment that has attracted investment into the renewable energy sector, including human capital, institutions, and government-led public-private partnerships, with special attention to Masdar and its parent, Mubadala Development Company.

Natural Resource Wealth

Like other states in the Gulf, the United Arab Emirates is a key player on the world energy scene. It accounts for over 7 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, making it the fifth largest oil producer in the Middle East and third in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).¹ It also accounts for 3 percent of the planet's natural gas reserves, putting it in the top five natural gas suppliers in the region. Conservative estimates suggest that over 85 percent of domestic economic activity in the UAE can be attributed to oil exports and over 80 percent of the government's revenue comes from the hydrocarbon sector.² These natural resource endowments allow the UAE to remain a tax-free jurisdiction, which attracts a high quality expatri-

ate workforce as well as international firms that contribute to development. Moreover, the UAE's capital endowments are sufficient enough to allow it to maintain a long-term investment horizon, a prerequisite for the development of renewable energy technologies and projects.

While many would argue that natural resource wealth allows for such an aggressive diversification strategy, existing frameworks allow the UAE to triumph in its energy ambitions in spite of its resource endowments. One needs to look no further than its GCC neighbors to see that while many states have similar endowments, few have significantly contributed to the promotion of renewable energy at a global scale. Saudi Arabia, for example, accounts for 15.9 percent of world oil reserves and over 90 percent of government revenues are from hydrocarbons.³ Despite announcing a move to build over fifty gigawatts of nuclear and solar energy

The abundance of capital from natural resources, coupled with the vision of political leadership in the UAE, creates an enabling environment where policies for sustainable diversification away from hydrocarbons can be debated, codified, and implemented.

capacity in 2012, the projects continue to be delayed, and no nuclear power plants have been constructed.⁴

As the development of alternative energies attenuates the value of traditional hydrocarbons on which MENA (Middle East and North Africa) states are largely dependent, this is a rational response. Further-

more, the abundance of natural resources tends to be associated with a decline in economic competitiveness and corrupt institutions designed to funnel revenue from endowments into the elite coffers—a phenomenon commonly referred to as the “resource curse.”

The UAE has seen significant growth in its relatively short history. This growth has been coupled with the development of world-class institutions and suggests that there are other factors that are important to consider when thinking about UAE leadership on the renewable energy front.

Leadership and Vision

The late visionary Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan understood that diversification of government revenue sources beyond oil rents would be essential for long-run development when he helped found the country in 1971. He established investment funds for oil rents—earmarking money for domestic investments in education, healthcare, transportation, and infrastructure—but also sought to maximize gains by investing abroad. From a nation of less than 500,000 people, he encouraged the robust growth of the manufacturing and services sectors, making energy sources and capital readily available, reducing barriers to trade, and establishing free economic zones. Keeping true to his vision for serving the people of the UAE, he encouraged socially responsible growth. “Every factory small or big must serve the Union. Every project should be directed to the welfare of society. If this is achieved, the community will experience happiness for the synergy accomplished among each other.”⁵ This leadership is also manifested in the promotion of women in leadership, especially on the environment and sustainability fronts, and can be found in policies that aim to promote private sector innovation.

An Enabling Environment

The abundance of capital from natural resources, coupled with the vision of political leadership in the UAE, creates an enabling environment where policies for sustainable diversification away from hydrocarbons can be debated, codified, and implemented. These programs focus on investments in human capital and providing an institutional context designed to incentivize innovation through public-private partnerships for research and development. In what follows, we focus on policies and projects that have allowed the UAE to successfully attract private investments in renewable energy during a period of high oil prices and regional political instability.

Human Capital Development

For the UAE to meet and exceed its renewable energy targets, they must be able to identify, train, and attract the human capital necessary for research and development, as well as management of advanced technologies, systems, and facilities. By some estimates, this will include 25,000 jobs requiring technical experience in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics by 2030.⁶ As this growing need has been acknowledged by analysts and pundits, the political leadership within the UAE has made a concerted effort to address any shortfall in qualified human capital at all levels.

At the highest level, this includes the establishment of various forums and exhibitions related to renewable energy, such as the World Future Energy Summit (WFES), the largest conference of its kind on renewable energy, water, and sustainability through which public and private sector firms and institutions discuss, debate, and showcase cutting-edge solutions in the renewable energy space. For example, this year’s summit included over 32,000 attendees from 170 countries and 900 energy companies from 47 countries.⁷ Venues like WFES showcase the UAE as a world leader

in renewable energy and offers opportunities to attract established high-quality professionals to renewable energy. Moreover, the UAE has made investments in establishing energy-related research and development centers with specialized graduate degree programs to build domestic human capital. One good example of this is the Masdar Institute, a joint venture between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Masdar.

Institutional Context

Above and beyond its investments in human capital, public and private sector actors also recognize the need for an institutional context that spurs innovation in renewable energy. In the UAE, this includes, among other things, the creation of enabling institutions and laws, including the establishment of specialized entities, to incentivize research and development in both the public and private sector. One good example of this effort at work in the public space is the institutionalization of innovative practices and tools by requiring government entities to reduce spending and dedicate savings to research and development. This mandate is broad by design, and it funds internal and external programs such as national training programs and innovation incubators.

The UAE has further institutionalized its vision for a clean energy future by creating designated institutions for carrying out the vision. Masdar is entirely devoted to the development of sustainable low-carbon energy projects and manages the Masdar Initiative—the UAE’s hallmark multibillion dollar investment in renewable and alternative energy and clean technology. Masdar supports innovations in clean energy technologies from research and development to commercialization and scale-up by housing laboratories for new technology research and financing new solutions. With an initial focus on concentrating solar power,

Masdar will continue to support projects in solar photovoltaic, wind, waste-to-energy, and solar cooling.

Masdar is perhaps best known for its headquarters at Masdar City, the world’s

Masdar is perhaps best known for its headquarters at Masdar City, the world’s first zero-carbon, zero-waste, car-free city, which uses 20 percent of the energy used by a city fueled on conventional energy of the same size. The city has the potential to house 1,500 clean-tech businesses.

first zero-carbon, zero-waste, car-free city, which uses 20 percent of the energy used by a city fueled on conventional energy of the same size.⁸ The city has the potential to house 1,500 clean-tech businesses—creating a renewable energy research hub of universities and research facilities developing, piloting, and commercializing new renewable technologies. While there are many other initiatives for promoting private sector involvement within the UAE, we conclude our case study of the UAE’s energy diversification policy by focusing on the creative public-private partnerships that have enabled the state to pursue its ambitious renewable energy targets with the support of the private sector.

Public-Private Partnerships

In an approach that differs from many other MENA countries, the UAE has shaped its energy sector through the involvement of the private sector. Even in traditional oil and gas exploration and

production, the UAE has a history of partnering with international oil companies—including BP, Oxy, Shell, and Total—for the riskiest stages of oil development, representing the government’s ability to anticipate and manage risk, work effectively with external partners, and galvanize international expertise. Similarly, in conventional electricity generation and water desalination, the UAE has partnered with international power project developers—including GDF Suez (France), SembCorp (Singapore), KEPCO (Korea), and Tokyo Electric Power (Japan)—to attract over \$17 billion in foreign investment and assume the risks of operating and maintaining the power plants.

Policies to encourage foreign investment and involvement have propelled the country’s ranking on the World Bank’s Doing Business index to 33 out of 183 for 2012.⁹ For example, in Dubai, companies incorporated in free economic zones enjoy 100 percent foreign ownership and expatriation of capital and profits, full exemption from import/export income and corporate taxes, and low-cost operations coupled with a one-stop shop service that eliminates red tape and facilitates quick and easy business registration. Equally interesting work is being done to encourage innovation within the private sector. One policy that promotes innovation is the designation of innovation zones governed by special rules and regulations, including foreign ownership, tax exemptions, and labor assistance. These terms have made the UAE an attractive destination for establishing headquarters for research and development operations.

These services are particularly salient for renewable energy developers interested in benefiting from the laboratory research and development facilities in Masdar City, which simultaneously serves as an incubator of new technologies. Commercial banks are also attracted by the UAE’s renewable energy projects; the 100 megawatt Shams

1 concentrated solar power plant benefited from financing from a syndicate of international commercial banks, which included BNP Paribas and Société Générale, alongside the National Bank of Abu Dhabi and

Although these public funds drive investment into the UAE’s burgeoning renewable energy sector, having the government as the main driver of alternative energy investment comes with disadvantages.

is supported in partnership with developers Abengoa Solar and Total.

Despite the attractive investment opportunities for private firms at Masdar, the lion’s share of renewable energy development is financed by the UAE’s four investment companies—all majority-owned by the state. These government-backed entities include the Mubadala Development Company, the International Petroleum Investment Company, the Abu Dhabi Investment Council, and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority is one of the world’s largest sovereign wealth funds with \$627 billion in assets invested in infrastructure and development projects within the UAE and abroad, including in conventional and renewable energy projects. The investment groups are able to channel government funds into infrastructure projects through effective partnering with the private sector at the global level. For example, Masdar Power, a Masdar subsidiary, has established a joint venture with Spanish-based engineering firm SENER to develop, demonstrate, and deploy next-generation, con-

centrating solar power technologies.

Although these public funds drive investment into the UAE's burgeoning renewable energy sector, having the government as the main driver of alternative energy investment comes with disadvantages. Government control of bidding processes are often plagued by special interests leading to economically inefficient outcomes. For example, project developers bidding on construction projects of solar generation plants are required to use Masdar-developed technology instead of their own, leading firms to invest more in politics than innovation. Oil and gas developers with existing relationships with the state are also cautious, forgoing opportunities to bid on solar projects in favor of maintaining a relationship with Abu Dhabi and access to the energy sources.

Despite these challenges, the UAE's pivot towards green energy would not have been possible without government support. New renewable technologies have high initial costs, and a long time is needed to recover the investment. Therefore, they require regulatory and financial support from government at the initial phases. Government support will be necessary to take new products through development and decrease the cost as a result of economies of scale.¹⁰

Finally, in order to promote a real pivot towards a green energy future, the UAE must roll back subsidies on power and water. These subsidies give citizens the impression that both are abundant resources, promoting overconsumption as opposed to environmental conscientiousness and conservation. Currently, the UAE spends about \$2,500 per person in subsidies for fossil fuel consumption, making it eighth in the world for largest subsidies.¹¹ Low oil prices in early 2015 present an opportunity to reduce subsidies, which is both good policy and sends a message to the public that conservation is critical for a green energy future.

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The Arab Uprisings and Their External Dimensions: Bringing Migration In

By Tamirace Fakhoury

Abstract

The 2011 Arab uprisings and their aftermath have highlighted the links between transnational and local politics.¹ Still, the extent to which these transformations have diasporic dimensions has commanded little policy and research attention.² This article puts forward observations as to whether—and if so, how—we can assess the impact of Arab migration on the post-2011 transformations in the Middle East. It draws on the findings I have reached as a result of my field research focusing on the activist politics of Egyptian, Syrian, Libyan, and Yemeni communities since 2011. The research was carried out in the United States, Germany, and Lebanon. Online interviews were also carried out with activists in England. The article calls for factoring in the consequences of migration on post-Arab Spring political change through a twofold prism. On one hand, Arab world out-migration dynamics and diaspora politics affect the balance of power among contending factions in Arab nation-states. On the other, states that receive migrants from the Arab world become de facto players in the Arab geopolitical landscape. Migration generates political linkages, making it impossible to disentangle local configurations of power from transboundary and global ones.

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Growing Prevalence and Influence of Arab Migration Trends

In recent years, Arab emigration has been growing. Arab expatriates constitute approximately 6 percent of the local population in the countries across North

Africa and the Levant, a percentage that is twice as high as the world average.³ Notwithstanding such significant patterns of out-migration, the impact of Arab emigration on domestic political systems has not been operationalized. Since the nine-

teenth century, nationals from the Arab world have migrated—for predominantly economic and political reasons—to various destination regions, namely to the Gulf, Europe, North America, and Latin America. To date, we know little about their orientations and activities.⁴ For instance, we do not know much at all about the profile of migrant categories that have sought to strengthen pro-regime networks and those that have sought to expose the cracks in their origin countries' regimes.

Contemporary scholarship has established interrelationships between migration and politics.⁵ Immigrant communities affect transformations “back home”

Both political dissenters and regime supporters in exile have historically sought to forge a politics of claims-making: dissenters in exile have promoted anti-regime activities through lobbying, protests, publications, etc. Regime supporters have sought to reinforce pro-regime loyalties through cooperative channels with their homeland's incumbents or with other transnational loyalist groups..

through external voting, the funding of political agendas, or return migration. They also circulate either pro-democratic or pro-authoritarian norms.⁶

Still, for all the debate on the relationship between migration and politics, schol-

ars and policymakers often pay little attention to the linkages between Arab migration and the politics of democratization or authoritarianism.

Though the picture remains blurred, both political dissenters and regime supporters in exile have historically sought to forge a politics of claims-making: dissenters in exile have promoted anti-regime activities through lobbying, protests, publications, etc.⁷ Regime supporters have sought to reinforce pro-regime loyalties through cooperative channels with their homeland's incumbents or with other transnational loyalist groups.

Arab regimes have themselves drawn on the “migration card” to reinforce their power base. Governmental institutions in Egypt or Morocco have sought to retain power over their diasporas by externalizing a state-defined form of Islam, through financing mosques and Muslim associations abroad.⁸ Countries such as Syria, Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia have forced opposition actors to leave or have kept dissenters in the diasporic pool at bay.

Diverse Forms of Influential Arab Diasporic Activisms

The 2011 Arab wave of contention and its aftermath have had marked diasporic features and ramifications whose significance ought to be assessed.⁹ Here, I sketch tentative observations arising from my field research since 2011.

My research shows that those communities engaged in a wide repertoire of online and offline activism. Libyans in the United States and in England have sought to provide alternative media accounts of events in Libya. They have carried out teach-ins and presentations on the history of “Libya under Ghaddafi.” They have further provided “contact points” for locals in case of internet breakdown. Some have returned to Libya to provide humanitarian assistance or assist refugees along the Tunisian-Syrian

border. Many have established diaspora-based civil society organizations (CSOs) that have engaged in activities such as gauging expatriates' perceptions on constitution writing.

Egyptian activists helped in various ways to sustain the momentum of contention in Tahrir Square. For instance, as Egyptian authorities disabled the Internet for five days beginning on 28 January 2011, activists in the United States contributed to circumventing the crackdown on social media by maintaining contact with locals through landlines and diffusing information through other means. In 2012, Egyptian expatriates were actively engaged in orchestrating the global campaign for external voting rights. Since then, a myriad of epistemic and artistic communities in America and Germany have collaborated with Egyptian locals in codesigning projects geared towards safeguarding “the 2011 legacy.”

Although Yemeni diasporic communities had been relatively unmobilized in the last decades, they experienced a temporary upsurge of activism in the United Kingdom and the United States when the Arab Spring began. For instance, activists based in the United Kingdom orchestrated aid campaigns to support local opposition actors during the 2011 uprising, engaged with policymakers, and deliberated on avenues to participate in the 2013–2014 Yemeni National Dialogue Conference. In the United States, for instance, Yemeni youth activists staged information campaigns on ways to participate in domestic affairs through education, civil activism, and political leadership. According to some of my respondents, it is hoped that empowering communities living outside of Yemen may serve as a catalyst for longer term political transformations.

Despite Syria's complex conflict dynamics, Syrian communities in the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States

have set up initiatives to count the dead and report human rights violations to international organizations. Many have lobbied in capitals such as Washington and London

Both local and diasporic political factions have established contact with sympathizers in the diaspora during the 2011 uprisings and their aftermath. Actors—be they secular, Islamist, or supporters of the ancien régime—have sought to shift the scale of contention to regional and transnational avenues.

for more articulate foreign policy stances vis-à-vis the war-ravaged country. Though diasporic momentum has subsided since 2013, Syrian activists in cities such as Berlin and Hamburg seek to reinvigorate what they qualify as a “waning diasporic activism.” They stage pilot projects and workshops with a view to debating which forms of cultural and political participation may yield results for their embattled homeland.

Still, assuming that diasporas have engaged only in forms of political resistance provides a reductionist picture. The nature and scope of diasporic interaction with domestic politics remains very diverse, and a systematic appraisal of its various forms is needed.

My research shows that both local and diasporic political factions have established contact with sympathizers in the diaspora during the 2011 uprisings and their aftermath. Actors—be they secular, Islamist, or supporters of the ancien régime—have

sought to shift the scale of contention to regional and transnational avenues. Still, we know little about the “transnational migrant circuits”¹⁰ through which such contacts are woven and about which host governments have been receptive to their politics of claims-making. The extent to which transnational Islam has cross-border roots has been well documented.¹¹ Yet, the literature is scarce in findings on whether—and if so, how—secular Arab migrant groups have crafted their politics of dissent prior to the 2011 uprisings. Also, while many articles have documented how contenders in diaspora have cheered the 2011 revolutions, the activities of pro-regime and Islamist expatriate actors received less media attention during the same time period.

It is worth adding that diaspora politics shapes Arab political regimes in various convoluted—albeit underresearched—ways. For instance, as the Tunisian case reveals, political trends within diaspora communities have had bearing through external voting on the local balance of power between secular and Islamist groups.¹² Economic remittances that diasporas send to locals may strengthen resistance but also provoke reprisals. My conversations show that when Egyptian expatriates fund local projects of political resistance, this spurs the regime to crack down on dissidents.

The Country of Reception and the Impact of New and Longstanding Refugees

Notwithstanding forms of Arab activism in exilic spheres, the 2011 uprisings have generated new waves of refugees and impacted the international governance of migration. The country of reception has become a key agent shaping the terrain of Arab politics through its own policies.

The politics of hospitality (or lack thereof) that receiving contexts adopt, vis-à-vis categories of refugees and political exiles,

indirectly impacts the political landscape back home. It may signal legitimation or contempt for transition Arab governments and for key political actors in the region. For instance, political refugees escaping the ongoing turmoil in Syria, Iraq, or Egypt have been welcomed, marginalized, or tracked in accordance to their sect and political orientations and in accordance with the extent to which the country of reception sympathizes or shuns the new regimes that have replaced old autocracies. In an effort to mend ties with the Sisi regime in Egypt, Qatar exiled Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leaders in 2014 that sought refuge in Qatar following the fall of the Morsi government. In the wake of a deepening “post-spring” cleavage between Shiites and Sunnis, the expulsion of Lebanese Shiites from the United Arab Emirates in March 2015 sends an ominous message to Hezbollah regarding its military role in Syria. It further highlights that securitizing migration has become a central feature of governance.

The policies of the host society may further dampen or exacerbate the perceptions of marginality that exiled actors harbor over time, impacting the way these actors draw on their receiving context as a platform for “long-distance nationalism.” The selection procedures and forms of hospitality that host societies practice, vis-à-vis post-Arab Spring refugees, may be expected to shape their political consciousness and forms of mobilization. For example, refugee inflows to Germany from Syria and Iraq have lately caused contentious debates on their integration into the urban social fabric. This has coincided with the rise of the right-wing Pegida movement in Dresden, making the issue a hotbed public item.

Ambivalent and ad hoc practices of host societies may also add another layer of complexity to the protracted nature of post-2011 conflicts and their spillovers. In

Lebanon, where society is divided along pro-Asad or anti-Asad sympathies, the incorporation of Syrian refugees in different communities has been conditioned by their background and political allegiances.

Spillovers of Post-Uprisings Political Crises through the Migration Lens

In yet another perspective, countries of reception have lately become the theater for some post-uprisings political crises. Migrant groups have replicated domestic conflicts through the prism of protests and clashes in cityscapes such as Hamburg, Celle, and Hannover.¹³ In the context of the Syrian conflict and the ascent of ISIS, immigrant forms of protest have refracted the various ways through which politicized forms of religion (e.g., Sunni Islam versus Alevism in post-2011 Syria) acquire new political salience in diaspora. Confrontations pitting Islamist groups against Yazidis and Kurds in Hamburg in light of ISIS attacks on Mosul and Kobane are a case in point. In October 2014, for example, the Kurdish community organized a demonstration in the vicinity of a Sunni mosque in Hamburg, denouncing ISIS offensives in the northern parts of Iraq and Syria. It was reported back then that Kurdish demonstrators ended up clashing with so-called “radical Islamists,” conjuring fears that the conflict “back home” had spread to Hamburg.

Policy Implications of Arab Migration

The Arab state remains the primary terrain for the reenactment of political and conflict dynamics between contenders for power. Yet, fully delimiting the theatrical stage of Arab uprisings requires looking beyond “bounded communities” and state-confined concepts of the political. For instance, gaining insights into the way Tunisian social movements drove change in 2011 requires reconstructing their alliances with Tunisia’s diasporic spheres. Further, it

is unrealistic to study the terrain of Islamist politics in today’s Syria without accounting for their cross-border and diasporic roots.

We are called upon to account for the myriad ways through which migration concomitantly interacts with Arab state structures and with global politics. Arab world diasporas often reproduce the same cleavages along which local Arab communities are organized. They affect inter- and

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Arab world diasporas often reproduce the same cleavages along which local Arab communities are organized.

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intra-state conflicts through sending remittances and transmitting political norms back home. They project overseas forms of political consciousness bound to affect their host society’s social landscape, foreign policy, and international relations.

However, it would be simplistic to dismiss diasporic spheres as platforms for conflict exacerbation. They are rather interlocutors for gauging the interdependencies between the local and global. Also, the various ways through which diasporas such as Tunisian communities have promoted democratization should not be discounted.¹⁴

Any policy discussion related to “post-spring” transformations cannot but develop a migration-related agenda. Questions with which experts are called to grapple are manifold: How have different Arab emigration waves affected the local balance of power between regime and opposition actors? Has out-migration benefited or backfired on local authoritarianism? Has it drained the reservoir of pro-democratic resources from the Arab state? To what extent have migrants rearticulated forms of political sectarianism? What are the circum-

stances under which migration flows and their governance affect the “post-spring” geopolitical field, making it impossible to separate local from transboundary drivers of change?

Such are some of the questions that ought to guide the international debate on Arab migration, one that considers the importance of migrant communities beyond security and labor prisms.

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A Corridor for Egypt's Economic Development

By Farouk El-Baz

Abstract

Since the dawn of history, Egypt's population has been confined to the Nile Valley and its Delta, less than 6 percent of its total area. During the past century, the population increased from 15 to 80 million. It is estimated that by 2050, it will top 140 million. Thus, there is a dire need to increase the livable area. The proposed Development Corridor opens twice as much land for expansion just west of the inhabited region. It continues for 1,200 km from the Mediterranean Sea coastline west of Alexandria to the border with Sudan. Its basic components are an eight-lane highway, a railroad for transport of goods and people, an electricity line to be powered by solar energy, and a water pipeline from Lake Nasser behind the Aswan High Dam. A preliminary study indicates that the Corridor would require \$24 billion to be completed in ten years. It adds 10.5 million acres of land for agriculture, new communities, industrial parks, entertainment complexes, transportation, tourism, etc. Most significantly, it would employ millions of Egyptian youths and open new vistas for them to innovate and forge a better future.

Throughout history, civilization has blossomed in any region where a people's collective action has resulted in: (1) production of excess food for the growth of bodies and minds; (2) division of labor in a fair and organized manner; and (3) comfortable living in urban areas, where individuals would be able to create and innovate.

In Egypt today, all three components are largely missing. The uprising in January 2011 and the upheavals that followed proved a general sense of dissatisfaction and a rejection of the status quo. The situation on the ground today falls short of assuring younger generations of a better future. It will not change on the ground unless steps

are taken to assure better development schemes that would benefit large segments of the fast-growing population. The proposed “Development Corridor” provides an innovative solution to this problem.

The first requirement for expansion outside of the Nile banks and its Delta is adequate transportation.¹ Since the establishment of the Egyptian state over 5,000 years ago, the Nile has served as an integral mechanism for transporting people, news, products, armies, and tax collectors—all hallmarks of a unified, sustainable state. Today, it is not possible to foresee the establishment of a modern network of transportation systems within the confines of the Nile Valley and its Delta, because that would significantly reduce precious agricultural land. Thus, it is imperative to open new vistas for expansion outside of the inhabited strip.

The Corridor introduces a plan for a superhighway along a strip of land just west of the inhabited, heavily populated areas of Egypt that are currently centered on the banks of the Nile. Such an initiative would limit urban encroachment upon agricultural land and open a myriad of opportunities for new communities close to overpopulated towns. It opens unlimited space for new schools and training centers, industrial zones, trade centers, and tourism. It would provide virgin territory for development initiatives in every field. This in itself gives hope to the new generations of Egyptians for a better future. It represents the best possible use of the country’s land resources.

This particular strip of land was chosen because of its unique natural characteristics. It is basically flat with a gentle northward slope from west of the southern city of Aswan to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The lack of topographic prominences makes it easy to pave and build upon. It is also devoid of east–west crossing valleys that are prone to flashfloods, as in the case of the eastern Nile bank. It passes close to

vast tracts of fertile soils that are amenable to reclamation; most of such regions have potential for groundwater resources. This strip is also comparatively free of sandy areas and is not crossed by lines of shifting dunes as in the case of regions farther west.

The proposed Corridor includes the following: (1) a superhighway with the highest international standards at 1,200 km in length, going from west of Alexandria to the southern border of Egypt; (2) at least twelve east–west branches, approximately 800 km in length, to connect the highway

Such an initiative would limit urban encroachment upon agricultural land and open a myriad of opportunities for new communities close to overpopulated towns.

to high-density population centers along the way; (3) a railroad for fast transport which runs parallel to the superhighway; (4) a water pipeline from Lake Nasser for human use of freshwater; and (5) an electricity line to supply energy during the early phases of development.

1. North–South Highway

As previously mentioned, the main superhighway runs parallel to the Nile River from Egypt’s Mediterranean Sea coastline to its border with Sudan. Its distance from the western scarp of the Nile Valley varies from ten to eighty kilometers, based on the nature of the crossed land. It begins near El-Alamein, perhaps at El-Hamman, for the establishment of a new international port. Egypt requires a technologically advanced port to serve future needs of importation and exportation as well as increased trade with Europe and the ex-



pansion of maritime transport worldwide. In the meantime, the northern branch of the superhighway extends to Alexandria and its present port and airport; it also extends eastward through the northern strip of the Nile Delta. The superhighway ends near the border with Sudan to form a link between the two countries, as well as farther south in Africa.

These characteristics would require a private sector organization to manage the

road and its maintenance, as well as to be responsible for manning the toll stations, providing emergency services, and maintaining the utility of the superhighway. Naturally, such an organization requires a specific mandate and clear laws and regulations that would assure its safety, authority, and utility.

2. East-West Connectors

Branches of the main highway are

roughly oriented east–west and should be established prior to the north–south highway to allow for timely urban expansion. They are designed to connect the north–south highway to all major centers of population; similarly, they assure easy transport between the main cities of Egypt and between the main agricultural production areas and the outside world. As shown in Figure 1, these include the following from north to south:

Alexandria Branch: This branch connects the main north–south highway to the road leading to Alexandria as well as to its port and airport. The eastern terminus of this branch would connect with roads leading to the northern cities and towns of the Nile Delta coastal zone.

Delta Branch: This connects the superhighway with the heart of the Nile Delta, particularly at the city of Tanta. The branch would be optimized through the construction of an elevated, new road within the Delta to limit encroachment on fertile land. It would also require a bridge built over the Rosetta Branch of the Nile River. From its terminal point at Tanta, it links with presently existing roads to locations throughout the region.

Cairo Branch: This branch connects the superhighway with the Cairo–Alexandria road and eastward to the densely populated region around Cairo. This would also allow the use of cargo land transport between Alexandria and Suez as an alternative to the Suez Canal when the need arises.

Faiyum Branch: This connector would be ideal for future solar energy generation as it lies along a flat plain that is part of a perfectly level, sand-free limestone surface. It would cover an area equivalent to over 2,500 square kilometers, which would be sufficient for generating more than all the energy needs of Egypt via solar power alone.

Bahariya Branch: This branch would improve the existing road to a series of oases

to allow for more robust development of the iron deposits and other natural resources within that large natural geological depression.

Minya Branch: This city has been one of Egypt’s major population centers since ancient times. However, little development has reached its shores because of the centralization of projects in and around Cairo. It has a university and can generate numerous avenues for local and regional development if it is better connected to the national market.

Asyut Branch: This case is identical to the former. Additionally, Asyut has an airport that could be upgraded for international transport. It is also the end point of the road that leads to the New Valley Governorate.

Qena Branch: This connector would open agricultural development south of the Nile bend and all the way to the Western Desert plateau. Its plain originated as fan deposits of streams that were more active during wetter climates in the geological past; therefore, groundwater resources potentially underlie it.

Luxor Branch: This branch would allow for unlimited growth of tourism and recreation on the plateau that overlooks the largest concentration of ancient Egyptian archaeological sites, which constitute a third of all the world heritage sites.

Kom Ombo-Aswan Branch: Here, over 735,000 acres of reclaimable fertile land lie west of the Nile. The region once hosted channels that brought in water from Eastern Desert highlands. Segments of these ancient watercourses were recently revealed by radar images from space. These former rivers deposited fertile soils more than three meters in thickness. The Development Corridor, located along its western border, would link the vast region to the rest of the country, both for attracting labor and distributing products and goods to the rest of the country.

Toshka Branch: The superhighway goes

through a depression, where a canal from Lake Nasser has created several lakes. The area is devoid of an adequate transportation infrastructure. The superhighway would provide all necessary mechanisms to transport people, material, and products to and from the region.

Lake Nasser Branch: This connector is at a site that is amenable to the development of a major fishing port along the shores of Lake Nasser to the north (downstream) of Abu Simbel. Plentiful fish from the lake could be transported to distribution centers throughout Egypt.

3. Modern Railway

Egypt's railway system was among the first in the world. It was established in 1854 and has been somewhat upgraded since then. However, a much more advanced railroad system is necessary to serve present and future development needs, and a rail track parallel to the superhighway would serve that purpose. That north-south track would be connected to others along the east-west roads to assure ease of transport of goods and people throughout the country.

The superhighway ends at the southern border of Egypt, a short segment of road would connect it to the shores of Lake Nasser at the northern border of Sudan. Presently, there is a railroad that connects the border at Wadi Halfa with towns of eastern Sudan along the Red Sea. Thus, it would facilitate transport between Egypt and the main cities and towns of Sudan, and potentially to other countries in East Africa.

4. Water Pipeline

No long-term development could be assured without the presence of freshwater. Several areas along the path of the east-west connectors promise the existence of groundwater, which could be used for agricultural purposes. However, a pipeline of freshwater from Lake Nasser is required to run the length of the superhighway for

human consumption at fuel stations, hotels, and other areas requiring water. A pipe of approximately one meter in diameter would likely provide the necessary resources.

The total length of the required pipeline is about 1,100 km. This is less than half that of the Great Man-Made River system in Libya. In that case, the main pipeline is four meters in diameter, is buried under seven meters of soil, and carries water from numerous wells in the south to the coastal zone with a total length of more than 2,000 km. In comparison, the proposed pipeline is neither technically difficult nor economically taxing to accomplish.

Freshwater would need to be pumped from the surface level of Lake Nasser up to the plateau, in several stages totaling approximately 300 meters; it would flow northward along the topographic gradient without any consumption of energy. Water flow down-gradient might even be usable to produce mechanical energy to generate electricity.

5. Electricity Line

Initial phases of the proposed Corridor require energy for manufacturing, lighting, and refrigeration, among others. Therefore, the project requires a line to supply electricity. At the outset, power could be supplied by any one of the generation plants along the Nile Valley as deemed appropriate. In the meantime, urban communities, industrial plants, and agricultural farms would be encouraged to utilize solar and/or wind energy resources as much as possible. However, in a later phase, solar-generated power could be a main source of energy all along the Corridor as well as throughout Egypt.

Project Benefits

It is important to evaluate the pros and cons of such a massive project. In this case, it is difficult to think of any drawbacks from environmental or socioeconomic points of

view. There is, however, a question of how long it would take to secure a return on the investment of such elaborate infrastructure.

This question can only be answered by a detailed economic feasibility study, best undertaken by expert consulting companies or organizations with inputs from global the academic community.

That being said, it is possible to list the benefits of the proposed project as follows:

1. Arresting dangerous urban encroachment on precious agricultural land throughout Egypt
2. Opening new land for land reclamation and the production of food
3. Establishing new areas for urban and industrial growth near large cities
4. Creating vast numbers of job opportunities for the country's prosperity
5. Reducing environmental deterioration throughout the Nile Valley
6. Relieving the existing road network from heavy and dangerous transport
7. Initiating new ventures in tourism and ecotourism all along the Corridor
8. Connecting the Lake Nasser region and its projects with the rest of the country
9. Creating a large physical environment for economic projects by the private sector
10. Involving the population at large in the development of the country
11. Offering Egypt's youth an opportunity to take part in rebuilding their country
12. Focusing people's energy on productive initiatives that would lead to a better future

Method of Execution

The proposed Development Corridor concerns the expansion of the living area in Egypt parallel to the Nile Delta in the north and all along the Nile River in the south. It would provide numerous opportunities for the development of new com-

munities, agriculture, industry, trade, and tourism along a strip of land, at least 2,000 km long, close to the presently inhabited areas.

This is particularly timely because the country is presently facing insurmountable problems of overcrowding in all major cities combined with the lack of opportunities for younger generations. Due to the financial difficulties facing the Egyptian government today, such a project would ideally be led by the private sector, perhaps through local Arab and international investors.

It might be feasible to initiate a corporate body that would issue bonds—first in Egypt, and then in the Arab world—followed by a call to international banks and investment institutions. Perhaps the guiding principle would be that no profit would be expected until the completion of the infrastructure, which some experts suggest would require ten years. That said, there might be better scenarios to be put forward by knowledgeable people in this regard.

Finally, it would be advisable to involve the youth of Egypt in the process. University students could compete for prizes to recommend projects on either side of the east–west roads. High school students could be given opportunities to compete in naming these east–west branches and the new towns and villages to be established along them. In having large numbers of people become involved in the project, it would have a better chance for being perceived as a “national project:” one that the whole society would own and protect.

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ical Society of America has established an award for desert research in his name.

Endnotes

1 NB: All references to research that contributed to informing this project were gathered under the auspices of Dr. Mohamed Fathi Sakr, the National Project Director for Development Planning Division Support at the Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development. All facts were delivered to a Ministerial Committee convened by the Prime Minister in 2006 (including the Ministers of Economic Development, Transportation, the Environment, Electricity, and International Cooperation). The government's internal document, submitted by the group of experts, was completed in late 2009. The report (in Arabic) has not been published.

The Hijacking of Algerian Identity

By Kheireddine Bekkai

Abstract

Over half a century after its independence from France, Algeria is still struggling with its identity. The long French colonial occupation left Algerians with many questions regarding their language, their history, and their overall sense of belonging. Algerian identity has been defined in various ways throughout the occupation and after the independence and is still being redefined at present. This article focuses on how the successive leaders in Algeria have dealt and are dealing with the issue of identity in the country. It will also narrate the steps that have been taken in order to fabricate and implement an Algerian identity, also shedding light on recent developments.

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Both French and post-independence Algerian rulers imposed a simplistic, narrow definition of identity on Algeria. These choices were dictated by ideologies associated with colonization and Pan-Arabism, marginalizing other key components of Algerian identity. In doing so, both the colonizer and the dictator were able to effectively maintain power in pitting cultural, linguistic, and ethnic facets of Algerian identity against the other. This strategy generated a certain complex vis-à-vis certain languages—especially, but not limited to, French. French is considered by Algerians to be the language of sciences and

mathematics because of its past (and to an extent, current) prominence as the language of instruction of such subjects in the Algerian education system.¹ This perception is bolstered by the notion that there is a greater amount of information on the subjects available in French. This is to be compared with Arabic, which has consistently been taught and perceived as the language of philosophy and literature. Tamazight, for its part, was rarely taught until the late 1980s.

Government officials in Algeria have long pursued a unique policy in building a national unifying identity for their citi-

zens. This initiative began as a reaction to the long and bloody colonization Algeria suffered at the hands of the French, who invaded Algeria in July 1830 and declared it a French territory in 1848. In order to establish control over this vast land—a region nearly four times the size of the French mainland—the French authorities began sending tens of thousands of French citizens to Algeria with numerous incentives, including free swaths of fertile land and no taxes.

These events marked the start of fundamental change for Algeria: the birth of *L'Algérie Française*. The French authorities went to great lengths to engineer a new identity for the natives of this North African addition to their extensive empire. A major component of this strategy was to legally replace the local languages of Arabic and Tamazight, the latter of which is spoken by the native Amazigh community, with French. The French began to subject Algerians to the same practices that the rest of the citizens of the *Métropole* endured, even teaching them that their ancestors were French Gaulles. The term

The term “Arab” became synonymous with uncultivated and barbaric and was systematically assigned a negative connotation.

“Arab” became synonymous with uncultivated and barbaric and was systematically assigned a negative connotation. (The use of this term in a pejorative manner lingered long after the French departure; decades later, it still remains in use in Algeria. To describe a job poorly done, one would refer to it as an “Arab job”.) The process undertaken by the French to replace the local

culture, language, and customs constituted a prolonged, thorough effort to Francize the country. It did not succeed completely, though. One of the many facets of French Algeria’s new identity was a hybrid language and culture consisting of French, European, Algerian Arabic, and Amazigh/Tamazight elements. The change was so dramatic that the current Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika stated that colonization resulted in the “genocide of identity, history, language, and traditions.” He said further: “We no longer know whether we are Amazigh, Arabs, Europeans, or French.”² In using “genocide,” Bouteflika meant that France deliberately and systematically attempted to exterminate local Algerian culture in order to replace it with a foreign one.

Post-Independence Challenges

While there were many uprisings against French rule that took place throughout the colonization of Algeria, a particularly violent series of revolts began in 1954. French rule was finally dissolved in 1962. The newly independent Algeria was immediately faced with a multitude of challenges that were similarly overwhelming as the joy of freedom: in addition to the chaos produced by the rapid departure of hundreds of thousands of European settlers, Algerians had been left without experience in the handling of state affairs of the country, let alone one emerging as independent from colonial rule and as geographically large and culturally diverse as Algeria.

The new, youthful leaders of the country decided to remedy the challenges left behind by the colonizers with a type of shock therapy to achieve the re-Algerianization of the country. The first Algerian president post-independence, Ahmed Ben Bella, wanted to recover the Arabic dimension of Algerian language and culture as quickly as possible. He began to do so in 1963, just after independence.³ This proved

insurmountable even for him: when he was invited to visit Egypt just after the independence at the behest of Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ben Bella was unable to address his audience in Arabic, leaving him publicly “humiliated.”⁴ (Nasser was at the time the embodiment of Arabization and pan-Arabism.) In response to this and as part of his pan-Arabism initiative, Nasser sent droves of Arabic instructors to Algeria, an effort that ultimately also contributed to the rise of Islamism in Algeria as instructors infused the teaching of Arabic with the teaching of Islam.

What took place from the 1960s through the 1970s can only be described as an overzealous effort to purge Algeria of its French component and substitute it with what were perceived as entirely authentic Algerian elements—this, however, excluded the Amazigh identity for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was easier to reinforce Arabic in the atmosphere of pan-Arabist movements throughout the region; secondly, Amazigh was seen as a dividing element as opposed to a uniting one because it was thought to represent only a small minority of the country. Similarly, Tamazight was not perceived—especially by the authorities but also by the average Algerian—to have the same prestige or practical purposes as Arabic did. There was not a unified Amazigh movement that compared to the size of pan-Arabism, with the exception of a contained movement in the mountainous Kabyle region of northern Algeria.

One of the first initiatives of this purging of French identity was a renaming of the streets and main thoroughfares: emblematic squares and routes such as Place Bugeaud, rue D’Isly, and rue Michelet became Sahet Chouhada, rue Larbi Ben M’hidi, and rue Didouche Mourad—the latter names all symbolic not only of Algeria’s Arabic heritage but also of the revolution and the Algerian resistance to the French. Soon after, schools, universities,

and government offices were ordered to begin using Arabic for instruction and on all official correspondence.

Ben Bella was overthrown in 1965 and was succeeded by Houari Boumediene, an Arabist with an academic career that included stints at the prestigious Islamic institutions of Az-Ziytouna in Tunisia and Al-Azhar in Egypt. It was under Boumediene’s rule that the process of Arabization, with the appointment of education minister Moustapha Lacheraf, was fully implemented.⁵

Bilingual Illiteracy

Schools in Algeria were given a short window of time of several years to comply with the government project of full Arabization. The generation going through the school system at this time was designated a “transitory class” or *classe transitoire*. Mathematics and the sciences were still taught in French, but history, geography, literature, and philosophy were to be instructed in Arabic. By the early 1980s, during the last generation of the transitory classes, anyone hoping for a successful future would not have opted for Arabic instruction. This was for the simple reason that French was still inherently valued by society and, consequently, in the academic and professional realms. An individual aspiring to become a doctor or engineer would be expected to be at least bilingual, and mastery of French was required in order to take high-level courses in high school and university.

By the mid-1980s, Algerian schools celebrated the switch to full Arabic instruction. The authorities boasted about this great “achievement” but did so avoiding the subject of the quality and competence of this new generation of youth. The new school system was christened *al madrasa al asasiyya* or the “Fundamental School.” The Algerian population used a perversion of the French version, *L’école fondamentale*, partially Arabizing it to create the term

“*fawdha mentale*” which, in the Algerian hybrid Arabic dialect, translates to “mental chaos.” The general Algerian response to this new curriculum was to deem it a failed curriculum producing bilingual illiterates—in other words, generating youth who were unable to master either French or Arabic.

At the root of the failure were several factors: the process of Arabization was rushed and poorly planned, and it was not thoughtful of the complex, deeply rooted linguistic and cultural realities on the ground.⁶ The first schools developed in this new period did not have textbooks or systems in place to replace what the French education system offered before. This made it more of a political measure than a substantial, carefully executed educational strategy. Similarly, there was a significant lack of qualified instructors and teaching material—while Egypt and other Arab countries continued to send Arabic teachers to Algeria, they often did not have teaching credentials at all, let alone in the instruction of the Arabic language. Algerian professors were untrained and unprepared for the sudden switch. This remained the case at all levels of the academic system until the early 1990s, except for a partially successful attempt to reform higher education. Even academic institutions that have high educational standards, such as the national Algerian Institute for Translation and Interpretation, would hire professors in translation who were incapable of speaking formal Arabic, despite the fact that students were expected to translate a multitude of languages into formal Arabic.

Algerian “Schizophrenia”

The language spoken in Algeria today is known as Algerian Arabic. In reality, this constitutes a mix of Arabic, Tamazight, French, Spanish, and in some cases Turkish and/or Italian. This holds true especially in the major coastal cities such as Algiers,

Ouahran, Constantine, and Annaba. Children are instructed from an early age that colloquial Arabic is improper and, in some cases, even vulgar; pupils are taught in formal Arabic and prevented from using any colloquial Arabic in the classroom.⁷ Official correspondence is also supposed to be in formal Arabic in accordance with a law passed in 1997, although it is said that senior officials often receive a French transla-

Bouteflika is the first Algerian leader, post-independence, who is both capable of and confident in switching between formal Arabic, Algerian Arabic, and French with ease.

tion alongside of the original, official Arabic copy. This is provided in order to ease the administrative process, due primarily to the lack of comprehension of formal Arabic and the relative fluency of Algerian officials in French. This inferiorization of the colloquial language that average Algerians use most of the time has major effects on the way in which Algerians perceive their own identity.

Since Bouteflika came to power in 1999, he has altered the perception of identity yet again: going against the protocol of all of the presidents before him, Bouteflika is the first Algerian leader, post-independence, who is both capable of and confident in switching between formal Arabic, Algerian Arabic, and French with ease. In doing so, he has catered his language choice to his audience and encompassed all of them into his identity. In justifying his choice, after addressing the French parliament in French in 2012, he asked, “Why follow the protocol when we can make it easier and speak in a language that we both understand and

grasp?” He has also questioned the implementation of the Arabization process, even suggesting a return to teaching French at an early age in a bilingual teaching system. In fact, the current Minister of Education, Nouria Benghabrit-Remaoun, has been tasked with exploring the feasibility of this proposal as an educational reform, among other potential alterations to the education system.

Algerians continue to question their identity and struggle with accepting all of its dimensions. Unlike neighbors Tunisia and Morocco, Algeria continues to grapple with its two adopted languages of Arabic and French, as well as with its native language of Tamazight. The first of the three is used as an identity marker although it is not actively developed, as it is used to merely copy or directly translate from French. The second serves as a communication tool for practical purposes. Tamazight is rarely used outside of the Kabyle area, generally regionally contained and never used in an official setting. Arabic remains the national and official language of the country, as stated in the constitution. Its usage is confined to formal situations, such as official communication, education, the media, and in religious institutions. Just as it is elsewhere in the region, formal Arabic is not used in daily life and is not considered to be the mother tongue. French, on the other hand, has been seen by many as what Algerian novelist Kateb Yacine, a prominent figure of the Amazigh cause and a critic of Arabization as it was enforced in the Algerian context, has deemed a “war bounty.” In other words, a language that served as a weapon against the colonizer and as a tool with which to climb the social ladder. French also served the Amazigh and the feminist movements in their respective struggles for an official recognition. Although it is counted among the largest francophone countries in the world in terms of the number of French speakers,

Algeria has refused to join the International Organization of the Francophonie, which is still perceived by the establishment as a neocolonial tool.⁸

The other major component of the Algerian linguistic identity, Tamazight, was excluded from any formal or national recognition until 2002, and then only after many violent protests.⁹ In April 1980, for example, the Algerian army was purported to have killed at least thirty-two people demonstrating for the official recognition of the Amazigh.¹⁰ The Algerian linguistic landscape resembles that of its western neighbor, Morocco, representing a patchwork of an Amazigh population on which Arabic and French have been imposed, either for religious/postcolonial purposes in the case of Arabic, or for practical reasons of social mobility in the case of French at various points throughout Algeria’s history.¹¹

Proud To Be Algerian

Overall, the process of postcolonial Arabization in Algeria has been a chaotic one, and many generations of citizens have paid the price for it: rushed, poorly planned, and politicized are among the many adjectives Algerians have used to describe the process.¹² That said, there are signs that Algerian leaders and intellectuals may have learned several valuable lessons from this failure: they are slowly but surely learning to accept and include the many languages spoken by Algerians. An additional lesson learned is that significantly more effort should be placed on the development of Arabic as a language used outside of the traditional realms of literature and social sciences; there is discussion of improving its use in the technical realms of mathematics and sciences. There is also some discussion about the extent of the “sacredness” of the language.¹³

The only component that is absent in this linguistic and cultural equation is the

native Amazigh heritage. Despite the fact that Tamazight was recently recognized as a national language in 2002, it lacks the interest that formal Arabic and French command from the general population for practical reasons.¹⁴ In other words, if one masters Arabic or French, they will often be more likely to get a job. However, the situation of the Amazigh movement and the fight for Tamazight recognition appears to have changed, at least on the surface. Tamazight has legal status and is finally recognized as a national language. Legislators are discussing ranking it equally with Arabic to become the second national and official language of the country.

After more than half a century of independence, Algerians continue to struggle with their cultural identity. In the 1940s, Abdelhamid Ben Badis, an Algerian religious and political figure, wrote an anthem that children in Algeria are still asked to memorize by heart: “The Algerian population is Muslim and belongs to the Arab world.”¹⁵ Today, intellectuals, politicians, and average citizens alike are challenging this definition. As author Kamel Daoud stated in response to a French journalist’s question of whether he felt Arab, “No, I am not. I am Algerian and proud.”

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French heritage language and culture program and serves as president of the New England chapter of a French expatriate organization. Since joining the faculty at Boston University, Mr. Bekkai has been a panelist and moderator in many panel discussions and talks hosted by local organizations regarding the issues of identity and immigration. He is also interested in media studies, journalism, and international relations, particularly as it pertains to the dialogue between Western societies and the Arab world.

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Independent Civil Society: A Necessary Ingredient for Stability and Security in the Middle East & North Africa

By Amira Maaty

Independent civil society in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has once again fallen victim to regional and international prioritization of security and stability over reform and democratization. The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS)—also known as the Islamic State—has shifted international attention away from the much-needed political and economic reforms called for during the Arab uprisings that began in late 2010. Instead, US and European diplomacy and assistance to the MENA region have refocused on security and violent extremism.¹ Autocratic Arab regimes have exploited this opportunity to suppress nonviolent critics and dissidents at home under the guise of counterterrorism efforts including laws and policies that criminalize and define basic freedoms as terrorism.² In doing so, these

regimes are dismantling the very civic space most needed to challenge radical ideologies, constructively channel youth frustrations, and ensure greater accountability and good governance.

Pointing to the threat of Islamic extremist groups, several Arab states, including US allies such as Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have taken steps over the past year to limit freedom of assembly, association, and independent media. This includes policies that directly or indirectly restrict the formation, activities, and funding of nongovernmental organizations; legal prosecution of civic groups and their members; harsh prison sentences for protestors; and censorship, harassment, travel bans, and smear campaigns against journalists, bloggers, civic leaders, and other individuals publicly critical of

the state. In addition to longstanding laws restricting free association and expression, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE adopted new counterterrorism laws in 2014 that broadly define terrorism to include: “any group which disrupts public order or threatens the safety, security, or interests of society;”³ “any act that harms the reputation or standing of the state;”⁴ or those who “undermine the stability, safety, unity, sovereignty, or security of the State.”⁵ These laws give authorities wide powers to dissolve, freeze assets, and issue harsh sentences—including the death penalty—to members of designated terrorist organizations. Based on these definitions, Egypt has moved to freeze the assets of “over 1,000 charities and organizations with apparent links to the [Muslim] Brotherhood, many of which provided public and social services” and dissolved an additional 300 NGOs;⁶ the UAE government has designated eighty-three terrorist organizations that include charitable and advocacy organizations that operate legally in the United States and Europe;⁷ and dozens of peaceful activists in Saudi Arabia have been arrested and are facing trial.⁸ Also in the past year, Bahrain, which had similarly amended its anti-terrorism laws in 2013, modified citizenship laws allowing the Interior Ministry to revoke citizenship from anyone who “causes harm to the interests of the Kingdom or acts in a way that contravenes his duty of loyalty to it,”⁹ and in January 2015, seventy-two Bahrainis, including journalists, doctors, and political and human rights activists, were stripped of their citizenship.¹⁰ These actions have shrunk the already limited regional civic space and have fed widespread xenophobic conspiracy theories about the United States and other Western governments seeking to destabilize the region. Many of these outlandish theories are promulgated by the same security establishments that have long enjoyed the overwhelming bulk of Western aid. Egypt’s recently acquitted, Mubarak-era Minister of

Interior, Habib al-Adly, has claimed that the January 2011 revolution “was an American conspiracy aimed at implementing a new Middle East plan, whereby leaders who refuse to cooperate on pursuing their vision

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were ousted.”¹¹ This narrative has been and continues to be a dominant theme of Egyptian state media since 2011¹² and one that is echoed in state-supported media throughout the region.

Subordinating civic freedoms to immediate security priorities has negative implications for local and regional stability. First, large-scale crackdowns against nonviolent dissidents and critics divert limited government resources away from real security threats such as militant radicalization and violent extremism. Second, stifling moderate voices in the region empties regional ideological debates of all but illegitimate state narratives and radical Islamist discourse, which is harder to silence. There are many examples of Arab civil society initiatives across the region that challenge the rhetoric of extremists and provide platforms for constructive debate and discussion. This includes groups that monitor and advocate for action against hate speech and incitement, youth civic education programs that promote tolerance and acceptance, independent think tanks that offer solutions for countering extremism, engagement of community and religious leaders to counter radical discourse, and

others. However, many of these are limited in scope and reach due to the type of restrictions described above. Third, it pits the state against civil society at a time when the latter should be a critical interlocutor

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Shrinking civil society space limits the emergence of new ideas and leaders at a time when they are most needed, and civil society can play a critical role in countering violent extremism.

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between state institutions, citizens, and society at large. Although governments may fear civil society's calls for transparency and accountability, the latter can also serve as a valuable partner for service delivery and community engagement, channeling the energies of disenfranchised and discontented youth towards constructive purposes. Youth across the region were initially energized to actively serve and better their communities post-Arab Spring as demonstrated by various formal and informal youth initiatives that emerged during that period but have since been discouraged by restrictions they've faced and the overall deteriorating conditions in the region. Fourth, civil society provides a space for a plurality of stakeholders to deliberate, identifying and debating the challenges facing their societies. In 2014, Tunisian civil society spearheaded a National Dialogue that broke through a political impasse and resulted in a roadmap that put Tunisia's democratic transition back on track.¹³ Shrinking civil society space limits the emergence of new ideas and leaders at a time when they are most needed. Finally, civil society can play a critical role in countering violent extremism; it "can develop

effective programs to increase community awareness of the dynamics of radicalization and teach the skills associated with building resilience and resistance to the drivers of violent extremism."¹⁴

Treating civil society as a long-term interest secondary to short-term security challenges is a fatal flaw in counter-radicalization strategies in the Middle East and North Africa. Decades of security-oriented funding and cooperation has lent international legitimacy to autocratic governments and has failed to make the region more secure. Rather, at the same time that such security policies have been prioritized, the region has seen a "steady increase in the number of [jihadist] groups during the 1990s and 2000s," including "a 58 [percent] increase in the number of Salafi-jihadist groups from 2010 to 2013."¹⁵ Now, more than ever, civil society freedom and independence must be an integral component of Western security assistance and cooperation in the region.

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Over the River: Jordan's Dependency on Transboundary Water Resources

By Sarah McKnight

Some of the most prominent, defining memories of my time as a Fulbright fellow in Jordan came from the “water day” in my neighborhood of Jabal Amman. In most of Jordan, water day was the one day in the week when either the lumbering water truck would come or the public water system would open to provide enough water to fill every family’s roof tanks and complete as many water-consuming chores as possible. Every Wednesday, a weekly stream would flood my street as my neighbors would dutifully wash their apartments’ floors, and I would stuff my washing machine with as many loads as I could muster. Beyond the water access issues that cause minor inconveniences and suggest ominous forebodings for the future, the country already suffers from drying water reserves: Azraq, the precious sanctuary for migrating birds, is disappearing, the rich biodiversity of the Arabian Desert has lost

much of its natural habitat, and the famous Dead Sea is rapidly diminishing at astonishing rates.

As a hydrogeologist with a passion for research, I always engaged my neighbors and friends in discussions about Jordan’s water issues and how they connected to the region’s politics. I learned that people struggled to work their lives around the ever-escalating water shortage crisis. The weekly “water day” phenomenon, along with Jordan’s tense and sometimes controversial diplomatic relations with its neighboring countries, continues to breed distrust towards the Jordanian government in the already skeptical population. While the government needs to continuously foster productive diplomacy with its neighbors, Jordan also needs to focus on more water conservation and production measures that rely on resources within its borders in order to lessen the burden on the country’s

strained regional relations as well as to ensure a more secure future for the nation.

Jordanians' doubts will not dissipate quickly, as Jordan's geopolitical environment creates a dismal future for this thirsting country. While Jordan annually has approximately 114 cubic meters (m³) of renewable water per capita, which equates to a total of an estimated 682 million m³ per year, the country needs at least an estimated 1.6 billion m³ per year to match its growing needs by 2020.¹ Currently, only approximately a third of Jordan's water supply comes from intraborder precipitation.² Jordan has also historically depended on obtaining most of its water from the basin and tributaries associated with the now dwindling Jordan River, which is also politically significant as both a religious icon as well as a tourist destination shared with the Palestinian territories and Israel.³ Beyond surface water, Jordan taps into an overwhelming 143 million m³ of nonrenewable groundwater per year.⁴ As climate change continues to dwindle the already scant rainfall—amounting to between 100 to 200 millimeters per year—and as the population continues to swell with growing numbers of refugees from multiple neighboring countries, Jordan continues to develop and search for alternative water resources both within and beyond the country's borders.⁵

Jordan finds itself surrounded by a chaotic milieu of conflict that both complicates and infringes upon progress towards a long-term, sustainable water policy. All water sources that Jordan plans to develop involve cooperation with neighboring countries. Of its current water sources, the Disi Water Conveyance Project began pumping 100 million m³ per year from southern Jordan to Amman 2013.⁶ Ever a contentious issue with Saudi Arabia, who shares a section of the Disi aquifer with Jordan, the question of access and usage rights remains an unanswered internation-

al issue as neither country has accepted an agreement. Jordan can only depend on the nonrenewable, ancient aquifer for between approximately twenty-five to fifty years before the country completely depletes the

Currently, only approximately a third of Jordan's water supply comes from intraborder precipitation.

water, conditional on Saudi Arabia not increasing its withdrawal from the part of the aquifer that lies within the Saudi borders.⁷ The Unity Dam on the Yarmouk River, a source of less importance located along the Syrian border, only provides minor relief to Jordan's water woes. Similarly, Syria's ongoing civil war and growing needs could never guarantee the reservoir as a long-term, dependable source.⁸ Wrought and slowed by stale negotiations, the proposed World Bank-supported Red Sea-Dead Sea pipeline relies on maintaining robust relations in an ever-tense political environment with Israel, and there is currently no guarantee over the amount of potable water Jordan would receive from the project.⁹ Though Jordan strives for innovative water production methods, these efforts continue to create a transboundary dependency requiring strenuous diplomatic efforts, leaving the country with a future lacking both stability and security.

To survive, the Jordanian government must further develop its water management and production policies by focusing on advancing efforts strictly within the country's borders. The Jordanian government can support innovative agriculture technology, invest in desalination, further develop water recycling methods, provide opportunity for public engagement, de-

velop and encourage surface water runoff conservation, and further utilize the brilliant minds of Jordan's youth and researchers. Specifically, the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation helps rural farmers learn new methods for conserving water.¹⁰ Similarly, as new irrigation technology with improved efficiency continues to develop, the government may consider financially supporting the poor rural farmers to gain access to such technology. Jordan could also pursue numerous other options that expand upon already functioning and successful programs, including increasing waste water recycling systems, redefining public and agricultural water consumption, and heightening the public's awareness of and engagement in responsible water usage. As another option, Jordan could further consider seawater desalination, though the process involves great complexity and inspires environmental concerns. However, new developments in desalination processes have cut the price of production in half.¹¹ With all the possible solutions readily within reach, such expansion and redefinition of Jordan's water policy would not inevitably lead to a self-sufficient water system, but it would gradually ensure greater water security with more options for contingency, as well as an increased chance for approaching the country's water budget.

Fortunately, despite the country's dubious circumstances, Jordan can take advantage of numerous resources that are readily available within the country's borders. Jordan has one of the most robust water infrastructure systems in the region, providing dependable access to over 98 percent of the population.¹² With such an impressive system already established, Jordan has a wide breadth of opportunity for shifting the demand for water closer to the supply. The further implementation of innovative technology and techniques in water conservation and production already within Jordan's borders will help the country en-

sure further national security and less dependence on the already strained relations with its neighboring countries. Jordan's water shortage will not reach desperation if the Hashemite Kingdom focuses on developing and protecting its water supply independently from its neighbors, by focusing and improving upon the already established water conservation technology while further investing in the innovative brain power of the Jordanian people. In the Middle East's environmentally and politically harsh landscape, Jordan's solution to the water question should focus beyond the mere application of all the possible techniques. Rather, the Jordanian government will protect its people most by strategizing a nation-focused, adept approach to prioritizing effective domestic innovations.

Sarah McKnight graduated from Mount Holyoke College with a major in geology in 2011 and spent the following year on a Fulbright scholarship at the University of Jordan. She put her advanced Arabic language skills to work at the Orphan's Association, Bekaa Refugee Camp, in Jordan, teaching English to children. While in Jordan, Sarah also compiled historical and modern seismic data in order to reassess the potential hazard of the Dead Sea transform fault system and performed assessments on groundwater flow and subsurface structure in areas around the country. She currently works as a hydrogeologist for Inland Professional Corporation in Hanover, MA, as a consultant doing environmental site assessment, evaluating the extent of contaminants and their transport in groundwater.

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