

IEMed.
MEDITERRANEAN
YEARBOOK

2022

European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Consortium formed by:

Generalitat de Catalunya
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación
Ajuntament de Barcelona

Board of Trustees - Business Council:

Corporate Sponsors

Banc Sabadell
CaixaBank
Iberia
Port de Barcelona
Port de Tarragona

Partner Institutions

Cambra Oficial de Comerç, Indústria i Navegació de Barcelona
ESADE
Foment del Treball Nacional
IESE Business School
PIMEC
Societat Econòmica Barcelonesa d'Amics del País

IEMed.
MEDITERRANEAN
YEARBOOK

2022

IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2022

Director

Senén Florensa

Coordination

Jordi Padilla

Editorial Team

Hugo Gallego

Collaborators

Núria Esparza, Francesca Pugliese, Edward Rodger Martínez

Advisory Council

Haizam Amirah-Fernández – Youssef Cherif – Itxaso Domínguez de Olazábal – Laura Feliu – Giorgia Giovannetti – Miguel Hernando de Larramendi – Larbi Jaidi – Kristina Kausch – Bichara Khader – Erwan Lannon – Aurèlia Mañé – Blanca Moreno-Dobson – Khadija Mohsen Finan – Marc Pierini – John O'Rourke – Eduard Soler

With the support of:



European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Girona 20

08010 Barcelona

www.iemed.org

ISSN: 1698-3068

Depositing of duty copies: B. 38.404-2004

Translation: Teresa Puig Gros (coordination) – Catalina Girona Arguimbau – Kari Eliza Friedenson – Jay Noden

Layout and printing: Addenda

The opinions expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the IEMed. Border illustration and use of maps do not guarantee the absence of errors, neither imply necessarily their recognition by the editorial team nor by the institution it represents.

Table of Contents

FOREWORD

Senén Florensa, President of the Executive Committee, European Institute of the Mediterranean, Barcelona.....	9
---	---

PERSPECTIVES

Roberta Metsola, President, European Parliament	13
---	----

KEYS

Reshuffling of Political and Military Alliances

The Big Powers, the Mediterranean and the Impact of the War in Ukraine (US, EU, Russia, China), <i>Senén Florensa</i>	17
Geopolitical Trends, Shifts, Challenges and Fractures of the Post-Arab Spring (2020-2021), <i>Bichara Khader</i>	32
Turkey at the Centre of the Mediterranean Geopolitical Chessboard, <i>Dorothee Schmid</i>	42
Qatar’s Role in the Geopolitical Scenarios of the Middle East and North Africa, <i>Salam Kawakibi</i>	48
Iran’s Influence on Countries in the MENA Region, <i>Moisés Garduño García</i>	53

Energy and Green Transition

Europe’s Quest for Energy Security and the Renewed Case for a Strong Mediterranean Green Energy Partnership, <i>Simone Tagliapietra</i>	58
The Clean Energy Challenges: Sustainability, Decarbonization and Security of Supply in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, <i>Blanca Moreno-Dodson, Constantin Tsakas</i> and <i>Silvia Pariente-David</i>	62
Tackling the Sustainability Crisis with a New Mediterranean Institute for Ecological Finance, <i>Thomas Lagoarde-Segot</i>	69

The Future of Politics

Political Dynamics in the Arab World and the Future of Ideologies, <i>Lise Storm</i>	78
Maghrebi Elites, the Pandemic and the Counter-Revolution Political Economy, <i>Isabelle Werenfels</i>	84
The Two Faces of Digitalization in Politics: The Role of Social Networks in Political Mobilizations and the Threat of “Digital Authoritarianism” in the MENA Region, <i>Marc Owen Jones</i>	90

Fragmentations in the Regional Mediterranean Integration

Euro-Mediterranean Regional Cooperation and Integration: The Urgent Need for an Enhanced Agenda, <i>Erwan Lannon</i>	96
MENA's Debt: An Opportunity or a Trap?, <i>Bassem Snaije</i>	104
What Do the Tensions in the Maghreb Mean for Europe?, <i>Luis Martinez</i>	111
The EU-Southern Neighbourhood Relationship in Transition: From "Closed" to Semi-Open Borders in the Mediterranean?, <i>Angeliki Dimitriadi</i>	115

DOSSIER: SOCIAL POLICIES AND THE CHALLENGES TO IMPROVE WELL-BEING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

Well-Being, Social Policies and Development in the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA) – State of Play and Challenges for Improvement, <i>Rana Jawad</i>	123
Achieving Healthy Lives in the MENA Region: Towards Strong and Equitable Health Systems, <i>Randa Alami</i>	131
Co-creating Mediterranean Narratives of Human and Ecosystem Health in the Era of Global Climate Change, <i>Michael Karner, Lina Tode and Katarzyna Marini</i>	138
Well-Being Societies in the Arab Region. Fighting All Kinds of Inequalities, <i>Samir Aita</i>	145
Citizens' Expectations for Individual Well-Being: Rethinking Well-Being Around the Idea of Dignity, <i>Habib Tiliouine</i>	151
City Diplomacy: An Emerging Tool to Enhance Well-being in MENA Cities, <i>Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi</i>	158
Job Creation, Innovation and Sustainability in the Arab Countries in the Southern Mediterranean: Will this Time Be Different?, <i>Zafiris Tzannatos</i>	164
Make Way for Numbers: The Age Race in the Mediterranean, <i>Isabelle Blöss-Widmer</i>	172

PANORAMA: THE MEDITERRANEAN YEAR

Country Profiles	179
-------------------------------	-----

Geographical Overview

EU Mediterranean Countries

Complexity and Tensions in the Maghreb, <i>Jorge Dezcallar</i>	204
The EU's Strategic Compass: How to Translate It into Capabilities?, <i>Sven Biscop</i>	211
The French Presidential Election 2022: Irreconcilable Clash between World Views and Mediterranean Perspectives?, <i>Jean-François Daguzan</i>	215

Western Balkans

Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Brink of Collapse, <i>Soeren Keil</i>	222
Western Balkans. From the Berlin Process to the Open Balkan Initiative. Prospects for the Accession Process, <i>Ferenc Németh</i>	226
North Macedonia. After Greece, Bulgaria Appears. North Macedonia's Obstacle Course to Enter the EU, <i>Yorgos Christidis</i>	230

MPCs. Maghreb

The Palace's Domestic and Foreign Policy Success and the Search for Stability, <i>Alfonso Casani Herranz</i>	234
"No Freedom – No Development," Algeria's New Deal, <i>Tin Hinane El-Kadi</i>	238

Tunisia 2021: Anatomy of a Coup Foretold, <i>Bernabé López</i>	242
Libya: The Political Process towards a Fragile Peace, <i>Mary Fitzgerald</i>	246
Mauritania: Domestic Politics and Regional Tensions (Maghreb / Sahel), <i>Francisco Freire</i> and <i>Moustapha Taleb Heidi</i>	249
MPCs. Middle East and Turkey	
Egypt: Economic Ruin Threatens Stability, <i>Hafsa Halawa</i>	252
Jordan Amid Diverse Challenges and Comprehensive Counter Strategies, <i>Amer Al Sabaileh</i>	255
Lebanon's Catastrophic Warlord Regime and the Tragedy of a Complicit State, <i>Carmen Geha, PhD</i>	259
The Israeli Government of Change under Naftali Bennett: Policy Substance, Political Fragility, <i>Mark A. Heller</i>	263
The Palestinian Struggle for Liberation: Where Do We Go from Here?, <i>Inès Abdel Razek</i> . . .	267
The Not So Frozen Crisis, <i>Natasha Hall</i>	272
The Post-Pandemic Landscape in Turkey, <i>Carmen Rodríguez López</i>	276
The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Other Actors	
How the Situation in Sudan Is Affecting the MENA Region, <i>Atta H. El-Battahani</i>	281
Saudi Reforms: Change for Survival or for Progress?, <i>Moustapha Chérif Bassiouni</i>	285
Strategic Sectors	
Security & Politics	
A New Chapter in the Drone Race in the Middle East, <i>Jean-Loup Samaan</i>	289
Water Crises in North Africa and the Middle East: When Anthropogenic Causes Combine with Capricious Skies, <i>Pierre Blanc</i>	292
Economy & Territory	
Youth, Women and Employment in the Mediterranean Region: Continuity and Change, <i>Roger Albinyana</i> and <i>Edward Rodger Martinez</i>	295
The Future of Mediterranean Tourism in a (Post) Covid World. Back to Mass Tourism or Leapfrog towards Sustainability?, <i>Jérémie Fosse</i>	301
Global Value Chains in the Spotlight of Economic Recovery, <i>Patricia Augier</i>	307
Formalizing the Informal Sector: a Fundamental Policy for the Economic Stability of the MENA Region, <i>Hamza Saoudi</i>	311
The Mediterranean Region: A Cocktail of Climate and Environmental Risks, <i>Joël Guiot</i>	315
Cities and Mediterranean Integration: In Search of a "New" Political Project, <i>Samuel Ripoll</i> . .	319
The Impact of Covid-19 on Migrants' Remittances in the Mediterranean – Evidence from Libya and Tunisia, <i>Liz Griesmer, Flannery Dyon, Joris Jourdain, Ahmed Aziz Dabboussi</i> and <i>Raffaele Bertini</i>	324
Culture & Society	
The Fluidity of Extremism: The Reshaping of Radicalization in MENA and the Balkans, <i>Lurdes Vidal Bertran</i> and <i>Mariona Rico Santacreu</i>	329
The Role of Social Media in the Fight for Women's Rights, <i>Mireia Faro Sarrats</i>	335
Climate Migration in the Eye of the Storm: A Future Challenge for the Mediterranean Region, <i>Matías Ibáñez Sales</i>	339
Migration as a "Threat", <i>Blanca Garcés</i>	345
Brain Drain in South Mediterranean Countries, <i>Mohamed Saib Musette</i>	348

Implications of the Conversion of Hagia Sophia into a Mosque, Inside and Outside Turkey, <i>Louis Fishman</i>	351
Arab Series: Between the Globality of Netflix and Local Specificity, <i>Pilar Garrido</i> and <i>Pedro Rojo</i>	354
APPENDICES	
Maps	359
Chronologies	
Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events	375
Chronology of Events in Israel and Palestine	412
Euromed Chronology	422
Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean	437
Mediterranean Electoral Observatory	446
Cooperation in the Mediterranean	
European Union Cooperation	448
Spanish Cooperation in the Mediterranean	452
Migration in the Mediterranean	454
Commercial Relations of the Mediterranean Countries	457
Signature of Multilateral Treaties and Conventions	461
The Mediterranean in Brief	463
Definitions	491
List of the Organisms Consulted for Drawing up Tables, Graphics and Maps	498
Country Abbreviations in Graphics and Maps	500
Acronyms and Abbreviations	501
Index of Tables	505
Index of Charts	507
Index of Maps	510
Authors	511

Foreword

Senén Florensa

President of the Executive Committee,
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),
Barcelona

When we said a year ago that despite the pandemic we could face the future with moderate optimism, little did we imagine that this window of hope would be so short. The multiple challenges and tensions in the region have been compounded by the war in Ukraine, which has aggravated an already very delicate situation. The effect of the war in the region is leading to economic difficulties, energy supply issues in Europe and food supply problems in the southern Mediterranean countries, some of which are heavily dependent on Ukrainian cereals.

In this situation, the region's existing problems and challenges are becoming more strained and fractured, multiplying and becoming more acute. The Mediterranean area is facing multiple issues that can hardly be addressed without comprehensive co-operation... Climate change, populism, authoritarian reaction, the economic crisis, the consequences of the pandemic, geopolitical tensions, migration, the wars in Syria and Libya, the urgent need for an energy transition, environmental conflicts, employment, the tourism crisis, the need to manage supply chains, the challenges of informal employment, environmental risks... These are multiple challenges that cannot be ignored and that are directly or indirectly aggravated by the war in Ukraine, which has focalized international attention.

In light of these events, the Yearbook has redefined its table of contents to accommodate the different foci of media attention without neglecting the substantive issues that, although of less media interest, will undoubtedly shape the future of the Mediterranean area.

The Keys section of this edition consists of four chapters in which various articles analyse some of the chief factors of the situation in the region. The first of the Keys is devoted, unsurprisingly, to geopolitical changes and the realignment of alliances against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine. It examines the effects of the war on the Euro-Mediterranean area, geopolitical transformations in the Middle East and the role of three countries that are important players in the geopolitical reconfiguration of the Mediterranean: Qatar, Iran and Turkey, to whom the war in Ukraine has lent the opportunity to assume a mediating role after a period of multiple tensions in the region.

The second of the Keys focuses on one of the fundamental aspects for the future, not only of the region but also of the planet: energy and the green transition. The war in Ukraine has clearly revealed the EU's energy dependence on Russia and the need to diversify energy imports on the one hand; and on the other, it has put a spoke in the wheel of the energy transition by forcing some countries to revert to highly polluting energy production in order to meet their energy needs. With the effects of climate change at our doorstep, it is essential to address the issue of energy in the Mediterranean. Three articles examine the geopolitical tensions of energy, the challenges of clean energy, decarbonization and alternative energies, and finally, the financing of energy transition commitments.

The third of the Keys deals with the future of politics in the Arab world. Firstly, political dynamics are analysed, with the resurgence of authoritarianism in the form of a technocratic populism that is eroding political parties, which had already begun their downfall with the decline of ideology among the population. It also discusses the role of elites in the counter-revolution and in the consolidation of authoritarianism in southern Mediterranean countries.

The last of the Keys focuses on some of the gaps that hinder regional integration in the Mediterranean. Four of these problems are explored in different articles: the urgent need for improved Euro-Mediterranean cooperation; the impact of the growing external debt in the region's countries; tensions in the Maghreb and their impact on Europe; and finally, the issue of migration in the Mediterranean, a major factor in relations between the two shores. The cost and implications of managing the EU's borders will largely determine relations with its neighbouring countries.

In its desire to go beyond current affairs to address in-depth issues of extreme importance for the future of the region, the Dossier in this edition of the Yearbook is dedicated to social policies and the challenges to improving well-being in Mediterranean countries.

As usual, the Dossier approaches the subject from different perspectives. It thus deals with the demographic situation in the Mediterranean, with completely different age structures on the two shores that determine the social policy needs in each country. It also covers classic welfare issues such as the situation of social services in southern Mediterranean countries and the fight against poverty, the functioning of the health systems and the need to improve them, the need for a safe environment and sustainable management of resources, and job creation and innovation as key elements of social development and the promotion of welfare societies. But it also addresses such issues as inequalities – not only economic, but also generational, gender and educational – as elements that hinder development and well-being, and the importance of cities and municipal cooperation in this development. Finally, it also analyses how citizens' expectations and aspirations determine individual well-being, not only from the point of view of mere economic aspirations, but also including political or identity-related expectations associated with the concept of citizens' dignity.

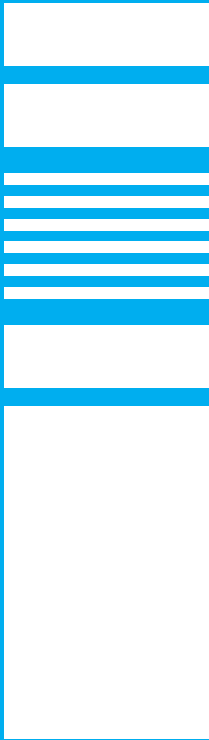
As in previous editions, the selection of articles is rounded off by the Panorama section, which presents a general overview of the most relevant issues in the region through 35 short articles. The first subsection, organized geographically, contains articles focusing on different Mediterranean countries that offer a glimpse of the main challenges they face. Among them, the articles on the serious situation in Lebanon and one on the political scenario in Tunisia are particularly noteworthy. Also included are articles on external actors such as Sudan, European defence and the accession process of the Balkan countries.

The second subsection under Panorama, organized thematically, reflects the Yearbook's will to tackle as wide a range of topics as possible. Thus, this section covers subjects ranging from the arms race in terms of drones and conflicts over water, to the role of social networks in the fight for women's rights, the configuration of extremism and the instrumentalization of migration as a threat, not to mention the informal economy, employment, value chains and the role of cities in Mediterranean integration.

Finally, the second part of the Yearbook contains the annexes. Composed of chronologies, statistics, graphs and maps, the annexes are the counterpoint to the articles. The variety and breadth of the information and data supplied in the annexes make up a huge repository of information which is updated edition after edition. These annexes are an essential tool for understanding the reality of the Mediterranean based on a selection of information and indicators that provide insight into different aspects of the situation in each of the Mediterranean countries.

This latest edition of the Yearbook, the nineteenth, upholds the IEMed's commitment to disseminating knowledge about the Mediterranean region. The Yearbook supplies those interested in the Mediterranean with a compendium of articles and information covering the widest possible thematic diversity and a variety of perspectives, ensured by the large number of authors that have contributed to this and previous editions.

Perspectives



Roberta Metsola

President
European Parliament

The collapse of the Soviet Union marked a transformation in the concept of global security. After decades of cold war, a new world order emerged rooted in increased diplomacy and international cooperation. And yet on 24 February 2022, the horrors of war returned to Europe. Putin's tanks rolling into independent and sovereign Ukraine saw the violation of our international principles and signalled Russia's blatant refusal to continue to form part of the rules-based international order. Putin attempted to redefine geopolitics, to polarize the world. Instead, however, he polarized himself and his country. The European Union's response was courageous, firm and united. Putin thought that he would divide us, but instead he drove us closer together. He strengthened our resolve to defend our democratic values and reinforced our efforts in reshaping our European security architecture.

The European Union was adamant: we cannot be *de facto* financing Russia's military aggression on Ukraine. This is why we adopted seven packages of severe sanctions against Russia to weaken its economy and to isolate it within the international sphere. As of July 2022, we have already provided Ukraine with €2.5 billion for military equipment, including for lethal weapons. I am proud that from a humanitarian perspective, we have taken unprecedented action to provide aid to Ukrainian children, women and men. Since the start of the war, our EU Member States and citizens have opened up their borders, their homes and their hearts to 5.5 million Ukrainian people who have been forced to flee from their homes. Complementing this, we have already mobilized €2.2 billion in macro-financial assistance to Ukraine.

The European Parliament was the first institution to call for the granting of EU candidate status to Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and to work towards granting it to Georgia. In my capacity as President of the

European Parliament, I echoed this call in the European Council in June. My justification was simple: we are stronger when we are together. Today, I am proud to see Ukraine and Moldova enjoying EU candidacy status. Georgia will also be granted this status once the priorities specified in the European Commission's Opinions are adequately addressed.

Leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are also reinforcing the political and defensive structures within their alliance. And the rest of the world – democracies and autocracies, neighbouring and distant countries, lesser developed countries and advanced economies, allies and rivals – cannot be neutral between the fire and the fire brigade. Complacency is not an option. Because Putin did not stop in Crimea. And he will not stop in Kyiv. In this regard, I have to be honest, I was hoping for more support from all around the Mediterranean. Whilst I appreciate all mediation efforts, we could and should have taken an even clearer stance against Putin. We should all have rejected the aggression against Ukraine in the United Nations General Assembly. Sometimes in history, there is a clear right and a clear wrong. This was such a moment.

Moving forward, the way we will manage the immediate emergencies originating from the war – *food security, energy security and our security and defence* – will reflect the seriousness and maturity of our institutions and alliances. The Mediterranean Basin is particularly important in this respect.

Ukraine exports 95% of its grain through the Black Sea. In the last two years, more than 50% of its wheat exports went to the Middle East and North Africa.

A disruption would therefore have dire consequences for food security in many already fragile Mediterranean countries. Not to mention the potential social and political turmoil if famine were not adequately addressed. International cooperation is the only way to prevent an unprecedented food crisis in the Middle East and North Africa.

Concerning energy, the Mediterranean region's unique position gives it a great opportunity to decrease its

dependencies on Russia. We need to explore ways to step up our energy cooperation and accelerate the energy transition. What this war has shown us is that the energy transition is as much about security as it is about climate ambitions.

Investments in the Mediterranean energy sector, and notably in renewables, will also boost employment and develop economies. The southern Mediterranean region has one of the youngest populations in the world. Through its partnerships, the European Union stands ready to support the Mediterranean countries in their efforts to provide a better life for their youth through job creation, especially in strategic sectors of the economy, such as the energy sector.

There is no denying that Europe is an ageing continent with a declining working age population expected to shrink by 18 million in the next decade. In addition, changes in the skills required by the EU labour markets between 2012 and 2025 show an increasing need for highly-skilled workers (from 68 to 83 million, or +23%). We saw this during the pandemic when we were desperately looking for health-care workers. We see it now in the hospitality and aviation sectors. And when it comes to information technologies, we've long seen Europe's lack of skilled workforce. On the southern side of the Mediterranean, Africa has the same challenges. Together, we can transform this mutual challenge into a joint opportunity. Through better cooperation on targeted training, we can equip our sectors with enough skilled workers, while at the same time guaranteeing quality employment to our skilled personnel – on both sides of the Mediterranean. Migration requires a common approach from all countries. Each must play their part to address the challenges and opportunities that it brings. Cooperation based on shared responsibility – from both sides of the Mediterranean – is the only way we can achieve solid results in a sustainable way. I regret that the European Union has not yet agreed on a common response to migration. During my term as President, it remains a top priority for me to facilitate an agreement on the related legislation.

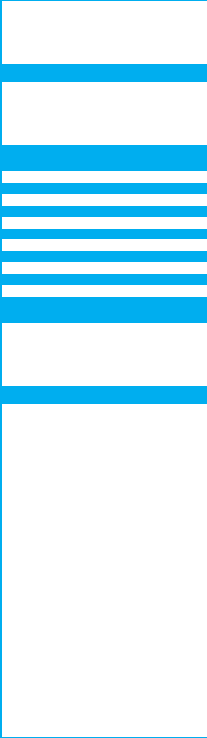
Another area where we urgently need to step up our cooperation is the protection of our environment and the fight against climate change. The Mediterranean is the second largest hotspot in the world, after the Arctic, and it is warming up 20% faster than the rest of the planet. Climate change already has a signifi-

cant impact on stability in the region: on social cohesion, on conflicts and on displacement and migration. Let me also recall that three-quarters of water resources are located in the northern Mediterranean, while three-quarters of the needs are in the South and East. Without drastic measures to meet our Paris Agreement targets, the demographic and socio-economic gap will further increase between the northern and southern Mediterranean. Such imbalances will only exacerbate tensions and conflict – be they domestic or international. With the “European Green Deal,” Europe already has an ambitious green agenda. But here, Europe acting alone is powerless. We need to concert our actions better.

Last but not least, let me address the elephant in the room. I am aware that Europe is a demanding partner. We enquire about human rights, we insist on democracy, good governance and the promotion of civil society. We are cumbersome compared to others. But give it a thought: is this such a bad thing? We are reliable partners. We put citizens at the heart of our policies. We focus on the well-being of societies. We strongly believe that striving for democratic values can benefit any agreement – whether on trade, on research or on investment. We understand that societal change cannot happen overnight, but we are ready to dialogue. The Mediterranean has a proud history of long-standing cooperation and it is my hope that we can further increase this cooperation.

In 2021, the European Union launched its new Agenda for the Mediterranean, as a gauge of its strategic interest in continuing to develop relations with its southern partners. Together we can make it a success. The recent series of visits by high-level European Union officials reflects our interest in increased cooperation. The first international forum I attended as President of the European Parliament was the European Union-Africa Summit in February 2022. My first official visit to a third country – aside from my spontaneous visit to Ukraine – was to Israel and Palestine. It was not by coincidence that I went to the Mediterranean and I am certainly planning to visit North Africa during my term. Let us jointly step up efforts to increase and nurture our partnership, in the Union for the Mediterranean, in its Parliamentary Assembly, bilaterally, with efficiency, maturity and equality. As a Mediterranean myself, let me assure you that my commitment to this important cooperation is as personal as it is institutional.

Keys



The Big Powers, the Mediterranean and the Impact of the War in Ukraine (US, EU, Russia, China)

Senén Florensa

President of the Executive Committee
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),
Barcelona

The War in Ukraine and the End of Europe's Helsinki Security System

On 24 February 2022, Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops. It was a military move and the start of a war on a scale unknown and unthinkable in Europe since the end of the Second World War. It was also the end of the European security system as set out in the final declaration of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe signed in Helsinki. Clearly, Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, compounded by its ferocious attack and destruction of Ukrainian cities and civilian facilities of all kinds, constituted a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and of all the principles of the fundamental agreement that had been the basis of European security since 1975.

President Putin thus sought a return to the Yalta system of sharing out the world between opposing blocs and recognition of the major powers' "zones of influence" and the principle of limited sovereignty of the vassal states, in accordance with the Brezhnev Doctrine. Putin was calling for Russia to regain the Great Power status as it was conceived by the Soviet Union before its implosion.

Are we facing the advent of a new World Order? How will it affect the Mediterranean? This would seem to be the case, to a large extent, and how it will affect us shall depend on the development and end of the war in Ukraine. Since 1991, we have lived in a unipolar global order with a single hegemonic power, the United States. But this order has been un-

dergoing a profound transformation due to enormous structural changes such as China's economic growth and the effect of the great waves of conflict, whose epicentre is largely in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

It is therefore clear that, since the zenith of American hegemony in the unipolar world at the turn of the century, the international order has been evolving towards a multipolar system, with China expected to overtake the United States by 2050. We are still far from a multipolar equilibrium, but the advance of the European unifying project, the progressive weight of China and Russia's growing military activity and presence in the Mediterranean and Africa are outlining the profile of the Big Powers in a fast approaching multipolar order, albeit with two clearly differentiated camps. In one camp are the Western liberal democracies under the leadership of the United States and Europe, and in the other, the authoritarian powers of China and Russia, with state-controlled economies and societies, which are presented as an alternative model, especially for developing countries.

Meanwhile, this unipolar period of supposed "Pax Americana" has not been as such. The invasion and war in Iraq, launched by President George W. Bush and his foolish and arrogant neocons in 2003, did not improve stability in the region, but rather seriously undermined it, creating a hornet's nest from which all kinds of attacks against the stability of Arab countries and the rest of the world radiated. Jihadist groups were strengthened, fundamentally al-Qaeda and its entire cohort of companions and continuers. Daesh prospered through the cruel Syrian civil war, and when it became less favourable to them, they began to move towards Libya and the Sahel countries, contributing decisively to the destabilization of the area. To this generalized confrontation in the Arab-Muslim world must be added the conflicts in

Lebanon, Yemen, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia, which are hardly minor.

Regional powers such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Egypt and Iran have been playing a growing role in recent years in the political and military alliances that have been gradually woven and unwoven in the context of growing conflict in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Against this regional backdrop, we will approach the issue from the angle of the major powers' presence and activity in the Arab and Mediterranean world in recent times, and especially in relation to the consequences of the war in Ukraine. First, we need to complete the picture by looking at how different countries or groups of countries have positioned themselves in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Europe and the West as a whole were surprised by the UN vote. Despite the blatant illegality of the invasion, the cruelty of the Russian attacks and bombings, and the harshness of the images, the realization was that Russia was not alone. Or at least, it was not repudiated by a wide array of countries. Many countries basically saw it as an internal European affair in which they did not want to get involved. Former partners to varying degrees since the days of the USSR in many cases, they did not want to adopt a position of condemnation towards Russia.

The initial proposal for condemnation by the Security Council was blocked by Russia's own veto power, although it received the pro-condemnation vote of 11 of the 15 member states. What was symptomatic were the countries that abstained: China, India and, surprisingly, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the General Assembly, a resolution condemning the invasion, demanding the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine and the reversal of Russia's recognition of the separatist, self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk was adopted on 2 March by 141 countries against 5 negative votes, although the 35 abstentions and 12 voluntary absences added to the negative votes totalled 52. A not insignificant number of countries avoided condemning the invasion. The abstaining countries and those that were absent fit the profile of what years ago we would have called "Third World developing countries," which were then members of the Non-Aligned Movement, led as then by India, Algeria, Iran, China (obs.), Cuba, Iraq and... interestingly, Mali, which recently passed into the orbit of Wagner's Russian mercenaries. The Arab group

voted in a scattered manner, with Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya (Tripoli), Mauritania, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Tunisia, the UAE and Yemen condemning the invasion. Algeria, Iraq and Sudan abstained, with Morocco conspicuously absent.

The General Assembly's vote on 7 April on Russia's exclusion from the Human Rights Council was approved by 93 votes to 24, although the total number of those who avoided condemning Russia had reached 100 countries by then. If we look at the Mediterranean, the entire North condemned Russia, along with Turkey and Israel. From the Arab world, only the Libyan government in Tripoli voted to exclude Russia from the Council and condemn it. The rest voted against Russia's exclusion, abstained or were absent. It is clear that in general they do not like to accuse or be accused on human rights issues, but it is nonetheless a highly significant result.

The conclusion is therefore, as stated, that Russia is not as isolated as Europeans and the West in general believe. The Russian military's failure to achieve a swift and resounding victory has serious implications for Russia's international prestige and ambitions. In the event of a protracted war in Ukraine, however, Russia has ample opportunity to replace trade relations with Europe and the West with other partners in the short to medium term. China and India are already supplanting Europe as a market for Russian gas and oil that the West has planned to progressively boycott. But in the longer term, if trade and financial sanctions against Russia persist, it is likely to face serious difficulties, especially in procuring technological and other components that it has hitherto acquired from the West, which it is not clear can all be replaced by Chinese or other products.

The United States: Towards a Renewed Presence in the Mediterranean

In recent years there has been much talk of US "retrenchment" or "disengagement" from the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The trend began during Obama's term in office, when he inherited a heavy burden of international responsibilities in Afghanistan and Iraq. Obama, and his Vice-President Joe Biden, proposed a shift in priorities, proposing the "Pivot to Asia" and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) initiatives, both of which ultimately failed due to domestic

issues of political opposition in Congress and complications in the Middle East, including the likewise failed priority of concluding the Iran nuclear deal as a legacy of his presidency. The trend was accentuated during Trump's tenure, with his "America First" nationalist involution and populist obsession with confrontation with China. The Middle East, with the exception of Israel, became less important. Moreover, the United States was progressively becoming self-sufficient in oil and gas, to a large extent, especially with the new fracking techniques, thus weakening the original reason for the priority of the Middle East in US foreign policy: a guaranteed oil supply and having a stabilizer for the world crude oil market. The perception of American disengagement in the region became more acute after the US withdrawal from Iraq and especially Afghanistan. And also as a result of the United States ceding the initiative to Russia and Turkey in Syria, with the more than partial withdrawal of American troops on the ground decided by Trump in October 2019 and agreed with Erdoğan, leaving the Kurds to their fate against Bashar al-Assad and the Turks. The insistence on respect for human rights as a foreign policy criterion since the Obama era, and above all the dropping of Mubarak, was already a warning signal that was poorly perceived by the Arab regimes. Also contributing to the sense of abandonment was the US withdrawal from UNESCO and other UN institutions as well as from the negotiation of the Iran nuclear deal and Trump's anti-multilateralist and regressive attitude in disarmament negotiations in general.

The attitude is no longer the same as that of previous generations of Middle Eastern leaders, and the United States will have to accept a greater degree of autonomy from its allies in the Arab world

This trend towards US disengagement from the Middle East and the Pivot to Asia initiative still existed on President Biden's election platform and in the first months of his term. But with Russia's attack on Ukraine, it underwent a profound change. Confronta-

tion with Russia returned; the Mediterranean and the Middle East became particularly important again. After the attack on Crimea and its annexation by Russia in 2014, the situation became extremely tense. Now, with the invasion of Ukraine there is a strong, unified reaction from the EU and the US, imposing heavy sanctions on Russia. NATO is once again important; countries with such long neutralist traditions as Sweden and Finland are joining the Alliance.

In the new war situation, with Russia's expansionist tendency definitively demonstrated, some of the major objectives of the Atlanticist hawks are beginning to be achieved: to weaken Russia definitively; for the war in Ukraine to at least serve to bleed it dry. It also achieves another of its major aims, that of disengaging Germany from Russia, backtracking down the long road begun by Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik and continued through to Angela Merkel, as we shall see later. It also achieves the other major goal of Atlanticism, which is to reinvigorate and unify NATO after Trump's attacks and after so many years without recovering a clear objective for the Alliance. Moreover, as was clearly established at the NATO summit in Madrid, NATO's southern flank has become a priority. It is thus clear that the United States is back in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, from which it never really left.

A New Security Policy for the Gulf and the Mediterranean

The Biden Administration began its term in office with relations with Arab countries in a state of serious disrepair. Given the urgency of the change of course demanded by the war in Ukraine, it was necessary to dust off and reconnect with the long tradition of US friendship with Arab countries, especially in the Gulf. The votes at the United Nations were already an indication of the lukewarmness of the old alliances. Moreover, Saudi Arabia and the other GCC countries refused to increase their production in order to mitigate the rise in oil prices, prioritizing compliance with the agreement reached by OPEC with Russia. US relations with Saudi Arabia, a key country in the Arab world, were particularly bad. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) did not even get on the phone with President Biden. The opposition Democratic Party had been particularly critical of Saudi Arabia in the wake of the scan-

dalous murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. A CIA report, released by the Biden Administration in 2021, concluded that Prince MBS himself approved the operation to “capture or kill” Khashoggi. Biden himself, when running for office, had said that the repressive Saudi kingdom should be turned into a global pariah. But the war in Ukraine changed everything and the needs of *Realpolitik* had to be addressed.

On 15 July 2022 President Biden arrived in Jeddah, where he met with Crown Prince MBS and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, plus the presidents of Egypt and Iraq, and the king of Jordan. This set the stage for the coalition that Biden sought to build to counter the influence of Russia and China in the Middle East. His core message was that the US remained committed to the countries of the Middle East and would not walk away. He did not get concrete commitments on increased oil production, but Biden was optimistic that the renewed relations with the conservative countries of the Arab world would bear fruit. Much work remained to be done, however; trade and investment flows with China, and also with Russia on a different scale, have been growing. China has signed Belt and Road Initiative agreements with virtually all Arab countries. The attitude is no longer the same as that of previous generations of Middle Eastern leaders, and the United States will have to accept a greater degree of autonomy from its allies in the Arab world.

The Perennial Alliance with Israel

President Biden was arriving in Jeddah from Israel, where he had decided to begin his trip to the Middle East, an important message in itself. There he met with Israeli and Palestinian National Authority (PNA) leaders, visiting Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories. The bottom line is that doubts about whether Biden would accept and continue with the Abraham Accords brokered by President Trump were dispelled. With them, Israel's relations with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan have been “normalized”, breaking with the Arab League's tradition of not recognizing Israel diplomatically without guarantees of Palestinian statehood, in line with UN General Assembly resolutions. The question is whether agreements with other countries will follow, especially the key player Saudi Arabia, which is currently

highly unlikely given the symbolic role Saudi Arabia plays in the Arab and Islamic world.

At the same time, the United States' special relationship with Israel in political, economic, and especially technological and defence matters was reaffirmed. Their close relations in terms of security and intelligence in the region likewise continues, especially with regard to Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Complicated Relations with Turkey

Kemalist Turkey had always been a fundamental NATO outpost. With President Erdoğan's Islamist-inspired administrations, however, relations have been complicated. Under Erdoğan, Turkey has pursued a highly autonomous international policy, often referred to as Islamist-inspired neo-Ottomanism, seeking to regain its influence in what were once the vast domains of the Ottoman Empire. This has led it to support Islamist-inspired movements along the lines of the Muslim Brotherhood in all countries without particularly running counter to US interests. Relations in the Syrian conflict have been more complicated. Turkey and the US have supported the forces opposed to Bashar al-Assad's regime, although they have clashed over US support for the Kurds in northern Syria, whom Erdoğan considers allies of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey, included on the list of terrorist movements. Turkey sought to keep them away by establishing a Turkish protectorate zone along its border, inside Syrian territory.

The most serious complications have arisen, however, as a result of the attempted coup against Erdoğan in 2015, of which the Turkish President accused the religious leader Fethullah Gülen, who is in exile in the US and whom Washington refused to extradite. Erdoğan carried out extensive purges in the administration and the military and appeared to have concluded that the Americans had possibly had a hand in inspiring the coup. Erdoğan has since maintained an ambivalent policy within NATO, which has led to controversial understandings with Russia, notably in acquiring the Russian S-400 air defence system. That understanding led the US to exclude Turkey from the F-35 Patriot missile procurement and industrial participation programme.

The war in Ukraine has, in this case, greatly strengthened Turkey's already important role. In the first place, because of its geographical position and its

control of the straits connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Secondly, Erdoğan has very skilfully played his hand as a mediator. First and foremost, by reaching agreements together with the United Nations to unblock the flow of cereals out of Russia and Ukraine, so necessary to avoid famine, especially in Arab and African countries. Moreover, Erdoğan continues to insist on his role as mediator between Russia and Ukraine, which allows him to maintain a position of neutrality that does not pit him against Russia and appears positive for all parties. His personal contact has been fluid and continuous with both Putin and Zelensky, as well as with the UN Secretary General and the main world leaders concerned. This has strengthened his position vis-à-vis Washington, and it is therefore to be expected that he will continue to pursue a policy with a broad degree of autonomy.

Europe's Soft Power Confronted with Geopolitical Reality

Europe and the Mediterranean: The Construction Years

In the world under American hegemony, Europe has generally felt comfortable. From the geopolitical point of view, specialization has taken place. The United States has been in charge of hard power, as the world's great gendarme, first against the Soviet bloc and then uncontested, while Europe has specialized in soft power and focused on the economy as the basis for its international relations. This state of affairs has clearly been applicable to the Mediterranean and the Middle East since 1956, when France and Great Britain ceased to be world powers after the Suez crisis.

In 1995, with the launch of the Barcelona Process, European soft power was perfected. Russia's military aggression against Ukraine has disrupted everything, including in the Mediterranean. But, as always, the biggest change consists of a sudden acceleration of the trends and developments that had already been taking place in recent years.

The Arab Springs were received with enthusiasm by the international community in 2011. They seemed to be the final crisis of the traditional authoritarian Arab state before moving on to a new democratic,

modernizing model such as the one that was being promoted by the Barcelona Process. The results varied depending on the developments in each case: countries where the democratic revolution triumphed, as initially in Tunisia and Egypt; countries where it later ended in an authoritarian reaction that re-established the traditional state, such as Egypt; countries where governments managed to impose a reformist path, such as Morocco and Jordan; countries that largely managed to avoid reforms by financing social peace with gas or oil revenues; and finally, countries where the revolution failed and a civil conflict of enormous proportions broke out, as in Syria, Yemen and Libya. These conflicts are intertwined with external interference from both major powers and regional powers, which support one or the other of the warring sides.

The current situation of crisis and heightened tensions as a consequence of the war in Ukraine will require a clearer sense of realpolitik by the EU in the exercise of its Principled Pragmatism and its new geopolitical capabilities

The EU was trying to adapt its Euro-Mediterranean policy to the reality of the new democratic processes and modernization driven internally by the most enlightened elements and youth in Arab countries. But the gravity of the situation was becoming increasingly apparent as the counter-revolutionary reaction in Egypt and Bahrain and the civil wars in Syria and Libya deepen. In 2015, the European Commission (EC) launched a review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) to address the consequences of the Arab Spring. The ENP's main priority in its Southern dimension continued to be promoting economic growth and institutional modernization in partner countries, but collective security and the prevention of irregular migration also emerged as major issues. The progressive construction of a European Security and Defence Policy found in the complicated Mediterranean scenario an area demanding increasing attention. It also included the emergence of new

and enormous challenges, such as climate change, the environmental emergency and the necessary energy transition, or the digital transition imposed by technological change. The imperative has been to adapt to the accelerating process of globalization. All of this led to the publication in February 2021 of the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Renewed partnership with the southern Neighbourhood: A New Agenda for the Mediterranean." To demonstrate its intended effectiveness, the Communication was accompanied by an Economic and Investment Plan.

The European Union: A Geopolitical Player?

In mid-February 2022, when an extraordinary, mass concentration of Russian military forces was already taking place on Ukraine's borders just before the invasion, there was still serious disunity among EU Member States as to the nature of the threat and the scope of possible sanctions to deter Russia. The EU lived up to its reputation as a legalistic body with cumbersome procedures, especially in matters of foreign or security policy, traditionally the zealously-guarded preserve of state sovereignty. On 24 February, however, everything changed. Faced with the ferocious Russian attack and invasion of Ukraine, Europe's response was united, swift and forceful. Moreover, doubts about the need for Euro-Atlantic solidarity suddenly disappeared. NATO has been strengthened. Even countries with a long tradition of neutrality, such as Sweden and Finland, quickly applied to join the Alliance. The European Union and its Member States have adopted historic sanctions against Russia by absolute consensus, adding to those already in place since 2014 as sanctions for the invasion and annexation of Crimea. Among other measures, funds and assets of 80 Russian entities in Europe have been frozen, as well as the entry possibilities of 1,091 Russian leaders. The financial assets and reserves of the Central Bank of Russia and the seven main Russian banks have been blocked and excluded from the SWIFT interbank connection system. A series of severe trade restrictions and bans have been passed and airspace, ports and land routes are now closed to Russian planes, ships and vehicles. And what is most ground-breaking for the EU is the approval of up to 1 billion euros in mili-

tary aid to Ukraine based on the European Peace Facility created a year earlier. It amounts to 900 million for the financing and supply of lethal weapons, for the first time in the history of the European Union, plus 100 million for humanitarian and emergency aid. 1.55 billion euros have been approved, based on the Temporary Protection Directive of 2001, for aid to the six million Ukrainian refugees in EU countries, of which 60 percent has been directed to Poland. Finally, Russian disinformation media, such as *Russia Today* (RT) and *Sputnik*, have been shut down and blocked.

These sanctions are identical or similar to those adopted by the United States. In addition, Russian gas imports are to be halved by the end of 2022, and oil imports are to be progressively reduced. Germany's initial hesitation due to its heavy dependence on Russian gas has been forcefully resolved by the new chancellor, Olaf Scholz, who cancelled the commissioning of Nord Stream II and increased the defence budget by 100 billion euros, with the plan to henceforth devote an annual 2% of GDP, which will be by far the largest defence budget among EU countries, a major change in Germany and in Europe in geopolitical terms. In response to a request by Ukrainian President Zelensky, the European Parliament has adopted a motion calling for the immediate opening of negotiations with Ukraine to make it a candidate country for EU membership. In a highly symbolic decision, the Council instructed the Commission to examine how this could be done.

In this manner, the European Union has just taken a very first step, but one of enormous importance, in the progressive configuration of a European defence system, in line with the goal of Strategic Autonomy. This was confirmed in the Strategic Compass approved on 21 March, a programmatic security and defence document for the 2022-2030 period.

Europe, which voted unanimously at the United Nations to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the strongest terms, is perplexed by the reluctance of the countries of the Arab world to join in. The EU and the US are launching their diplomatic offensive in the face of the elusive behaviour of Arab countries that they considered especially friendly and allied. President Biden's key visit to Israel and Saudi Arabia was backed up by trips by Borrell and other senior EU officials. Energy is the first area of negotiation, but the diplomatic wrangling and approaches go beyond

this. Alliances are taking shape that, if consolidated, may come to characterize the new International Order after the war in Ukraine. Traditional European policy towards the Mediterranean, through the ENP and the Union for the Mediterranean, is being maintained and strengthened, but the war in Ukraine has accelerated the changes that were already taking place. Realpolitik is gaining ground through the EU's Principled Pragmatism, which is acquiring a more geopolitical and realistic profile in the defence of its positions and interests, based on the acceptance of the Arab-Mediterranean world as it is rather than as Europeans would like it to be.

The southern countries will be more autonomous in their foreign policy; But they are well aware that, in order to defend their stability, prosperity and interests, US hard power and EU soft power cannot be replaced by an alternative alliance or understanding with Russia or China. In the competition for influence in the MENA region, the first fact is that European official development aid still far exceeds that of China. At the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the EU approved 225 million euros in aid from the Food Resilience Facility for the MENA countries in the face of potential problems of rising cereal prices, shortages and famine. More importantly, the EU has approved the major Global Gateway programme, which plans to mobilize 300 billion euros for infrastructure projects around the world in the fields of digital infrastructure, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research. In this context, the external dimension of both the European Green Deal and the large-scale Next Generation programme designed to revive the economy after the Covid-19 pandemic crisis stand out. The Global Gateway programme, in particular, appears to be specifically designed to compete with the Chinese government's Belt and Road Initiative programme, offering alternative funding and support.

The current situation of crisis and heightened tensions as a consequence of the war in Ukraine will require a clearer sense of realpolitik by the EU in the exercise of its Principled Pragmatism and its new geopolitical capabilities. In general, the EU will support reformist regimes such as Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia (which will hopefully continue to be so); it will seek the best possible understanding with conservative authoritarian countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates; and, together with the

US, it should call to order Turkey, which should not forget that its great economic progress since 2001 is based on its Customs Union agreement with the EU. Finally, the EU will have to act in concert with the US to contain the disruptive activities of Iran and its dependent proxies in Syria and Lebanon. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiations that President Biden wants to resume offer a good opportunity to attempt to do so.

Russia, the Mediterranean and the War in Ukraine

Russia's presence and policy in the Mediterranean in recent years is part of its desire to project itself as a major power on the international stage. It was Putin's immense good fortune that when he came to power as Russia's prime minister in 1999, the country's economic situation radically changed. After more than 10 years of economic disasters, the Russian economy experienced a period of vigorous economic growth in the 2000s, driven by the boom in the global oil market. This allowed him to acquire enormous stature as a ruler capable of lifting Russia up again. His drastic intervention in the Second Chechen War in 1999 caused stupor in Russia, but also admiration. The comparison was obvious; the years of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin were years of economic collapse. Vladimir Putin came to power as the strongman capable of rebuilding the country and putting it on a firm footing. The result was the construction of an authoritarian, autocratic system with a particular preponderance of former KGB men, and the consolidation of the plutocratic system based on the plundering of the sources of wealth clearly subject to presidential political power. His ambition to restore Russia's status as a great power was made explicit by Putin himself at the Munich security conference in 2007. Before Angela Merkel and a good many Western leaders, including former NATO Secretary General and EU High Representative Javier Solana, Putin clearly expressed his rejection of the unipolar global order, denouncing NATO enlargement as an operation concocted against Russia in breach of previous alleged commitments. He claimed Russia as a great country with 1,000 years of history that should participate in building and leading a new international order.

The sequence is clear. After the Chechen experience in 2009, inside the Russian Federation, and the Georgia War of 2008, the invasion and annexation of Crimea was launched in 2014, along with the incitement to secession of the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Donbas. There were sanctions by the West, but Crimea remained annexed to Russia.

This is not the clean, swift war that was envisaged, but rather is turning into a war of attrition that is destroying Ukraine, but also progressively weakening Russia, due to its military failure and the consequences of the economic and financial sanctions that will continue to be increasingly felt. All of this will have consequences for Russia's projection in the Mediterranean and the Middle East

The Mediterranean has always been part of the Russian social imaginary. It is the outlet to warm waters for a country whose immense continental landmass is enclosed, with the only exits to the seas being the icy waters of the Arctic, impassable for much of the year; the narrow Russian window on the Baltic; and the Siberian Far East via Vladivostok. Even if it is through the Black Sea and then the narrow passages of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, the Mediterranean Sea is thus Russia's clearest outlet to the world, and furthermore to the world in which it can develop its ambition for imperial influence, i.e. the countries of the South.

The exceptional economic boom allowed for a major rebuilding of the Russian army and navy, an essential attribute of a great power, as well as the reconstruction and modernization of Russia's powerful military industry. In recent years, with the military and economic instruments in place, the success of Russia's projection in the Mediterranean has been truly significant. First, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, with a large base in Sevastopol for the Russian navy's

southward projection. In 2015, the decisive intervention in the Syrian civil war, which managed to change the course of the conflict. Subsequently, the firm foothold in Libya and the building of important relations with all the countries of the South. Putin's imperial design was thus achieving its goals without encountering much resistance. In 2022, he finally made his historic miscalculation. The invasion of Ukraine was intended as a blitzkrieg, creating *faits accomplis* on the ground as in Crimea in 2014, without major opposition from the West beyond the announced sanctions. However, the invasion of Ukraine has provoked a unanimous, strong response from European countries and the United States and massive support for the Ukrainian military.

The failure of the Russian army's offensive and its enormous difficulties against the Ukrainians are causing it to lose its prestige and respectability. This is not the clean, swift war that was envisaged, but rather is turning into a war of attrition that is destroying Ukraine, but also progressively weakening Russia, due to its military failure and the consequences of the economic and financial sanctions that will continue to be increasingly felt. All of this will have consequences for Russia's projection in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The basic objectives of Russia's projection and presence in the Mediterranean in recent years have been to:

- Establish itself as a major power in an area of special interest to it.
- Fight against Islamist terrorism, which could once again spread among the Muslim populations of the Caucasus and Central Asia.
- Support strong regimes that provide stability and close the door to democratic transitions, which could lead to new colour revolutions in the area of the former Soviet countries, including Russia.
- Penetrate and influence the world oil and gas market as an exporting country and also as an investor.
- Acquire permanent bases for the Russian navy and air force in the region.

Considering Russia's economic capacity, which, with a GDP lower than Italy's, can hardly match that of a major world power, Russia's actions will be opportunistic. It will take advantage of the opportunities that arise and try to make its military operations prof-

itable, charging for its services, arms sales or the exploitation of raw materials, in addition to political influence. Furthermore, it will try to minimize costs by using mercenaries such as Wagner's, who are less politically compromising and much more effective and cheaper for the type of missions to be carried out in African countries.

The first major operation of Russia's new power projection in the Mediterranean was its intervention in the civil war of Syria, a country that was a former client of the USSR. There is an overriding Russian interest in having permanent military bases in the Mediterranean: the large naval base in Tartus, revitalizing and expanding the one that the Soviet navy already had there, and the new Khmeimim air base, essential for air support to the Assad regime, which would turn the tide of the war. In this war, Assad's and Putin's objectives coincide: to fight the Islamist terrorism of ISIS and related groups, on the one hand, and the Syrian democratic opposition forces, which were already failing in their attempt to overthrow Assad and initiate a democratic transition in the country, on the other. Moscow sees the democratic projects of the Arab Spring as yet another example of the colour revolutions that could "infect" the countries in its orbit, and Russia itself. With Russia's aggressive military intervention, especially its aviation, the same war tactics are being repeated as in Grozny in the Georgia war, the massive destruction of cities such as Aleppo, which we will later see repeated in the war in Ukraine.

The democratic revolution of the Arab Spring in 2011 was initiated by groups of modernizers and youth and women's movements. However, it was soon hijacked by Islamist movements, whether jihadist revolutionaries or moderates, supported by the Gulf countries. With the outbreak of repression and war, the Syrian regime, with the support of Iran, faced a large coalition composed of opposition movements, both democratic and Islamist, and the Kurds, who would be joined by an international coalition including the United States and Turkey, initially formed to fight against the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq, and later transferred to Syria. It was the direct military intervention by Russian aircraft that changed the course of the war, but the progressive inhibition of the international coalition also played a role, especially the US withdrawal proposed by Trump, which was largely carried out. Some analysts believe that the

US withdrawal was partly because the Trump Administration was happy to accept that Bashar al-Assad's regime had survived and that Russia would impose order and stability in the country.

Russia's support was primarily political and diplomatic, as its veto prevented the UN Security Council from condemning the Syrian army for its proven use of chemical weapons. In addition to arms sales, Russia has been intervening directly since 2015 with direct aviation, artillery and training support, in exchange for the guaranteed provision of its military bases for the future. Incidentally, misgivings among its allies led Damascus, under pressure from Iran, to shorten the years of cession of the bases originally envisaged when negotiating their respective agreements. Iran and Russia are circumstantial allies here, but with ultimately conflicting objectives: Russia's interest is in regime stability that will guarantee the use of its military bases for the future, while Iran remains committed to spreading the Shiite revolution, its pre-eminence in the region and the destruction of Israel.

Involvement in the Syrian civil war is just one factor in the fundamentally complicated relations between Russia and Turkey. Modern Kemalist Turkey was a staunch NATO ally. Under Erdoğan and Putin everything is much more complicated. The war in Ukraine has changed the equation significantly, adding more unknowns for now. What is certain, however, is that Putin has achieved significant collusion with Erdoğan, especially since the failed coup of July 2016.

Russia was already a commercial partner, a key supplier of gas and oil, a regular customer of Turkey's important tourism sector and a major investor in the construction and real estate sectors. During Putin's official visit to Turkey in 2014, he announced the construction of the TurkStream gas pipeline, which entered service in 2020. After 2016, relations went up a notch. In 2017 Erdoğan bought a batch of S-400 missile systems worth \$2.5 billion from Russia. Reacting to criticism from NATO, he bought a second batch in 2020. In 2018, the Russian company Rosatom broke ground for the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant. With the Ukrainian war raging, in July 2022, Russia approved \$20 billion in funding for the expansion of the plant under construction, which will be maintained and operated by Rosatom and whose first reactor is due to start operating in 2023.

The fluidity of Russian-Turkish relations has allowed Erdoğan to play the complicated role of mediator in order to reach an agreement on shipping cereals from Ukraine and Russia to the international market, avoiding, as we said, problems of famine and unrest, mainly in Arab and African countries. The Ukraine war undoubtedly strengthens Turkey and Erdoğan's position in their relations with Russia, as well as with the United States. But Russia is certainly losing face for its failures in Ukraine. Despite its mediations, Turkey may come under increasing pressure as a NATO member to become more defined in support of Ukraine, which it has thus far managed to avoid.

Russia's relations with Egypt have traditionally been good since the 1956 Suez crisis and Nasser's agreements with Khrushchev for the construction of the Aswan Dam after he failed to obtain US support for the project. The Obama Administration supported the democratically elected government of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood and strongly criticized al-Sisi's coup, while taking pains to avoid labelling it as such in order to maintain important trade, political and military aid relations. Al-Sisi moved closer to Russia, and Egypt is now a major customer of the Russian arms industry and the world's leading importer of wheat, most of it Russian. Trade and economic relations grew significantly after the Western sanctions imposed on Russia in 2014 for the invasion and annexation of Crimea. Al-Sisi has continued the Nasserist tradition of balancing between the US and Russia. In 2017, the two countries reached an agreement for Rosatom to build a nuclear power plant also in Egypt for \$24 billion with Russian and international funding, which is scheduled to begin operating in 2024. The oil companies Rosneft, Gazprom and Lukoil are all involved in oil exploration and exploitation in Egypt. This same Nasserist tradition and popular pressure, fundamentally anti-American, will foreseeably lead Egypt to maintain a balanced position on the war in Ukraine, as already demonstrated by the UN votes.

After Russia's great diplomatic and military success in meddling in the Syrian civil war since 2015, the experience would be repeated to some extent in Libya. Russia, which had maintained good political and especially commercial relations with the Gaddafi regime, felt cheated when a mere humanitarian no-fly operation approved by the UN Security Council, with the Kremlin's abstention, turned into a full-

fledged military intervention by NATO and some Western countries, especially France. Moreover, with the fall of Gaddafi, Russia lost an important market and even debts of more than \$4 billion that the new post-Gaddafi Libyan government refused to recognize. Gazprom and Tafnet were forced to abandon contracts they had in the country worth more than \$10 billion. The implosion of the Libyan State and the ensuing civil war plunged the country into chaos. The re-launching of the war by Marshal Haftar's alternative government, established in Benghazi, to advance towards Tripoli and control the entire country, offered the opportunity for the Russian intervention decided by Putin in 2019. Haftar had the support of Egypt and the UAE, and Russia is present with aviation forces and through the Wagner mercenaries, both Russian and Syrian pro-Bashar al-Assad militia. For the moment, Libya has become a platform for the projection of Russian military power in the heart of the Mediterranean and a base of operations for Wagner mercenaries in the Sahel. However, with Marshal Haftar's offensive having failed, the continuity and modality of Russia's military presence in Libya will be conditioned by the evolution of the peace process underway under the auspices of the United Nations. For the moment, the war in Ukraine seems to be resulting in a transfer of Russian forces and mercenaries from Libya to Ukraine, where they find themselves in a very different situation, which could put a damper on the arrogance they have tended to display in African countries.

The Gulf states, led by Saudi Arabia and the US, played a leading role at the beginning of the Ukrainian war. The UAE's abstention at the UN Security Council, avoiding condemning the Russian attack on Ukraine in exchange for Russian support to avoid UN criticism on human rights, was the first alarm bell. This was followed by the refusal of Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries to increase oil production in order to mitigate the price increases and market disruption caused by the war. As explained above, President Biden's visit claims to have redressed the situation.

Finally, it is worth noting Israel's always interesting role and relations with Russia in the Middle East. In recent years Israel has dramatically improved its relations with Russia in trade and technology, bordering on military-applicable technology, as well as having a particularly important human link because of

the many Jews of Russian origin who are citizens of Israel. Israel and Russia have had counter-terrorist intelligence collaboration in Syria, Iraq, Iran and elsewhere, and an understanding that Russia is not an impediment to Israel's operations in Syria against targets it deems a terrorist threat. The war in Ukraine will certainly complicate the situation by forcing a choice of sides. Israel has attempted some Erdoğan-style mediation, with little success so far.

China, the Cautiously Ascending Power

On 4 February 2022 President Putin travelled to Beijing for the Winter Olympics, just 20 days before launching the attack on Ukraine. It is hard to believe that they did not refer in some way to the situation regarding Ukraine. Putin obviously went to Beijing seeking Chinese backing. The various options were ready, although it was perhaps not yet clear what the eventual course of events would be. The result was a warm reaffirmation of friendship between the two countries. The Chinese ally, meanwhile, is taking note. The war in Ukraine is a major test bed for China. First, to test the West's reaction and the degree of unity in its response; second, to analyse the effects of economic and financial sanctions; and third, to observe the reactions of third countries sympathetic to one side or the other. Ever cautious, China did not give direct support to Russia; it did not join the Russian veto of the UN Security Council resolution condemning the invasion of Ukraine. It simply gave indirect support by abstaining. One of the principles of Chinese diplomacy is that of balance, not taking sides in any conflict other than its own, maintaining good relations with both camps and, should the occasion arise, presenting itself as a peace power and mediator. Ukraine is also a delicate case for another reason: it involves another major principle, that of territorial integrity, which Russia applies to Ukraine and China to Taiwan, which it considers a Chinese province awaiting reintegration into the common homeland. China's attitude towards Taiwan is similar to that of Russia towards Ukraine. China went so far as to say that what has happened in Ukraine is the result of US and NATO pressure and its besiegement of Russia in recent years; but the fact is that it abstained. China presents its model, which some have called the Beijing Consensus, demonstrating by example

that the good policy for long-term economic growth and development is not the liberal recipes of the Washington Consensus, but a politically authoritarian and economically state-directed system, even if economic stakeholders act with relative freedom in the market. This is the model it now largely shares with Russia, hence its solidarity of interests and international positioning. Its typical clientele is therefore those countries that aspire to economic development and that may find the Chinese model and aid the most effective way forward.

China, from a Mainland Country to a Trade and Maritime Power

China's economic growth and its extraordinary engagement in international trade have, to some extent, put the Mediterranean back at the centre of the world. Or at least at one of the strategic points for the functioning of China's economic model in recent decades. The route from China through the Strait of Malacca and the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean, and from there to Europe and optionally to the eastern seaboard of the United States is thus the route that connects China with the European market and also with the North American market on its Atlantic coast, which has similar freight costs from China as from the Pacific and Panama. It is also the route that connects China to energy sources in the Middle East, and to Africa, the continent of the future in terms of natural resources. But China's concept and approach are totally different from Russia's, at least in Putin's version of Russia. China's approach is always based on its first and foremost objective, which is to continue its extraordinary economic growth of recent decades in order to modernize the country and give China its rightful place among the world's great powers and, from its perspective, even a position of hegemony in the future. China is therefore well served by the stability on which it has built its economic growth. Stability at home through the iron grip of the Communist Party and stability in partner countries with which to continue prospering. This implies, for example, in the Arab and Islamic world, the deepest possible vigilance and cooperation in the fight against Islamist extremism, which could spread to the Islamic areas of China itself, especially the Uyghur ethnic group in the Xinjiang region.

China has traditionally had very little presence in the Mediterranean. However, everything has changed with globalization and China's extraordinary economic growth. The new China of recent decades has become the world's factory. It needs to attract foreign investment in technology – especially in its first decades of growth and industrialization – to expand its markets, mainly in Europe and the United States, and supply itself with raw materials and especially energy. In the case of the MENA region, the volume of trade with China was \$20 billion in 2000, but rose to \$314 billion in 2018, a 16-fold increase over 18 years. However, these figures represent only 7% of China's growing foreign trade. China's exports to the MENA countries are quite diversified, while 80% of exports from the MENA region to China are concentrated in oil and gas. China relies on the MENA region for 42% of its hydrocarbon imports, although one of the consequences of the war in Ukraine is that China is increasing its gas and oil purchases from Russia, and decreasing its imports from the Gulf and the MENA region in general.

President Xi Jinping has given China's foreign policy a much more assertive external projection. In 2013, he launched its major programme to structure China's projection throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, i.e. the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This is an extraordinarily ambitious programme that essentially promotes and finances infrastructure projects based on agreements with countries that serve China's interests and conditional on the maximum possible participation of Chinese agents, be they financiers, companies, technicians or workers. After four decades of growth, China has also become a major investor abroad. For years, its trade surplus was invested mainly in US bonds, but for many years now Chinese companies, both public and private, have been investing massively abroad directly and in sectors with ever greater added value, setting up or buying companies of the highest technological level. It can be said, however, that China builds primarily in the South, through the BRI, but invests preferentially in companies in the rich countries of the North. BRI projects chiefly involve the Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank, the new Development Bank for BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the New Silk Road Fund. In its financing projects, as in its commercial transactions, one of China's main aims is to promote the de-dollar-

ization of the economy and international finance, in which it has so far made little progress. Perhaps in this regard, the war in Ukraine and the financial sanctions imposed on Russia will be counterproductive, boosting this de-dollarization in China's and Russia's trade with one another and with third countries.

The Belt and Road Initiative comprises a complex map of land and sea routes linking China with Europe and Africa through six land corridors and two major maritime routes: the Arctic route, which may become important with climate change; and fundamentally, that of the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean, through the straits. Initially, its main objective was connectivity, investing in land and maritime connectivity infrastructures, in ports such as Piraeus, for example, now Chinese property. But most BRI projects consist of financing the award of large construction and engineering contracts to Chinese companies. The MENA region accounts for 30% of the construction contracts won by China and financed by the BRI. Algeria, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran are among the top 10 countries in construction volume by Chinese companies working abroad. Only Sub-Saharan Africa receives a higher volume of BRI funding than the MENA region, with a larger grant component. Some authors have accused China of practising debt trap diplomacy, i.e. lending to economically weak countries beyond their ability to pay in order to have greater leverage and influence over them.

China, a Growing Military Power in the Mediterranean

The greater assertiveness of Xi Jinping's foreign policy, the need to guarantee the security of its supply lines and, above all, the desire to have a greater presence as a world power, have led China to both increase its defence spending and weave a network of collaboration through military cooperation with certain countries according to its interests and through arms sales.

Initially, China's military operations were within the framework of UN-flagged peacekeeping operations. Since 2008, the Chinese navy has been actively participating in anti-piracy operations in the Horn of Africa, off the coast of Somalia. This finally led it, in 2017, to establish a naval base abroad for the first time, choosing the strategic location of Djibouti, at the mouth of the Red Sea, a strategic point on the BRI

sea route. China has thus become a “maritime power,” – as Xi Jinping announced at the beginning of his term in office. Since 2015, China has been conducting naval exercises with Russia in the Mediterranean, the China Sea and the Pacific. It also conducts naval exercises in the waters of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean separately with both Saudi Arabia and Iran.

China is now the world’s fifth largest arms exporter and has major customers in the MENA region, such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, an important US ally, buys only 1% of its arms imports from China, but has reached an agreement with Beijing for the installation of a CH-4 drone factory in the country. Riyadh had tried to buy Predator missiles from the US, but President Obama vetoed it in the face of dissenting views in Congress over civilian deaths in bombings in Yemen. As a result, Saudi Arabia replaced it with a first-time purchase of CH-4 drones from China, which led to the agreement to set up the stated TH-4 drone factory.

China has clearly hierarchized its relations with other countries, in principle into three categories: comprehensive strategic partnerships, strategic partnerships and potential partnerships, as well as special partnerships in some cases. Applying this to the MENA region shows us a map of priorities. China has concluded comprehensive strategic partnerships with Algeria, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, while maintaining strategic partnerships with some others, such as Morocco. A clear prioritization of energy supply interests in its relations with the MENA countries follows from the map. There is also China’s fundamental interest in preserving its good relations with all countries along its maritime route to Europe and the Atlantic. For the Arab countries, China is an increasingly interesting partner because of its immense economic capacity and the relevance of BRI aid, investment and development projects, and especially because of the non-political or ideological conditionality of Chinese aid and investment.

China viewed the revolutionary movements of the Arab Spring with suspicion and little confidence. In general, it supports stable, authoritarian regimes that shun alignment with the US to some extent, wishing to maintain a degree of autonomy from the West in their foreign policy. In North Africa, China has traditionally maintained particularly close relations with Algeria. Beijing has prioritized its traditional harmony

with the Algerian regime to favour its BRI projects, where more than 40,000 Chinese workers and technicians are employed. Algeria, which has the largest defence budget on the African continent, is a good buyer for China’s arms industry.

The Chinese ally, meanwhile, is taking note. The war in Ukraine is a major test bed for China. First, to test the West’s reaction and the degree of unity in its response; second, to analyse the effects of economic and financial sanctions; and third, to observe the reactions of third countries sympathetic to one side or the other

Egypt is of particular interest to China as a major geographic, demographic and cultural centre of gravity in the Arab world, although in recent decades it has been displaced by the wealth and power of the Gulf countries. But there is an additional feature that makes it strategically important, which is the Suez Canal, under Egyptian sovereignty and control. China maintained an important and fruitful relationship with Gaddafi’s Libya. Today it maintains good relations, mainly economic, with both the Tripoli government, since it is the one recognized by the United Nations, and General Haftar’s government in the Benghazi area, awaiting to enter into juicy contracts for the reconstruction of the country when the conflict comes to an end, whoever wins.

China has concluded two important special agreements with Turkey and Israel. Turkey is an old and new regional power, in a process of industrialization that is both competitive with and complementary to that of China. It is also of particular relevance to China because of its geographical position as the guardian of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits. In recent years, Israel’s relations with China have become increasingly important because of China’s exceptional interest in Israeli technological capabilities. China’s relations with the Gulf states have, predictably, been based primarily on energy. In recent years,

however, other dimensions have clearly developed that have an impact on stability and conflict in the region. Along with the other “big five” Security Council members, plus the European Union and Germany, China was one of the promoters of the nuclear deal with Iran and has consistently pushed for a return to that negotiation after it was broken off by President Trump. China cultivates and closely controls Iran so that it does not spread its revolutionary Islamist influence inside China. With the Biden presidency, negotiations should resume and China, which maintains excellent trade, political and security relations with Iran, will play a special role.

Looking to the Future

So, is the war in Ukraine a turning point towards a new World Order? And what impact will it have on the Mediterranean? It all depends, as stated, on the outcome of the war. In any case, it has been pointed out that crises and wars, rather than radically changing things, accelerate the trends that were already developing. And what appears on the horizon is indeed a multipolar system, but which in reality is configured into two opposing camps vying for hegemony and also for their ideology and political and social model, with quite or very different value systems: the camp of liberal democracies, led by the United States and the EU; and the camp of authoritarian systems, with societies, cultures, media and economies that are more or less capitalist but controlled by the state and all of its apparatuses.

In the case of the South Mediterranean world, there are three models, three possible paths: 1) A model of modernization and progressive democratization, such as the one agreed since 1995 with the European Union through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP); 2) an anti-Western Islamist identity model, today in regression at the governmental level but not so much at the social level, with two different versions: the conservative one, driven by countries such as Turkey and Qatar, and the revolutionary one, driven by Iran and its epigones in Syria and Lebanon among the Shiites, and by the descendants of al-Qaeda among the Sunnis; and 3) the conservative model of the traditional Arab authoritarian state – which has been reinforced in recent years by the failure of the Arab

Spring – promoted by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and accepted by the US and the Western camp as a fait accompli when necessary for stability, as in al-Sisi’s Egypt. The possibilities for progress and development in the countries of the region depend on internal factors, on the policies pursued by regional powers and also, to a very significant extent, on the policies and attitudes of the major global powers. The problem is that the latter will act in accordance with their interests, which do not always coincide with those of the countries and populations of the region.

Bibliography

- ABDEL GHAFAR, Adel and JACOBS, Anna L. *China in the Mediterranean: Implications of expanding Sino-North Africa relations* Brookings Doha Center, Doha, July, 2020. www.brookings.edu/research/china-in-the-mediterranean-implications-of-expanding-sino-north-africa-relations/
- ARNOLD, Michael “The United States in the Middle East: The Return of Realpolitik?” *Policy Outlook* TRT World Research Centre, 2022. https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/US-in-the-Middle-East_V2.pdf
- BARNES-DACEY, Julien and LOVATT, Hugh “Principled pragmatism: Europe’s place in a multipolar Middle East” European Council of Foreign Relations, 2022.
- CALVO, Jordi, “Exportations d’armes russes dans la région MENA” in *afkar/ideas*, No. 66, summer 2022. www.iemed.org/afkar-edition/guerra-ucrania-impacto-en-el-mediterraneo-sur/
- EKMAN, Alice “China in the Mediterranean: An Emerging Presence” *Notes de l’Ifri*, February 2018. IFRI. www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/china-mediterranean-emerging-presence
- GOWAN, Richard “The Ukraine War and UN Reform” International Crisis Group, 6 May 2022. www.crisisgroup.org/global/ukraine-war-and-un-reform
- HASS, Ryan “U.S.-China relations: The search for a new equilibrium” The Brookings Institution.
- HILTMANN, Joost “Tackling the MENA Region’s Intersecting Conflicts” International Crisis Group. 2017. www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/tackling-mena-regions-intersecting-conflicts

- NESET, Siri “Turkey as a regional security actor in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Levant Region” CMI Report, 2021. www.cmi.no/publications/7820-turkey-as-a-regional-security-actor-in-the-black-sea-the-mediterranean-and-the-levant-region
- ICG “The Impact of Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine in the Middle East and North Africa” In International Crisis Group, 2022. www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/impact-russias-invasion-ukraine-middle-east-and-north-africa. Washington, February, 2020.
- Interview with Douglas LUTE “How war in Ukraine is reshaping global order” *The Harvard Gazette*, 22 April 2022. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/04/how-war-in-ukraine-is-reshaping-global-order/>
- KATZ, Mark N. “Russia in the Mediterranean and the Middle East” in *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2021*. IEMed, Barcelona, 2021 www.iemed.org/publication/russia-in-the-mediterranean-and-the-middle-east/
- KHADER, Bichara “The Chinese Breakthrough in the Arab and Mediterranean Markets” in *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2018*. IEMed, Barcelona, 2018. www.iemed.org/publication/the-chinese-breakthrough-in-the-arab-and-mediterranean-markets/
- KHADER, Bichara “L’invasion russe de l’Ukraine vue par les états arabes et méditerranéens” in *afkar/ideas*, No. 66, summer 2022. www.iemed.org/publication/la-invasion-rusa-de-ucrania-vista-por-los-estados-arabes-y-mediterraneos/
- KRASTEV, Ivan and LEONARD, Mark “Peace versus Justice: The coming European split over the war in Ukraine” European Council of Foreign Relations, 2022. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/peace-versus-justice-the-coming-european-split-over-the-war-in-ukraine/>
- PIERINI, Marc “New Power Struggles in the Mediterranean” in *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2020*. IEMed, Barcelona, 2020. www.iemed.org/publication/new-power-struggles-in-the-mediterranean/
- PIERINI, Marc and SICCARDI, Francesco “Why the EU and the United States Should Rethink Their Turkey Policies in 2021.” Carnegie Europe, January, 2021. <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/01/21/why-eu-and-united-states-should-rethink-their-turkey-policies-in-2021-pub-83662>
- PUTIN, Vladimir “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,” 12 July 2021. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>
- SALEM, Paul “The Biden Administration and the Mediterranean: Interests and Policies in Search of an Overall Strategy” in *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2021*. IEMed, Barcelona, 2021. www.iemed.org/publication/the-biden-administration-and-the-mediterranean-interests-and-policies-in-search-of-an-overall-strategy
- SIDŁO, Katarzyna (ed.) “The Role of China in the Middle East and North Africa. Beyond Economic Interests?” *Euromesco Joint Policy Study* No. 16. July, 2020. www.euromesco.net/publication/the-role-of-china-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-beyond-economic-interests/
- SOLANA, Javier “Ukraine and the Fundamentals of European Security” Project Syndicate, 21 January 2022. www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/russia-ukraine-crisis-requires-european-diplomatic-role-by-javier-solana-2022-01
- SUTYAGIN, Igor “Russian Policy in the Middle East and North Africa – Some Driving Forces” in *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2017*. IEMed, Barcelona, 2017. www.iemed.org/publication/russian-policy-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-some-driving-forces

Reshuffling of Political and Military Alliances

Geopolitical Trends, Shifts, Challenges and Fractures of the Post-Arab Spring (2020-2021)

Professor Bichara Khader

Professor Emeritus

Université Catholique de Louvain

After the first decade (2010-2020) following the watershed events dubbed as the “Arab Spring,” many Arab States are either unstable or simply in shambles, and the old Arab political order is collapsing while the new geopolitical landscape is marred by a chaotic shift of alliances, proxy wars and sectarian violence. If in the past we had some sort of a “regional Arab system,” today we have a “region without a system,” where non-state actors are filling the vacuum left open by weakened Arab states’ power systems and where non-Arab countries like Israel, Iran and Turkey are gaining ground, clout and influence.

In summary, the first ten years following the immolation of Mohammad Bouazizi, on 17 December 2010, have been years of bitter harvest and of disappointment and disenchantment. The general outlook has been disheartening. Arab regimes have been busy either containing Iranian expansionism, dislodging the Muslim Brotherhood, undermining the Arab Spring dynamics, or simply surviving. Some followed their own agenda with outsized diplomacy. Others tried to diversify their foreign alliances. New re-alignments brought about new alliances. A greater cause for concern is the security vacuum, in the absence of any regional security architecture. Not only have the Middle East and North Africa, as a region, been incapable of filling the security vacuum, but the ability of the states themselves to address security concerns has decreased dramatically. The reliance on the West has become crucial at a time when Western powers themselves are facing huge economic and political challeng-

es at home and are losing hegemonic influence abroad.

In such a context, Russia and China have raised their profile both in the region and outside of it. This was clear in the Syrian crisis where they protected, de facto, the Syrian regime. By opposing any Western attempt to bring the Syrian issue to the Security Council, China and Russia positioned themselves as “*alternative reliable allies*.” Whether these two countries are capable or willing to assume the responsibilities of a “big power,” as guarantors of security, remains to be seen.

Given all these considerations, no one can guess at this stage the outcome of the second post-Arab Spring decade (2020-2030). Will we witness happy transitions, mass delusion, a return to authoritarianism or illiberal democracy? Will we see a wake-up call for a new Arab revival? Regrettably, the general trends of the past two years (2020-2021) do not look promising. But there are some signs, mainly in Mashreq countries, to indicate a willingness to bury the hatchet of distrust.

Geopolitical Events in 2020-2021

2020-2021 has been a period of turmoil and havoc: an unprecedented epidemic, Trump’s “Deal of the Century,” the so-called “Abraham Accords,” the fourth Israeli offensive in Gaza and persistent geopolitical fractures such as the quagmire that is Lebanon, the bumpy political process in Libya and the backsliding to authoritarian rule in Tunisia. But there have been some signs of “détente” and a significant shift of alliances, with a fragile rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the end of the internal GCC rift between Qatar and its fellow Gulf partners and a more pragmatic Turkey.

The coronavirus epidemic will be reported in history books as the most world-shattering health disease in recent times. The far-ranging consequences of the epidemic will not be limited to an economic slump and higher public debt. It will also have a transformational effect on states and societies and lead to significant shifts in the distribution of power at the regional and international level.

The first ten years following the immolation of Mohammad Bouazizi have been years of bitter harvest and of disappointment and disenchantment

All Arab and Mediterranean countries have been severely hit, as the pandemic struck at the worst moment, laying bare the states' bad governance and incompetence and the absence of a collective and concerted response. All Arab states responded promptly to control infections: school and business closures, lockdowns and border controls. But these measures were unevenly applied: the most-populated countries, refugee camps, migrant workers, occupied Palestinian territories and conflict zones were severely affected. International organizations reported some six million cases and 150,000 deaths across the 22 Arab states. But there has been significant underreporting, as the real figures are certainly higher. With the exception of the Gulf's rich oil-producing countries (80% fully vaccinated), and, to a lesser extent, Morocco (around 65%) and Tunisia (40%), the overall vaccination rate in other Arab countries was less than 15%. In general, hospitalizations and mortality rates have been lower than in other regions because the Arab world is the "most youthful."

The socioeconomic cost of the pandemic has been devastating. In the Arab Gulf region, the pandemic struck at the worst possible moment, marked by a slump in oil prices to unprecedented levels. However, these countries have better staffed and equipped health systems and sufficient financial resources to cope with the disease. But expatriate workers have

been disproportionately affected, as businesses and construction works were brought to a halt, depleting migrants' financial remittances.

In all other Arab countries, the negative impact was severe. Crippling financial crisis (Lebanon), chronic political instability (Iraq), protracted conflicts and civil strife (Yemen, Libya, Syria), dysfunctional bureaucracies, inefficiency, bad governance and the corruption of the political systems of all Arab countries only served to increase their misfortunes. The paralysis of the tourist industry (10 to 15 % of GDP in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Jordan) and the dwindling of migrants' remittances drastically diminished countries' abilities to weather the storm. It is estimated that in 2020, the region's businesses lost \$500 billion of market capital and \$400 billion in 2021. It is also estimated that four to five million jobs have been lost, increasing poverty rates to a real average of 30-35%. Did Covid-19 serve as an eye-opener, triggering internal reform or regional strategic dynamics? Sadly, the answer is no. In some countries (Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt) the pandemic offered the incumbent regimes an opportunity to crack down on legitimate speech and stifle the protest movements under the guise of public health safety. Other countries indulged in scapegoating. On Twitter, hashtags such as "coronavirus Qatar" blamed Qatar for spreading the virus. On 10 March 2020, the Council of Ministers in Saudi Arabia, accused Iran of "*bearing direct responsibility for the outbreak of the corona infection.*" Later, Saudi Arabia accused Saudi Shia inhabitants of "*illegally visiting Iran and bringing back the virus with them.*" Thus, hopes that the pandemic would spur political reform or put an end to internal strife and regional conflicts were dashed in 2020 and 2021. Authoritarian regimes have remained intact, even becoming emboldened, and no one should expect these regimes to embrace genuine reform any time soon. There has been no lull in raging conflicts, mainly in Yemen. Israel has further tightened its grip on the occupied Palestinian territories with total impunity. Bashar El Assad is still in the saddle and there are signs of normalization between his regime and many Arab countries, as well as calls for the reintegration of Syria into the League of Arab States. On 18 March 2022, Bashar al-Assad made his first visit to the Emirates. The Libyan crisis further deepened after Khalifa Haftar claimed he has "legitimate mandate" to govern Libya (27 April 2020). Morocco and Algeria

continued their squabble. The League of Arab States remained as a bystander, and the League's scheduled 2020 Summit, rather than showing commitment to health cooperation, was cancelled.

The pandemic offered the incumbent regimes an opportunity to crack down on legitimate speech and stifle the protest movements under the guise of public health safety

In 2021, the broader regional economic system was beginning to bounce back, with GDP increasing by 4%. Unfortunately, the 24 February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has been a hard blow to many Arab countries, such as Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen and Libya, which are among the top buyers of grain from Ukraine and Russia: 50% of wheat consumption in Lebanon in 2020, 43% in Libya, 22% in Yemen and 14% in Egypt came from Ukraine. The threat of disruption, shortages and rising prices are unsettling for these countries, and others. Oil-producing countries are better positioned to cope with food shortages as they have benefitted from a sharp rise in oil and gas prices due to the sanctions imposed on Russia, military operations, divestment and the withdrawal of major oil corporations from Russia. But population-rich and resource-poor Arab countries will be severely hit by food shortages and skyrocketing energy prices.

The "Deal of the Century" (28 January 2020)

On 28 January 2020, President Trump announced the political part of his plan to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, dubbed the "Deal of the Century." The economic part of the "plan" was disclosed in a workshop that took place in Bahrain in June 2019. The two parts are combined under the title "Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People." The 181-page plan contains 22 sections covering a wide range of issues. Concocted by a radical Zionist trio – Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, David Friedman (the American ambassador to Israel) and Jason Greenblatt (the American Middle East special envoy) – the plan is an

updated and revised version of Shimon Peres' vision of a "New Middle East," purporting to establish a prosperous Middle Eastern region with "Israel at its heart and the Palestinians at the bottom" as Marwan Bishara summarized it.

Indeed, the whole plan is centred on Israeli security concerns and the recognition of Israel as "a Jewish state." It stipulates that 87% of Palestinian territories will be annexed by Israel, that the Jordan Valley will remain under absolute Israeli sovereignty and that Israel will be responsible for all international border crossings into the proposed Palestinian State. In violation of the 1949 UN resolution, the plan rejects the right of return of Palestinian refugees, and even envisages the possibility of a territory transfer of Arab Triangle communities that would reduce the Arab demographic "burden" in Israel. And, finally, the plan stipulates that Jerusalem will remain the unified capital of Israel.

Economically, the plan promises international aid and investments of \$50 billion over ten years as part of a regional economic integration. But it says nothing about potential donors and investors.

The plan does not exclude a disarmed and non-contiguous "Palestinian state" on 13% of Occupied Palestinian territories, with a capital in Abu Dis to the east of Jerusalem, and not in East Jerusalem, which is annexed by Israel. The proposed "State" is made conditional on Palestinians recognizing Israel as "a Jewish state;" on combatting what Israel considers to be "terror in all its forms;" on granting Israel's right to conduct security operations within the Palestinian State; and the responsibility for the security and control of all crossings and airspace West of Jordan. Presented at the White House on 28 January 2020, the plan was described as "a novel American Proposal." It is as hawkish a plan as most radical Zionists could have dreamed of. It is no surprise that Benjamin Netanyahu, who was the sole host of the White House ceremony, applauded his friend "Donald," qualifying the day of the plan's presentation as "*historic.*"

A few months before the official announcement of the plan, on 14 April 2019, 37 former European ministers, foreign ministers and special EU envoys signed a letter to incumbent EU Foreign Ministers and the EU High Representative ringing alarm bells. "*Unfortunately,*" says their letter, "*the current US Administration has departed from longstanding US policy and distanced itself from established international legal norms. It has so far recognized only one side's claims*

to Jerusalem and demonstrated a disturbing indifference to Israeli settlement expansion... we believe that Europe should embrace and promote a plan that respects the basic principles of international law as reflected in the agreed EU parameters for a resolution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict."

The letter reflects the "malaise" that Trump's plan generated in many European circles. Yet there were mixed reactions from European capitals, with some allies, notably the United Kingdom, giving the so-called "Deal of the Century" their backing and others firmly rejecting the proposal out of hand. The EU itself did not want to turn its back on the US Administration, welcoming any moves that could lead to peace, but it did acknowledge the flaws of the plan and reaffirmed its commitment to the two-state solution.

The Abraham Accords (15 August 2020)

The "normalization" accords between Israel and the United Arab Emirates were announced on 15 August 2020. Bahrain joined the Accords on 11 September and the White House signing ceremony took place on 15 September. After the announcement of the Deal of the Century, the Accords represent another major foreign policy achievement for Israel, Netanyahu's doctrine of "Peace for Peace, and Peace through strength" proving to have paid off. The only promise Netanyahu made was to "suspend" the annexation of the Jordan Valley and other parts of the Occupied Territories. To assuage the rage and wrath of the Palestinians, the UAE hailed the suspension of annexation as "a diplomatic victory" for the Palestinian people.

The reality tells another story: the Accords do not mention the end of Israeli occupation, but rather preserve the territorial status-quo, allowing Israel to sideline the Palestinian leadership, ignore the Palestinians and bury the idea of the two-state solution. As Tova Norlen and Tamir Sinai aptly argue, "*the deal symbolizes a geopolitical shift in Middle Eastern security, and a significant step in the gradual but deliberate long-term efforts of Israel to normalize relations with its Arab neighbours without having to compromise on the Palestinian issue.*"¹

Indeed, for many observers, the deal represents the end of the Palestinians' "veto power" on Israel's rela-

tionship with its Arab neighbours and the return to state realpolitik. To put it in a nutshell: Palestine has lost its symbolic centrality in Arab official politics and is no longer a major concern. Some Arab countries do not wish to remain "constrained" by automatic solidarity with the Palestinian cause to the detriment of their own interests and security agenda. That is why Trump's transactional foreign policy has been so successful, not only in the Gulf, but also in Morocco and Sudan. To Morocco, Trump promised to recognize its sovereignty over Western Sahara. To Sudan, he promised to take the country off the "terrorist list." So, far from being a diplomatic breakthrough, the Accords appear to be a "bargaining chip."

It is too early to assess the possible impact of the normalization agreements on regional security. There is no doubt that the deal has tilted the balance of power in Israel's favour, since it has moved its military capabilities into the heart of the Gulf, to the doorstep of its arch-enemy, Iran; opened a vast market for Israel's military-industrial complex, allowed Israel to tighten the noose on Iran through military bases in the Gulf, Iraqi Kurdistan and Azerbaijan; and may have increased Israel's veto "power on arms purchases" by Gulf states.

The UAE is concerned by the preservation of the Emirates' political stability and strives to benefit from Israeli technology, attract visitors, increase its trade and shield the Emirates from insurgency or the Iranian threat. In a scenario of possible American disengagement from the region, the Emirates sees Israel as a substitute to the US, as a security guarantor but with American weaponry (possible purchase by the UAE of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters) with Israel's consent. Jeffrey Goldberg summarizes it as follows: "*In many ways, the Abraham Accords amount to an arms deal. The UAE and other states that now engage with Israel will find themselves armed with a better class of American weaponry.*"²

Morocco is obsessed with the issue of its sovereignty over Western Sahara. The Accords are supposed to boost Morocco's standing and security, through the transfer of Israeli technical know-how (including the Pegasus Programme) and military cooperation. Such an orientation has further strained relations with Algeria, which severed its diplomatic ties with

¹ www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/abraham-accords-paradigm-shift-or-realpolitik

² www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/09/winners-losers/616364/

Morocco and shut the Gas pipeline that crosses through its territory.

In Sudan, a military coup led by General Adel Fattah al-Burhan, overthrew the civil government (25 October 2021). Massive protests filled the streets calling for a return to civil rule. The normalization accords have not been the main drivers of the street protests, but they have certainly added fuel to a raging fire.

In summary, the Abraham Accords, which are hailed by Israel as significant diplomatic progress in the Gulf and Maghreb regions, have created a dangerous dynamic which may lead to a strategic disaster, with increased tensions in the Gulf, proxy wars (in Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon), increased friction between Algeria and Morocco, total paralysis of the Arab Maghreb Union and continued turmoil in Sudan.

Palestine has lost its symbolic centrality in Arab official politics and is no longer a major concern. Some Arab countries do not wish to remain “constrained” by automatic solidarity with the Palestinians

Separate peace deals with some Arab countries will not lead to peaceful coexistence unless the “core Palestinian issue” is addressed. Focusing on external enemies while continuing the occupation and expanding Israel’s settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is a recipe for strategic disaster. Norlen and Sinai aptly warn that the normalization trend “*postpones the tragedy but cannot avoid it, as the future can never fully bury the past.*”

The Fourth Israeli Offensive in Gaza (May 2021)

The fourth Israeli offensive in Gaza in May 2021 was a sad reminder of the risk of shelving, postponing or sidelining the Palestinian issue, and of the unfounded belief that Israel’s status quo in the Occupied Territories can remain unchallenged.

The fourth Israel-Hamas war (10-21 May 2021) was triggered on 6 May 2021, when Palestinians began protests against the eviction of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah in occupied East Jerusalem (illegally annexed by Israel), the storming by Israeli nationalists of the Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound in Jerusalem, and the announcement of the annual Jerusalem Day march, the so-called Dance of Flags, by far-right Jewish nationalists. On 10 May, Hamas gave Israel an ultimatum to withdraw security forces from the Al-Aqsa Compound. With no response from Israel, militant groups in Gaza fired rockets into Israel. Israel immediately launched deadly airstrikes at Gaza, as it had in 2008-2012 and 2014. After 11 days of fighting, 256 Palestinians were killed, including 66 children, and more than 2,000 injured. 13 Israelis were killed and around 200 injured. As of 20 May, more than 72,000 Palestinians had been displaced. As usual, Israel said that “it retaliated to Hamas rockets” and “acted in legitimate self-defence,” ignoring the root causes of the conflict.

The 2021 Hamas-Israel war ended with a huge loss of lives and resources, mainly in the over-populated Gaza Strip. It revealed, once again, the intolerable situation of Palestinians living under Israeli control in Jerusalem and in other parts of the Occupied Territories. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) called on Israel to stop all forced evictions of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah, as they may constitute “war crimes.” While Human Rights Watch released a statement saying that the unequal rights between Palestinians and Jewish residents of East Jerusalem “*underscore the reality of apartheid in East Jerusalem.*” Later, on 1 February 2022, Amnesty International published its 200-page report accusing Israel of subjecting Palestinians to a system of apartheid, and saying that the International Criminal Court should investigate crimes against humanity.

Once again, the fourth war between Hamas and Israel in less than 14 years demonstrates the mistaken belief that the Palestinian issue, the heart of the geopolitical turmoil in the Middle East, can be ignored.

Once again, the fourth war between Hamas and Israel in less than 14 years demonstrates the mistaken belief that the Palestinian issue, the heart of the geopolitical turmoil in the Middle East, can be ignored.

Geopolitical Fractures: Libya’s Quagmire, State Collapse in Lebanon and Tunisia’s Backsliding to Authoritarian Rule

Until 2021, Libya had been the theatre of a civil war between the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli and the leader of the self-proclaimed eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA).

The war took a dramatic turn when Haftar's army, with some military and diplomatic backing from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Russia and even France, attempted, in April 2019, to capture Tripoli. Haftar's assault on the capital ended without victory in June 2020. In September 2020, Haftar's forces and his allies lifted a nine-month oil export blockade. On 23 October 2020, the Libyan National Army, led by Haftar and supported by his allies, and the Government of National Accord, led by Fayez Al-Serraj and his main backer, Turkey, signed a cease-fire agreement. It was followed, in early 2021, by an agreement to form an interim national unity government, in an effort to pave the way to ending political feuds and prepare for transparent and credible presidential and parliamentary elections for 24 December 2021. As Libya continued to draw in foreign backers, the UN Security Council adopted, in April 2021, resolutions 2507 and 2571, demanding the *"withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries without further delay."* The High National Election Commission opened registration for all candidates on 8 November 2021.

If the Lebanese State collapses, significant security challenges and vacuums will emerge

Libya appeared to be on the right track. A total of 98 presidential candidates were registered, but 25 were considered non-eligible, among them the Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah (due to his commitment that he would not run), Khalifa Haftar (for his role in the 2019 civil war) and Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi (wanted by the International Criminal Court). The Sabha Court ruled in favour of Saif al-Islam and the Tripoli Appeal Court accepted Haftar's and Dbeibah's candidacies. But tensions remained high and elections were postponed over disputes between rival factions on laws governing the voting. The political landscape deteriorated further after the Tobruk-based House of Representatives declared

that the Government of National Unity, established in accordance with the 2021 Geneva Process, was no longer valid, and that Dbeibah's term was considered to have expired and that a replacement was necessary. The Tobruk-based Parliament appointed a new Prime Minister, Ahmad Bashaga, while the interim Prime Minister, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah refused to step aside. Bashaga, who was lauded by Russia and Egypt, formed a cabinet, and the eastern-based Parliament gave it confidence on 3 March 2022. As expected, the vote of confidence was rejected by Libya's High Council of State in Tripoli.

Racked by conflict since 2011, Libya was once again hostage *"to a showdown between two self-serving centres of power."*³ With such a gloomy picture, one may wonder if Libya will overcome the scourge of its geopolitical fractures and the interference of its foreign backers and hold elections in the summer of 2022.

Lebanon is grappling with a crippling financial crisis that led to an 80% devaluation of the Lebanese pound and to debt default (March 2020) and is facing huge street protests against the corruption and incompetence of the political elite. The horrific explosion at the Port of Beirut on the 4 August laid bare the incompetence of the successive Lebanese governments and fuelled renewed anger among the population.

It is true that most of the problems of Lebanon are of its own making, as confessional elites are known for their entrenched patronage and cronyism, poor governance and lack of accountability, as well as being incapable of engineering political reform that avoids *"a slide toward the total failure of state institutions and the precipitous downturn of the country's economic and social indicators."*⁴

But it is also true that the country – an arena of competing powers – has been severely affected by proxy wars on its soil, the influx of Syrian refugees, the embargo imposed on Syria and by the general destabilization of the Middle East. Fabrice Balanche offers a perfect description of Lebanese geopolitics: *"In a system structured by institutionalized communitarianism, decisions made in the political sphere are very much shaped by regional power relationships and*

³ MEGERISI, Tarek. *The man from Misrata: Why Libya has two prime ministers (again)* ECFR, 16 February 2022. <https://ecfr.eu/article/the-man-from-misrata-why-libya-has-two-prime-ministers-again/>

⁴ HARB, Inam K. *Politics, Geopolitical Conditions Pushing Lebanon into a Death Spiral* Arab Center Washington DC, 22 December 2021. <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/politics-geopolitical-conditions-pushing-lebanon-into-a-death-spiral/>

*the interventions of both regional and external patrons (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, USA and Russia).*⁵

At the time of writing, Lebanon is in a total mess: Saad Hariri, the leader of the Sunni community, has renounced his post as Prime Minister, the Hezbollah-Amal duo enjoys a majority in the Parliament, which assures them of a Christian President who is fully to their liking. While the Christian camp is divided between those totally hostile to Hezbollah's "veto power" and influence on the political process and those who seek alliance with the group in their bid for the Presidency.

The internal disputes of the Lebanese confessional communities have been further exacerbated by tensions with the Gulf countries and the boycott imposed by Saudi Arabia on all imports from Lebanon. Saudi Arabia was infuriated by remarks made by a Lebanese minister, George Kordahi, criticizing Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, by Hezbollah's role in the conflict between the the Shia Houthis and the Gulf countries and by its cosy relationship with Bahraini Shia dissidents belonging to the Al-Wefaq group. Nobody can say when relations between the Gulf and Lebanon will be restored.

In the meantime, rudderless Lebanon is on the brink of total economic and political collapse; no one should expect 2022 to be an easy year. Indeed, if the Lebanese State collapses, significant security challenges and vacuums will emerge with a resurgence of violent extremism, possible massive displacement of the population, internal civil war and heightened regional insecurity, including a renewed military confrontation with Israel.

Tunisia was the spark that triggered the so-called Arab Spring. And against great odds, such as political violence and a faltering economy, Tunisia was on the right track for a "happy transition," drafting a constitution in 2014 and holding parliamentary elections in the same year. Observers and analysts used to label Tunisia as a success story of the Arab Spring. This idyllic vision came to an abrupt halt, on 25 July 2021, when President Kais Saied suspended the Parliament and dismissed the Prime Minister on the pretext that they had failed to eradicate the scourge of corruption. To many Tunisians, the decision was

clearly a return to authoritarianism, and was seen as a "self-coup," granting the President the power to rule by decree (22 September 2021) and concentrating all state powers in his hands.

Saied's decisions were met by a wave of criticism in Tunisia and abroad. Bowing to pressures (mainly from the EU), Saied promised to end the emergency powers and restore Tunisia's democratic order, announcing, on 13 December 2021, that Tunisia would hold a referendum on 25 June 2022 to amend the Constitution, ahead of parliamentary elections on 17 December 2022.

The announcement did nothing to assuage the fears of Tunisians, who have seen how his new rubber-stamp government "has *abused counterterrorism laws to stifle dissent*,"⁶ suppressed freedom of speech and cracked down on opponents, arresting former ministers (Noureddine Bhiri, the former Minister of Justice, and Fathi Beldi, a former official from the Interior Ministry) and even high-profile figures (including Rachid Ghannouchi, the Speaker of Parliament and President of Ennahda).

Once seen as the paradigm of a happy revolution, Tunisia is slowly backsliding into harsher controls over the society, without addressing its economic woes. The real objective of the President is not to fight corruption but to clip the wings of the Islamist movement – Ennahda – in Tunisia. Proof of that is the support he received from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, all known for their entrenched hatred of "political Islam."

Geopolitical Shifts of Alliances

2021 was a year that saw the acceleration of the arms race, including unmanned weapons, complicating the regional security dynamics. But it has also been marked by tensions being de-escalated, rifts healed and the rebuilding of working relations among regional actors.

Reconciliation between Qatar and Saudi Arabia

Qatar's quick embrace of the "Arab Spring," through the wide coverage of protests by the Al-Jazeera chan-

⁵ <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/13210>

⁶ HURSH, John. *How Kais Saied Betrayed Tunisia's Democratic Revolution* DAWN, 14 January 2022. <https://dawnmena.org/how-kais-saied-betrayed-tunisias-democratic-revolution/>

nel, put the country at loggerheads with its fellow partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain accused Qatar of directly intervening in support of the Muslim Brotherhood, thereby undermining regional security. In 2014, the three countries withdrew their ambassadors from Doha and in June 2017 they imposed a land and air blockade on the country. Egypt followed suit and severed diplomatic ties with Qatar. The blockade lasted four years from 2017 until 2021. Never before has the GCC suffered such a dramatic setback. Qatar weathered the storm, exhibiting great resilience, but it had to scale down its tone. Saudi Arabia and the Emirates emphasized, in 2021, the need to “turn the page,” to heal the wound and to handle the conflict through dialogue. Saudi Arabia invited Qatar to the 41st GCC summit, in Al-Ula (5 January 2021). The six members of the GCC signed the Al-Ula declaration, putting an end to the crisis. The declaration affirmed the need to “*enhance unity and cohesion among the countries of the Cooperation Council and to return the joint action of the Gulf to its natural course and maintain security and stability in the region.*”

There were multiple reasons for healing the rift with Qatar. Saudi Arabia felt wary of the new American President, who warned that the US, under his leadership, will revise its relations with Saudi Arabia. By re-integrating Qatar into the GCC, Saudi Arabia was trying to avoid pressures from the new US Administration. On the other hand, the cost of the pandemic, the protracted war in Yemen and Iran’s new assertiveness forced Saudi Arabia and the Emirates to adopt a less aggressive policy.

De-escalation between Saudi Arabia and Iran

Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran have rarely been smooth and cordial. Both countries scrambled to increase their influence and their clout at the regional level, competing for the symbolic leadership of the Islamic world (Sunniism versus Shiism or Islamist activism versus a conservative interpretation of Islam). Mounting tensions between conservative Saudi Arabia and “revolutionary Iran” took a dramatic turn with the killing of more than 400 Iranian pilgrims in Mecca, in 1987.

In the war between Iraq and Iran in the 1980s, Saudi Arabia sided with Saddam Hussein, not out of love,

but for pragmatic reasons, as this meant weakening both countries, each of which posed a security challenge for the survival of the monarchy.

Relations improved slightly in the late 1990s. Hassan Rouhani, Iran’s then National Security Chief, and the late Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, then the Saudi Interior Minister, signed a security agreement, “*pledging not to interfere in each other’s internal affairs.*”

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring in 2011, relations deteriorated dramatically due to the Saudi monarchy’s sense of insecurity in the face of mounting popular uprisings. Saudi Arabia accused Iran of fuelling the protests and establishing a network of proxies in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. The Houthi takeover of Sanaa’ in Yemen, in 2014, was considered by the Saudis as the “straw that broke the camel’s back.” The Saudis perceived the rise of this “Shiite” pro-Iranian group as a significant security threat, prompting the Kingdom to set up a military coalition, in 2015, in support of the legitimate Government of Yemen.

It is in this context of Saudi-Iranian rivalry that the first Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA) was signed in 2015. Saudi Arabia and Israel lobbied heavily against the deal. Later, in 2018, both countries applauded Trump’s withdrawal from the deal and his Administration’s “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran. In 2016, diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran were severed, after Iranian protesters in Tehran stormed the Saudi Embassy. The riots were sparked by the execution of Nimr al Nimr, a respected Saudi Shiite cleric.

The war in Yemen produced a severe humanitarian disaster but no victory for the Saudi-led coalition. On the contrary, not only did the Houthis resist the military campaign, but they even upgraded their military capabilities with advanced long-distance missiles and drones targeting civilian and economic infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. Direct precision attacks on Saudi Arabia’s oil facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais, in 2019, have revealed the Kingdom’s vulnerable security, but also the US’s unwillingness to respond to what the Saudis saw as direct Iranian attacks.

Against this background of a changing balance of power and the US’s apparent “disengagement,” Saudi Arabia and the Emirates sought to ease tensions with Iran. With Iran severely hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Emirates sent medical aid to their neigh-

bour, while Saudi Arabia cautiously reopened discreet security channels.

For Saudi Arabia, regional geopolitics is a crucial factor. The Kingdom perceives Iran as an external and domestic threat. Externally, Iran threatens its regional sphere of influence by encircling the Kingdom to the north and south via its Iraqi and Houthi proxies. Internally, the Kingdom fears Iranian meddling through the incitement of the Saudi Shia minority in the oil-rich east of the Kingdom. Bahrain shares the same concern as a significant part of its population is also Shia. However, both countries tend to overstate the extent of Iranian meddling, and overlook the legitimacy of unaddressed Shia grievances. The Emirates do not see Iran as an “internal threat” but mainly as an external one, linked to the historic Iranian occupation of three Emirati Islands (Abu Musa and Great and Lesser Tunbs), Iranian support of the Houthis in Yemen and Iranian attacks on vessels in Emirati waters. Despite the bitter rivalry between the two countries, Saudi and Iranian security officials engaged in dialogue in April 2021, which was followed by a meeting of foreign ministers in Baghdad in August 2021. Since then, there have been four rounds of talks aimed at de-escalating tensions. But the fifth round, due to take place on 16 March 2022, was suspended following Saudi Arabia’s execution of 81 men over what it called “*allegiance to foreign terrorist organizations and holding deviant beliefs*.” Half of the executed men were “Shia” from the eastern Saudi region of Qatif, which has historically been a flash-point between the Sunni Saudi Monarchy and its Shia minority. This clearly shows the fragility of the diplomatic normalization process.

Turkey’s Return to Diplomacy

Since 1950, Turkey has been firmly anchored in the Western camp, becoming a member of the Council of Europe in 1950 and NATO in 1952. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey had assumed a dual role as a “pro-Western pivot” in the volatile region of the Middle East, and as a “buffer” preventing the Soviet Union from leapfrogging into the Arab region where the West had vested interests, ranging from the protection of Israel to the control of Arab oil resources. Yet, in spite of being firmly anchored in the Western alliance, Turkish national security policy continued to be influenced by what is known as “the

Sèvres Syndrome,” i.e., “*the conviction that the external world is trying to weaken and divide Turkey*.”

This explains, to a large extent, why successive Turkish governments have taken such a strong stance against Kurdish nationalist claims.

The electoral victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), in 2002, transformed Turkish foreign policy. In the 2000s, the AKP focused on its immediate neighbourhood – the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia and, mainly, the Middle East – with the aim of fostering inter-regional relations based on dialogue and cooperation. This new policy orientation has been synthesized by the former Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, in the motto “zero problems with neighbours.” And indeed, Turkey repaired its relations with all its neighbours and often acted as mediator. The AKP was lauded as “a model” of Islamic democracy. And Turkey became an important trading partner, as an exporter-importer of energy resources and as an investor.

The Arab Spring in 2010 marked a momentous reversal of Turkey’s “Ring of Friends policy,” as Ankara embraced the uprisings and applauded the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in elections in Egypt (the Morsi Presidency), Tunisia (Ennahda’s victory in the parliamentary elections) and Morocco (the Justice and Development Party’s victory in the 2011 elections). In some cases, Turkey engaged militarily in support of protesters (in Syria) or to shore up the Government of National Accord in Libya. And when President Morsi was ousted by a military coup in Egypt, Turkey condemned the coup and was fiercely critical of al-Sisi. This spate of Turkish moves soured relations with many Arab countries that regarded the Arab Spring protests as an existential threat to their stability and to the regimes’ survival, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the Emirates. The rift produced new alignments: Turkey and Qatar sided with the Muslim Brotherhood while Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates closed ranks with Israel, Greece, Cyprus and even the Palestinian Authority. The murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul further embittered relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the two countries later supporting opposing sides in the Syrian conflict.

Relations between Turkey and Israel were no better. They soured after the incident of the Turkish ship, Mavi Marmara, which was heading to Gaza when Israeli commandos intercepted it in international wa-

ters on 11 May 2010, killing ten Turks. Later, following Israeli attacks on Gaza protesters during the 2018 “Great March of Return,” Turkey and Israel expelled their respective ambassadors.

The discovery of gas in the eastern Mediterranean became another bone of contention between Turkey on the one hand and Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt on the other. In response to the deployment of Turkish gas research vessels in the eastern Mediterranean (2019) and the signing of a “Memorandum of understanding” with the Government of Tripoli, regarding the maritime continental shelf and the Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZ), Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Italy and the Palestinian Authority set up the East Mediterranean Forum (September 2020).

The return to soft diplomacy, is a good omen for a better regional future

In early 2021, it was with great anguish that President Erdogan noted Turkey’s loneliness. It was clear that that country’s coercive diplomacy had not paid off. Consequently, he decided to change course and reach out to neighbours, rivals and adversaries. He received Abu Dhabi’s Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed; he pledged to restore ties with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Armenia; he received the Israeli President; and, more recently, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine (24 February 2022), he proved to be a loyal member of NATO in his attempts to mediate between Russia and Ukraine by organizing a meeting between their respective foreign affairs ministers and striving to organize a face-to-face meeting between the presidents of Russia and Ukraine.

A new regional dynamic has been set in motion. Whether it will wipe out a decade of distrust remains to be seen.

Conclusion

In the IEMed Yearbook 2014, the organization’s Executive President, Senen Florensa, wrote a long essay titled “*Transitions and Regional Geopolitics in the Arab World*,” in which he analysed, with great clarity and expertise, the evolution of the Arab state system and the changing geopolitical dynamics between 1945 and 2014.

This article updates Senen Florensa’s 2014 essay and offers a critical assessment of the geopolitical events, trends, shifts and fractures in the post-Arab Spring. I do share Florensa’s analysis that “*there have been successive waves of democratization in the world...there is no reason that the Arab world will be a permanent exception*” ... but “*in the short and even medium term, many of them (Arab countries) may encounter great resistance, conflict and suffering.*” And indeed, the first part of this article carries the title “the bitter harvest of the first decade of the post-Arab Spring (2010-2020).” I could have titled it the “unfulfilled promises of the Arab Spring,” not to infer that the Arab Spring has been a failure, *in se*, but that the Arab Spring has been hijacked, confiscated and perverted by reactionary forces, which have reverted to repressive methods and authoritarian control. Even in Tunisia, where the Arab Spring was triggered, there has been a backsliding to authoritarianism since 2021.

The second part of the article looks at events and trends of the last two years – 2020 and 2021. It analyses major events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and its political, social and economic impact; Trump’s Deal of the Century as a means to bury the Palestinian question; the Abraham Accords and their impact on regional dynamics; the fourth Hamas-Israel war in Gaza; and the geopolitical fractures in the Middle East and North Africa. This part concludes with a short analysis of the shifting alliances in the Middle East and North Africa, the regional rifts that have emerged and, finally, the return to soft diplomacy, which is a good omen for a better regional future.

Reshuffling of Political and Military Alliances

Turkey at the Centre of the Mediterranean Geopolitical Chessboard

Dorothee Schmid

Researcher, Head of the Contemporary Turkey and Middle East Programme
French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), Paris

Turkey is a Mediterranean country because of its geography – 7,000 km of its coastline are bathed by the Mediterranean – and because of its history: the Mediterranean Sea and its shores were explored and dominated in the past by the Ottomans, to whom the Turkish Republic, founded in 1923, is heir. Yet modern Turkey has lived most of its existence with its back turned to this area, associated with memories of the end of the Empire, the trauma of which still lingers today through the rivalry with the Greeks in the Aegean. But Turkey's reunion with the Mediterranean now seems to be on the agenda, in a climate of nationalistic one-upmanship: between defending its national interests and wanting to upset the regional balance of power, Ankara has become a central protagonist on the Mediterranean geopolitical chessboard. All the countries around the Mediterranean now have dynamic relations with Turkey, which is seen either as an aggressive competitor or as an effective partner. The return of Turkey to the Mediterranean does not only illustrate a form of historical nostalgia: it confirms above all the full entry of the Turks into a globalization that they are tailoring to their objectives.

Turkey's Return to the Mediterranean: Opportunism or Grand Vision?

Often perceived as a simple bout of neo-Ottoman imperialism, the recent hyperactivism of the Turks in

the Mediterranean takes on its full meaning in a more global geopolitical perspective.

The Turkish Historical Imprint in the Mediterranean

The Ottomans imposed themselves in the Mediterranean by conquest, and only Morocco escaped them. It was in the 16th century, under the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, at the height of the Empire, that their naval superiority was established. The Ottoman fleet maintained constant pressure on the Christians and, with the exception of the siege of Malta in 1565, was not defeated until the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Lepanto marked the end of the great expansion of the Ottomans, but not that of their domination in the Mediterranean: neither Cyprus nor the Holy Places were taken by the Invincible Armada, and Crete was even conquered in the 17th century. The classic narrative of an Empire in decline from that time onwards underestimates the effectiveness of the Ottoman presence maintained in North Africa, the Levant and the Balkans, and whose disintegration would only come about gradually, with an acceleration in the 19th century under the pressure of European colonisation. The longevity of the Ottoman presence can be explained in particular by a certain flexibility of administrative organization. It nevertheless left a strong imprint on societies, gastronomy, urban landscapes, art and architecture, territorial and political organization, and even the region's economic growth models.¹

It was only after the First World War that the Mediterranean became an Anglo-French lake, with the victors of the conflict – France, Greece, Great Britain and Italy – even occupying the Mediterranean coasts

¹ MOREAU, Odile, "Notion et nature de l'État, de l'héritage ottoman aux réformes constitutionnelles modernes." *Les Cahiers de l'Orient* 2013/2 (No. 110), p. 117-134; CORM, Georges, "L'influence aottomane dans les structures socio-économiques des pays arabes et leur mode de développement." *Anatoli*, CNRS Éditions, 2014, p. 217-232.

of Anatolia until their liberation by the army of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The centre of gravity of the republic he founded shifted to the east: Istanbul lost its status as capital to Ankara, a peaceful provincial town in the middle of the country. Once the population exchanges linked to the redrawing of Turkish borders had been carried out, the Mediterranean issue was closed; its memory remains traumatic and fragmentary.²

The Rediscovery of the Mediterranean, from Neo-Ottomanism to the Mavi Vatan

This is how the country turned its back on the wider Mediterranean for three-quarters of its existence. The modernist project of Republican Turkey was continental, straddling Europe and Asia, and isolationist. After the Second World War, Turkey joined the Western camp, with a mission to watch over the Soviet Bloc. The strategic importance of Mediterranean issues remained present, but in a narrower version: the Montreux Convention, which had given Turkey control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits since 1936, was contested by Stalin in 1946; the territorial dispute with Greece in the Aegean Sea and the Cypriot issue have episodically poisoned the climate within NATO since the 1970s. The end of the Cold War allowed Turkey to once again assume its vocation as an intermediary country. Turkish soft power developed in the former Ottoman areas from the 1990s, under the leadership of President Turgüt Özal,³ and took on another dimension with Ahmet Davutoğlu, the éminence grise of the Islamist AKP party and very active Minister of Foreign Affairs, then Prime Minister until 2016. He was the architect of the full reintegration of the Mediterranean in a renewed, global and ambitious vision of Turkish foreign policy, positively reinvesting its historical neighbourhood.

The Ottoman memory in the Mediterranean is now spectacularly staged in Turkish audio-visual productions: the biggest audio-visual production of Turkish public television, “*Barbaroslar: Akdeniz’in Kılıcı*”

(“Barbarossa: Sword of the Mediterranean,” broadcast in Turkey since autumn 2021, exalts the destinies of Oruç Reis and Hızır Reis, admirals of the Ottoman navy who took part in the expansion of the Empire in the Mediterranean in the 16th century. Recall that Algeria and Morocco are today among the biggest consumers and buyers of Turkish series. This glorification of the Ottomans has also been accompanied, for some years now, by revisionist rhetoric questioning the territorial arrangements at the end of the First World War. The preparation of the centenary of the Turkish Republic in 2023 is feeding the vengeful rewriting of the national narrative: Tayyip Erdoğan has already declared on several occasions that he considers the Lausanne Peace Treaty to be “obsolete.”

The return of Turkey to the Mediterranean does not only illustrate a form of historical nostalgia: it confirms above all the full entry of the Turks into a globalization that they are tailoring to their objectives

Above all, a new Turkish strategic doctrine, integrating the Mediterranean maritime space into a global vision of the country's power interests, is now being publicly discussed, although its real status within the institutions is not very clear:⁴ the *Mavi Vatan*, or “Blue Homeland” doctrine, advocates establishing Turkish supremacy in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean by modifying the status quo on Cyprus and the Dodecanese Islands. Very much in vogue in 2020, when Turkey was fighting victoriously in Libya and Greek-Turkish tensions were at their peak, the *Mavi Vatan* theme, borne by admirals close to the Eurasian and Russophile current, has now lost its lustre.

² PARLARDAL, Emel, “La Turquie pour la Méditerranée, de l’indifférence à l’ambiguïté.” in *L’Europe en Formation* 2010/2 (n° 356), p. 87-108

³ ÇANDAR, Cengiz, “Grand Geopolitics for a New Turkey.” *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 12, no 1, 1 January 2001, p. 22-38.

⁴ DENIZEAU, Aurélien, “Mavi Vatan, la Patrie bleue: origines, influence et limites d’une doctrine ambitieuse pour la Turquie.” *Études de l’Ifri*, Ifri, April 2021.

Turkey is currently exporting a post-colonial discourse to sub-Saharan Africa, targeting and disqualifying the former powers

An Element of Turkish Global Power

Should we see in the renewed activity of the Turks in the Mediterranean a simple capacity to seize opportunities, the coherence of which is staged after the fact, or a surge of planned imperialism? In any case, the progression of Turkey's regional influence takes on its full meaning in a broader, international vision of Turkish power. Beyond the Levantine façade, the Mediterranean opens the doors of Africa to the Turks. Turkey's military intervention in support of the beleaguered Libyan government in Tripoli in 2020 made it possible to bring the Middle East and Africa together in a single foreign policy matrix, via a maritime delimitation agreement directly encroaching on Greek waters. The Middle East and Africa are now linked militarily – the same methods of intervention, the same fighters, the same armament used by the Turks in Libya and Syria; legally – the Turkish-Libyan maritime delimitation agreement has, like an earthquake, led to a multiplication of “aftershocks” between the countries bordering the eastern Mediterranean; and through memory – Turkey is currently exporting a post-colonial discourse to sub-Saharan Africa, targeting and disqualifying the former powers, foremost among them France.

Turkey's Channels of Action in the Mediterranean

Turkish pragmatism therefore often precedes rhetorical formalization whose dissuasive effect is remarkable: the publicity surrounding the Mavi Vatan doctrine has greatly worried European partners. More specifically, Ankara has become an often convenient, rewarding and even essential partner

for the countries of the South and East Mediterranean because it mobilizes a very comprehensive range of tools.

The Economy at the Heart of the Reconquest

Soft economic power has been at the heart of Turkey's external reconquest for the past 20 years. From this point of view, Fernand Braudel's old capitalist Mediterranean is a space rich in resources and markets for Ankara.

Recall that the Turkish economy itself is one of the most advanced in the region. Its GDP represents more than 40% of the total production of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries; it is almost the only one in its category to be a member of the OECD, with the exception of Israel. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) has unleashed Turkish growth by accelerating the country's entry into globalization. With a strong industrial base, Turkey has developed a successful service sector and taken advantage of its position as a natural transit point between the Caspian, the Caucasus and the Black Sea on the one hand, and the Mediterranean on the other. Huge trade flows from Asia and the post-Soviet areas, bound for the countries around the Mediterranean, use the Bosphorus sea route. The trend towards the relocation of industrial production in the post-Covid context accentuates this situational advantage and Turkish logistical capacities are constantly adjusting to fully assume this role of economic hub: the system of ports and terminals is continuously developing from Istanbul to Mersin, and the industrial centres of the Sea of Marmara.

Major emerging countries' share in trade with the Mediterranean countries continues to grow. China and Turkey perform particularly well: in 2000, these two countries each accounted for about 2% of North African trade; by 2019, China accounted for 9% of North African trade (13% of imports) and Turkey for 4% (5% of imports).⁵ The economic sectors of interest to Turkey in the region reflect its own growth model: construction is in the lead – Turkish companies account for 60-65% of the construction sector in Algeria, are setting up in Libya and are growing in

⁵ French Ministry of the Economy, “Accords d'association et intégration commerciale entre l'Union européenne et l'Afrique du Nord.” *Trésor Eco* No. 296, December 2021, (www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/c637819a-0ba8-49ab-9c9a-1f011de08e2b/files/4aed41cb-f5fe-4f8e-bf4c-f94873a00938).

Morocco;⁶ tourism, the Mediterranean industry par excellence, is developing notably in its medical version (1.2 million medical tourists in Turkey in 2020, particularly from Algeria);⁷ and the entertainment industry, with the aforementioned series of films. But energy issues are now becoming the most pressing: Ankara is seeking to diversify its sources of supply in the Mediterranean to escape the Russian grip. The Turkish authorities explicitly associate their continued presence in Libya with projects for the development of oil and gas, but also renewable energies. The successive gas discoveries in the eastern Mediterranean are also sharpening geopolitical tensions around Cyprus, with Turkey posing as the defender of Northern Cyprus' interests.

The Arduous Quest for a Winning Diplomatic Line

While Turkey is a stakeholder in most of the regional cooperation mechanisms in the Mediterranean (Union for the Mediterranean, Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution, etc.), its diplomacy has been more dynamically deployed in bilateral adventures for the past ten years. Ahmet Davutoğlu had invested in mediation operations, particularly in the Arab-Israeli conflict, though without much result. But the political earthquake of the Arab Spring has opened up a period of intense experimentation since 2011, overturning the AKP's conservative fundamentals: Turkey has since displayed its companionship with the political parties of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt and Tunisia, and has become involved alongside the Syrian opposition in attempting to topple the Bashar-Al-Assad regime. These options have not always been successful: Marshal Sisi's counter-revolution in Egypt drove a wedge between the two countries in 2013; the Syrian crisis has created a zone of insecurity along Turkey's entire southern border, between jihadist pockets and the extension of Kurdish territory; and Ankara had to take account of Tunisian President Kais Saïed's coup d'état in 2021, which has temporarily put an end to the last open political experiment in

the region. The Libyan issue was more productive: after having stayed out of the Franco-British military operation against Gaddafi, Turkey victoriously re-entered the game by offering its protection to the Tripoli government emerging from the UN-sponsored Skhirat Accords.

The relationship with Israel has also remained complicated since 2010, with the conflictive episode of the Mavi Marmara. Ankara's systematically pro-Palestinian positioning maintains the mistrust, despite attempts at rapprochement. The multiple tensions in the eastern Mediterranean were thus bound to lead to the ostracization of Turkey by the "Abrahamic bloc," with Israel and the United Arab Emirates coming together with Greece and Cyprus in an informal anti-Turkish front. A turnaround seems to be underway, however: the difficulties of the Turkish economy, the flexibility of Gulf diplomacy and the fallout from the Ukrainian crisis have brought the protagonists to their senses in 2022, opening a beginning of détente, displayed in March by Turkey during its major diplomatic forum in Antalya. With Africa still imposing itself as a horizon beyond the immediate Mediterranean, we must follow the progress of Turkish diplomacy towards Algeria: in the process of post-Hirak stabilization and external openness, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune seems very receptive to Turkish offers of partnership.

A Growing Military Presence

Ankara has been pushing its hard power in the Mediterranean for several years now. While nearly 60,000 Turkish soldiers are still stationed in Northern Cyprus, a remnant of Operation Attila, which in 1974 was intended to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority against Greek pressure, the modernization of this presence is taking shape: a base for operating drones was officially inaugurated in 2021, and a project to build a naval base is regularly mentioned.⁸

Since 2020, it is above all the Turkish naval presence that has occupied analysts in the Mediterranean, as it is being ostensibly reinforced. It should

⁶ "A new formula for collaboration: Turkey, the EU and North Africa." Sabancı & Clingendael Report, 21 March 2022, (www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Report_New_formula_for_collaboration_Turkey_EU_NorthAfrica.pdf).

⁷ SAANOUNI, Mona, "La Turquie s'affirme en tant que pôle régional du tourisme médical." *Anadolu Ajansi*, 22.02.2021, (www.aa.com.tr).

⁸ SCHMID, Dorothee and DAHECH, Yasmina, "La méthode turque en Méditerranée : l'emprise sur Chypre-Nord." *Briefings de l'Ifri*, 23 July 2021.

be noted that out of eight Turkish naval bases, six are located in the Mediterranean/Aegean/Sea of Marmara. The Turkish Navy, which ranks eighth in the world in terms of personnel, maintains the largest submarine fleet in the Mediterranean.⁹ The deployment of military vessels is now regular in several places of strategic Turkish interest (gas exploration in Cyprus, the Libyan coast), while exercises are increasingly conducted on the high seas.¹⁰ This insistent naval presence leads to friction with NATO allies: in addition to regular clashes with Greece and Cyprus in the Aegean Sea, an incident nearly degenerated into a confrontation with France off the Libyan coast in June 2021.

The Turkish army is also present in several theatres of land operations. In Syria, Turkey has intervened militarily three times to secure its border, has occupied several areas along the border, and threatens a new operation in the summer of 2022. The stabilization of its forces in Libya is also highly controversial: it has established four military bases along the coast around Tripoli, and maintains a contingent of 1,000 Turkish army personnel and several thousand Syrian mercenaries there, with a deployment of artillery, drones, anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems.¹¹

To complete this military panorama, note that the Mediterranean countries are also becoming an outlet for Turkish arms sales: after Bayraktar TB2 drones, for instance, Morocco acquired seven fast attack ships and a Göktürk frigate in 2021.

A Disputed Area: What Future for Turkey's Mediterranean Ambitions?

The Mediterranean is today a highly contested and conflictive area. The pursuit of Ankara's ambitions in this context depends on both internal and external factors. The resonance with Turkish opinion, the evolution of regional power relations and the necessary understanding with its main partners are all variables that will contribute to calibrating the country's Mediterranean priority.

The Weight of Mediterranean Issues within the Country

A survivor of a military coup in 2016, Tayyip Erdoğan has since allied himself with the ultranationalist movement to govern Turkey. The militarization of Turkish activities in the Mediterranean Basin appears in these circumstances increasingly as a direct function of the AKP's internal political difficulties. While interventionism in Syria – and especially the reception of nearly 4 million refugees – or in Libya may divide the electorate, the issue of the Eastern Mediterranean is, on the other hand, more consensual in Turkey. Ankara's protests against Greece's maintenance of military forces on the Dodecanese islands thus play on the famous "Sèvres Syndrome": the atavistic fear of the dismantling of Turkish territory by external powers. Turkish opinion, including its opposition component, therefore rather supports Tayyip Erdoğan in his Mediterranean claims.

The difficulties of the Turkish economy, the flexibility of Gulf diplomacy and the fallout from the Ukrainian crisis have brought the protagonists to their senses in 2022, opening a beginning of détente

The regions along the Mediterranean coast are historically more Western-oriented and socially open; the Aegean coast is in favour of the opposition, and Istanbul and Izmir have elected Kemalist mayors. However, the weight of history and nationalism combine here with material considerations. The three administrative regions of Turkey that have a Mediterranean coastline (Aegean Region, Mediterranean Region and Marmara Region), on a little more than a third of the country's surface area, concentrate 60% of the total population and most of the wealth: the

⁹ OZBERK, Tayfun, "The Future of the Turkish Navy." *Naval news*, 15 Feb 2021, (www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2021/02/analysis-the-future-of-the-turkish-navy/).

¹⁰ PEYRONNET, Arnaud, "Ambitions turques en Méditerranée : vers une accélération des frictions navales avec l'Europe ?" *Actualités FMES*, 27/06/2020, (<https://fmes-france.org/ambitions-turques-en-meditteranee-vers-une-acceleration-des-frictions-navales-avec-leurope-par-arnaud-peyronnet/>).

¹¹ *Strategic Atlas of the Mediterranean and the Middle East*, FMES, 2022.

Marmara region alone, with Istanbul, accounts for nearly half of the Turkish GDP. Industrial innovation is also strong in these territories: renewable energies are developing rapidly on the Aegean coast and the first Turkish nuclear power plant is due to be built in Akkuyu, 130 km west of Mersin, opposite Cyprus.

The Difficult Management of Regional Power Relations

For the powers traditionally active in the Mediterranean, Turkey's game is essentially disruptive. The transition from a soft power perceived as peaceful to a more aggressive hard power, systematically prioritizing the balance of power, including on the diplomatic level, worries both Ankara's partners and its competitors. The American administration is concerned about the breakdown of the legal status quo in the Aegean, while the European Union is primarily affected by the vagaries of Turkey's Syrian policy: fundamental differences on the Kurdish issue and, above all, the nagging question of refugees. The agreement on immigration negotiated in 2016 in Brussels offered Turkey a substantial financial envelope (six billion euros) to settle Syrian refugees on its soil; Ankara uses it as a means of pressure on the EU, threatening to relax surveillance on its coast as soon as relations become strained. NATO is also suffering the fallout from Greek-Turkish disputes; its de-escalation mechanisms helped ease tensions in the summer of 2020, as the German EU Presidency failed to mediate and France openly sided with Athens. Greece's rearmament is now underway, with Paris and Washington competing for the biggest equipment contracts.

Turkey also has complicated relations with other important players. Russia, which is reinvesting in the Mediterranean area because of the Syrian and Libyan conflicts, is obliged to come to terms with Turkey in these two theatres. The Russian-Turkish relationship, competitive as much as it is cooperative,¹² is

always renewed in the end through partial arrangements that worry NATO – the fragility of the fronts remains particularly evident in Syria, from Idlib to the Jazira region. China, for its part, has placed the Mediterranean on its maritime silk road, and is gradually integrating the economic competition of the Turks into its North African equation. The Gulf monarchies, increasingly active in the post-Arab Spring context, must also deal politically with Turkey; Ankara had sided with Qatar in the dispute between it and Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, but a general reconciliation is underway, as with Israel, which does not wish to alienate Ankara for long.

For the powers traditionally active in the Mediterranean, Turkey's game is essentially disruptive. The transition from a soft power perceived as peaceful to a more aggressive hard power worries both Ankara's partners and its competitors

In 20 years, the Mediterranean has thus once again become an area of Turkish influence: Ankara has carved out an essential place for itself there, through its active diplomacy and its economic offer, which constitutes an alternative to European or Chinese partnerships, but also through its stated lack of aversion to military risk. After a year 2020 filled with dangers, Tayyip Erdoğan displays his stabilizing intentions without really convincing as tensions persist. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, in the face of which Turkey is displaying neutrality, is now accentuating the pressure: Turkey is indeed guarding the gateway to the Black Sea in the Mediterranean, and military traffic is steadily increasing there.

¹² FACON, Isabelle, *Russie-Turquie. Un défi à l'Occident ?* Paris, Passés composés, 2022.

Reshuffling of Political and Military Alliances

Qatar's Role in the Geopolitical Scenarios of the Middle East and North Africa

Salam Kawakibi

Political Scientist. Director

Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies of Paris

Qatar is a small country (11,586 km²) with an equally small national population of around 333,000 inhabitants. It has a dry desert climate and limited groundwater and surface water. This situation is conducive to neither the emergence of agriculture nor the establishment of industry. Moreover, geographically, it is wedged between two large regional states: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which spans its entire land border, and Iran, which surrounds it almost entirely by sea. This geopolitical situation means that Qatar does not benefit from the comforts of a strong state: a large area, a large population, and a developed agricultural and industrial base. Furthermore, because the two major powers on either side of it are vying for control of the region, it likewise does not benefit from a regional system such as the one in place in Europe since the end of World War II, in which “democratic peace” prevails and small countries are protected from the hegemonic tendencies of large ones through international law and the principle of state sovereignty.

However, despite all its weaknesses, Qatar has assets that have allowed it to achieve its goals and take on an important regional role. These assets are threefold. In order of importance, the first is the presence of an ambitious ruling elite with a plan and a vision. The second is the availability of vast natural resources, in particular, natural gas. This comfortable situation makes it financially independent and helps strengthen its political autonomy vis-à-vis its two neighbours. Finally, the third is the presence of regional and international contradictions that Qatar has successfully turned to its advantage, making and

unmaking alliances with a view to transforming its security needs into a regional and international necessity.

These factors allow Qatar to overcome some of its structural weaknesses, gradually replacing them with soft power, which it wields in two ways: defensively, to ward off the danger surrounding the Emirate, in the form of regional forces; and offensively, as manifested in its desire to expand its area of influence beyond its own borders, adopting a strategy that enables it to circumvent some of the structural limits associated with its size. The Qatari State further boosts its influence through the media, by broadening the space for debate around subjects that the mainstream Arab media considers taboo. In this way, the country has benefited from the cultural and media decline of the Arab region's traditional large urban centres: Baghdad, Beirut, Cairo and Damascus. In this context, Qatar is seeking to play a leading role as a regional hub for Arab culture. Furthermore, its involvement as a mediator in several conflicts in the Arab region and elsewhere has positioned it high on the list of countries active in conflict resolution. Finally, the reinforcement of the activities of humanitarian associations and organizations working to alleviate poverty in underdeveloped countries in Asia and Africa has helped consolidate Qatar's soft power.

It is precisely for these reasons that Qatar, its politics and its international relations are watched with great interest by foreign ministries, research centres and the media at all levels. The role played by the country on the regional and international stage is sometimes criticized and sometimes praised, depending on the angle from which it is viewed. The in-depth academic debate on Qatar's regional role and foreign policy must transcend all political biases and ideological positions without disregarding them

completely. A close reading of Doha's foreign policy reveals political realism. Usually, no matter how rich and developed, small countries do not carry much weight in the political arena, especially in the face of regional and international powers. They thus become entirely subject to the equations set by the powers. This forces them to choose between two orientations. The first imposes a relationship of dependence and submission, in which they are included under the wing of a larger power in exchange for protection against the threats of other powers. The second leads them to build alliances to counter these threats.

1995: The Date of Qatari Foreign Policy Renewal

The great shift in Qatar's foreign policy began with the coming to power of a new administration in June 1995 and can be examined alongside the change in leadership by tracing the impact on policy. Under Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad (1972-1995), Qatari foreign policy was almost entirely governed by systemic factors, consistent with the structure of the regional system, in which geographical and geopolitical factors are central. This changed in 1995, when the Qatari Head of State attempted to control the structural factors, or at least limit their ability to hinder the achievement of his goals and implementation of his policies, by adopting specific strategies.

The new Qatari administration embraced an active foreign policy that protected its political and economic interests and reflected its ambition to play an influential regional role. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's approach was geared towards change, towards breaking with the status quo, and making the most of the country's capabilities and natural resources. Thus, since 1995, Qatar's foreign policy has clearly reflected its national interests, its leaders' regional ambitions and its security needs. Prior to that, one could argue that Qatar did not have a foreign policy of its own.

As for Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's vision of his country's role and place in regional and international politics, and his ability to devise suitable strategies to

overcome structural constraints, the new Qatari leader first had to analyse the surrounding external environment and probe its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks. The first structural challenge his analysis revealed was Qatar's geographical situation in terms of its size and population, squeezed between two major regional powers, both seeking to pull it into their orbit, amidst fierce competition and a turbulent and risky security environment in which Qatar cannot afford to be neutral.

Qatar's financial independence was the first and most important step towards an independent foreign policy

An ambitious strategy to meet this first challenge could only be achieved with the appropriate means. Accordingly, work began to explore and exploit the strengths and opportunities to transform Qatar from a small state to a regional power (middle power). Although geography has deprived Qatar of traditional sources of power, it has endowed it with abundant energy reserves. With more than 24 trillion cubic metres, or 13% of global reserves,¹ it has the world's third largest natural gas reserves, behind only Russia and Iran. Thanks to costly investments in the liquefied gas industry, today Qatar has a production capacity of 79 million tonnes per year, a figure expected to swell to 126 million tonnes by 2027; it currently dominates 25% of this market worldwide.² These abundant financial resources, resulting from the major outlay in natural gas extraction and liquefaction to enable its export via oil tankers, have gone hand in hand with the rise of a new political elite with a strategic plan. So began the process of Qatar's transformation into a regional middle power, entailing a more independent foreign policy and a more active regional role. Qatar's financial independence was thus the first and most important step towards an independent foreign policy.

¹ "Natural Gas Reserve by Countries." *Worldometers*. Accessed on 24 April 2022 at: <https://bit.ly/2VbUaz6>.

² "Qatar Announces Huge Rise in Gas Production Amid Diplomatic Crisis." *CNBC*, 4 July 2017. Accessed on 24 April 2022 at: <https://googl/n92M3a>.

Security Challenges

Iraq's defeat in the war to liberate Kuwait in 1991, and the policy adopted by the Clinton Administration in the US starting in 1993, led to a major shift in the regional balance of power, paving the way for Saudi hegemony. As a result of this shift in power relations, and the ensuing shift from a state of balance to one of hegemony, Qatar's security dilemma intensified. Qatar began to look for tools to ensure its survival in the face of escalating threats in its regional environment. It signed a defence agreement with the United States in 1992, followed by another with France in 1994. When Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa came to power in 1995, security became a supreme strategy for the country in the face of external threats, as well as a means of preserving its independence, far from the influx of its two large neighbours, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Al Jazeera became a key player not only in the regional context, but on the international scene

Needless to say, Saudi Arabia did not welcome the attempt by Qatar's new ruling elite to adopt a foreign policy independent of it. This is because that country strives, above all, to align the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council with its policy. Sheikh Hamad thus faced strong opposition to his rule and policy from Riyadh, which considered him to be leading a rebellion. Hence, the Kingdom's support for two coup attempts to overthrow the government in Doha, in 1996 and 2002. It likewise opposed the construction of gas pipelines to transport Qatari gas to Kuwait and Bahrain.

The Saudi position³ prompted Sheikh Hamad to adopt a combination of defensive and offensive strategies. These included attempts to create a balance, the building of alliances, and using the available soft-power tools (mediation, conflict resolution, media, cultural activities, research centres, funding for humanitarian work and sport). In other words, Qatar

partnered with international powers to become part of the global economic system.

Qatar's foreign policy orientation was thus clearly driven entirely by its security dilemma. In this regard, although Qatar has sometimes proved able to turn a foreign policy threat into a strength by adopting offensive strategies to seize the opportunities available in its environment, this has also increased the risk ratios, as evidenced by the 2017 crisis.

In general, the strategies that Qatar has pursued in its quest to adopt an independent foreign policy and carve out a regional role commensurate with its leaders' ambition can be summarized as follows:

Financial Independence

Of all the oil-producing Gulf states, only Qatar has given natural gas the attention it deserves. The other countries in the region, including Saudi Arabia, treated it more carelessly, considering it a mere by-product of oil. Often, the gas was either burned off or pumped back into the wells to push the oil out before ultimately being sold at low prices. This situation changed dramatically at the turn of the millennium due to the population boom and strong economic growth, which increased the need to generate electricity and spurred the expansion of gas-dependent industries, such as the petrochemical and aluminium industries. Indeed, most Gulf countries have recently increased their gas imports to reduce oil consumption in power generation in order to make it available for export. Saudi Arabia, for example, consumes about 900,000 barrels of oil per day to generate electricity; by replacing the oil used for electricity production with gas, it can supply this amount for export.

Occupying the Media Field

In light of Saudi Arabia's near absolute domination of the Arab media space, in November 1996, Qatar launched Al Jazeera, the first Arab satellite channel specialized in news. By meeting the urgent need for a news channel with a wide margin of freedom and a diversity of opinions, Al Jazeera gained great popularity, in particular during its coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the second Palestinian In-

³ CHAMPION, Marc. "Saudi Dispute with Qatar has 22-Year History Rooted in Gas." *World Oil*, 6 June 2017. Accessed on 24 April 2022 at: <https://bit.ly/32VTWwm>.

tifada in 2000. An important dimension of Qatari soft power, the channel became a key player not only in the regional context, but on the international scene. As a result, the channel has been very poorly regarded by most Arab regimes, which consider it to have propagated values foreign to the region. Al Jazeera's activities have sparked several diplomatic crises between Qatar and various Arab countries. The channel was an essential part of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's plan to develop Qatar and secure for it an ambitious regional role of its own. Indeed, it has become one of the most effective tools to this end.

Strengthening the Relationship with Washington

After achieving financial independence and owning its own influential media, the third prong of Qatar's independence strategy was to strengthen its security and means of defending itself. The tension with Saudi Arabia in the wake of the 1996 coup attempt in Qatar prompted the country to seek tools and means to bolster its defence and mitigate the threats it faces. One of the solutions was rapprochement with Washington in order to boost the level of US commitment to ensuring Qatar's security in the face of Saudi, Emirati and Egyptian attempts to overthrow its regime. Qatar seemed to be in urgent need of strong allies to help it deal with its security dilemma, exacerbated by its deteriorating relations with its neighbours. In 1992, Qatar signed a defence agreement with Washington. In so doing, it sought to take advantage of the peace process that gave rise to the Oslo Accords between the Palestinians and Israelis and get closer to Israel. Qatar agreed to open a trade office to represent Israeli interests in 1996. However, this rapprochement was cut short by the first major stumbling blocks encountered in the peace process: the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the coming to power of the Israeli right led by Benjamin Netanyahu, and the suspension of the Palestinian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli peace talks. Qatar has since abandoned this policy, in favour of a more dynamic foreign policy based on balance. The country began to reinforce its military relations with Washington, even as it moved closer to Washington's adversaries in the region, rather than its allies. The rule followed is to maintain relations with everyone while striking a balance between them.

A crucial step in this direction was the transfer of US forces from Saudi Arabia to Qatar in 2003. The Doha government, which had made the Al Udeid base available to the US in 2000 without signing any agreement, left the Americans in charge of it from 2001 on. In December 2002, Doha and Washington finally signed an agreement giving official cover to the US military presence at Al Udeid. In April 2003, the US Air Force Central Command moved from Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia to the Al Udeid base. The US's growing reliance on Qatar, in terms of its military presence in the region, in a theatre of major operations for US forces (due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan), has further strengthened Qatar's importance for Washington. Qatar's success in attracting the US military presence was viewed as an important step towards resolving its security dilemma and embracing a bolder, more independent foreign policy.

Mediation Diplomacy

This political ability to simultaneously establish relations with opposing countries and political forces has allowed Qatar to play a unique role in a number of regional conflicts. This strategy has imbued its policy with greater strength and influence, although it has been marred by ambiguity for some, and by confusion for others, to the extent of increasing the level of resentment towards its amongst its adversaries, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Qatar's success in attracting the US military presence was viewed as an important step towards resolving its security dilemma and embracing a bolder, more independent foreign policy

Qatar has thus positioned itself as a key actor in several situations of regional tension: in ending the political crisis that broke out in Lebanon following Hezbollah's invasion of its capital Beirut on 7 May 2008, or by offering to mediate between the Houthis and former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh to find a

solution to their fourth war in 2007. Doha also helped set up a series of meetings between the Taliban and the US and made considerable diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. Qatar's effective mediation to resolve certain disputes in the Arab and Islamic world has made it an effective mediator and an important regional player. Its mediation efforts have become an integral part of its foreign policy toolbox and are often conducted in the spotlight in front of local and international media. This diplomacy aims to project an image of Qatar as a recognized intermediary and neutral country, strongly committed to peace and stability in the region. The use of this diplomacy optimizes its interests and influence.

Balancing Relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran

Since the early 1990s, Qatar has striven for balance in its relations with its two large neighbours. This, of course, meant breaking with the policy of rapprochement with Saudi Arabia, adopted following its independence in 1971, in order to pursue slightly greater proximity with Iran until the desired balance in these relations could be achieved. To this end, it settled its maritime border disputes with Iran and concluded a security agreement with it in 2010. However, Qatar has been unable to achieve its goal. It has thus resigned itself to having bad relations with one of its neighbours, but endeavouring to avoid having bad relations with both at the same time.

Qatar mediation efforts have become an integral part of its foreign policy toolbox

It could be argued that Qatar did not have a foreign policy of its own until the early 1990s. On the contrary, after the end of the British protectorate in 1971 and the dissipation of the effects of the Treaty of Friendship that had bound it to Great Britain in 1981,

it relied entirely on Saudi Arabia within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

As noted, due to its delicate geopolitical situation, Qatar has developed a strategy more akin to what could be called the "law of survival" in its foreign policy. When faced with pressure from Iran, it pushes Saudi Arabia closer to the coalition's borders; when Saudi Arabia is the source of the threat, Qatar counters with a calculated rapprochement with Iran. The exception to this rule occurred during the Arab Spring (2011-2013), when Qatar pursued offensive behaviour in which it took a gamble on the possibility of a change in the structure of the regional system, betting on a democratic transition that both Iran and Saudi Arabia opposed.

Sources

- ENNASRI, Nabil. *L'Énigme du Qatar*. Paris: Armand Colin/IRIS Éditions, 2013, 191 p.
- GHAFFAR, Adel Abdel. "Between Geopolitics and Geoeconomics: The Growing Role of Gulf States in the Eastern Mediterranean." *IstitutoAffariInternazionali (IAI)*, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/resrep28808.
- KHATIB, Lina. "Qatar's foreign policy: the limits of pragmatism." *International Affairs* 89, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2013. https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/riia/v89i2/f_0028335_23053.pdf
- LAZAR, Medhi. "L'émirat hyperactif' : une analyse de la politique d'internationalisation du Qatar." *Confluences Méditerranée*, No. 84, p. 59-76, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.3917/come.084.0059>
- LAZAR, Medhi. "Qatar : quelle stratégie régionale ? De l'influence à la puissance." *Diploweb.com: La Revue Géopolitique*. 14 October 2012. www.diploweb.com/Qatar-quelle-strategie-regionale.html
- يفاي جي تارتس ال، اةي ج راخ ل رطق ةس ايس، "ن اورم، ن ال بق حب ال ل لي بر عل ازك رمل، ةخ فص 388. "اي فار غجل اة هج اوم 2021، تاس ايس ل اة س اردو ثا

Iran's Influence on Countries in the MENA Region

Moisés Garduño García

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Iran is not typified as a country that leads invasions, but is rather an actor that takes advantage of the conditions of invaded countries. The cases of Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon provide evidence for this argument, as Iran's presence is manifest not only in their civilian bodies, but also in their security and intelligence apparatuses. This phenomenon has led the capitals of these countries to be ironically portrayed in the regional media as "Tehran's four Arab capitals."

Since the new President, Ebrahim Raisi, took up office in July 2021, Iran's foreign and security policy towards these theatres has changed little, as the nuclear programme, missile programme and assistance to armed non-state actors such as Hamas, Hezbollah, Kata'ib Hezbollah and the Houthis persist as the central factors in Iranian strategic defence thinking. In parallel to this exercise in dissuasion, however, the new Raisi Administration has also pursued temporary détente mechanisms towards other regional neighbours, most notably the expansion of the so-called "resistance economy" in Iraq, the easing of tensions with selected countries on the Arabian Peninsula, and its apparent consolidation in the Mediterranean, not only via countries such as Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, but also through contacts with the Algerian government. Taken together, these events represent a range of opportunities for the "revolutionary pragmatism" being pushed by the new Raisi Administration, whose priority, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and in the midst of the

Russian-Ukrainian conflict, is the achievement of a domestic economic recovery not dependent on the lifting of sanctions surrounding the complicated nuclear *affair*.

Recalibrating Strategy in Iraq

In Iraq's October 2021 parliamentary elections, the Iranian-backed al-Fatah Movement won 17 seats while its main rival, the bloc led by Muqtada al-Sadr, won 73. While this means that Iran maintained its influence over factions as diverse as Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asa'ibAhl al-Haq and the Badr Front, it also indicates that Iranian influence in the government of Iraq has decreased dramatically.¹ Hence, Tehran has decided to recalibrate its strategy with Baghdad through a process of cooperation and conflict that shows, on the one hand, how Iran refuses to stop seeing Iraq as a potential market for its "resistance economy," and on the other, how the geopolitics of the area have driven Iran to use Iraqi territory as a theatre of operations to wage a covert war with actors such as Israel.

Trade with Iraq accounts for 40% of Iranian exports, making it Tehran's most important trading partner after China. This fact allows us to understand the enormous economic influence that Tehran has on its Arab neighbour, especially following the struggle against the Islamic State in 2014, at a time that allowed companies linked to the Revolutionary Guard such as Khatam al-Anbiya to build roads, power plants, hotel complexes and businesses throughout cities such as Basra, Nasiriyah, Najaf, Karbala and Baghdad, which formed an economic corridor worth

¹ HIGEL, Lahib. "Iraq's Surprise Election Results." *The Crisis Group*. November 2021. www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iraq/iraqs-surprise-election-results

around \$9 billion before the pandemic. This relationship is expected to grow to \$20 billion in the coming years, according to Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the new Iranian Foreign Minister, who has visited Baghdad twice since taking office, in the context of a regional summit in August 2021, and then as part of the work of the Fourth Joint Economic Committee in April 2022. This diplomatic presence is fully intended to compete with other Gulf countries, such as Saudi Arabia, which also aspires to supply gas and electricity to Baghdad in the medium term.

Parallel to this, Iran has continued its irregular war strategy against groups allegedly backed by the United States and Israel through support to Shiite militias. In this regard, Ebrahim Raisi has confirmed that Iraq remains vital to its national security because covert operations have been planned from Iraqi territory that have taken the lives of valuable nuclear scientists and important military figures, as demonstrated by the assassinations of Abul Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in January 2020. In other words, the Iraqi theatre has also become an extension of the covert war waged by the Iranian and Israeli armed forces in the Syrian arena of operations, as attacks against Tehran in southern Syria are frequently countered by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in northern Iraq, the Iraqi Kurdish area, where Mossad intelligence activities are presumed to take place. One of the tactical attacks evidencing this took place in March 2022, when the Pasdaran claimed responsibility for the launch of a dozen missiles against an “espionage centre” in Erbil in response to the assassination of two Iranian generals in the suburbs of Damascus in April of the same year.

Caution on the Arabian Peninsula

Similar strategies have been pursued with Saudi Arabia in the context of a diplomatic rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran since 2021, alongside the friction in the theatre of operations in Yemen.

On the one hand, the leaders of the so-called “Arab Quartet” (Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt) signed the al-Ula agreement in January 2021, in which they pledged to resume dip-

lomatic relations with Qatar, a move that was interpreted by Iran as a temporary measure of détente in which these countries seek to take advantage of the business climate and tourist attraction that the celebration of the next FIFA World Cup in Qatar will bring to the entire Persian Gulf in December 2022.² In fact, Iran is following the same path, given that it signed multiple cooperation agreements with Qatar in April 2022 to take advantage of the proximity of Doha and the provinces of Bushehr, Hormozgan and especially the attractive island of Kish, areas that will serve not only to accommodate tourists, but also to promote tourism within Iran.

The geopolitics of the area have driven Iran to use Iraqi territory as a theatre of operations to wage a covert war with actors such as Israel

Although Mohammed bin Salman stated in al-Ula that Arab unity was necessary to confront Iran, four months after the agreement, Riyadh began a round of direct talks with Tehran. With Iraq as the facilitator and venue for the meetings, the talks with Iran were aimed at defusing tensions that arose when the two countries severed diplomatic relations in 2016 after hundreds of people attacked the Saudi embassy in Tehran in response to the execution of Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent Shiite religious leader. Although progress has been slow, one of the main outcomes of these talks was the reopening of Iran’s representation to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in January 2022, which is seen as an example of the new Iranian pragmatism under the diplomacy spearheaded by Ebrahim Raisi.

Despite this, the Yemen scenario remains the main bone of contention between Tehran and Riyadh, albeit with some nuances. Although the truce signed by the Houthis and the Yemeni government in April 2022 was announced as part of the rapprochement between Tehran and Riyadh, it was actually the severe economic consequences of the Russian-Ukrain-

² UN TREATIES. “Al-Ula Declaration. No. 56786,” January 2021. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/NoVolume/56786/Part/I-56786-08000002805b2870.pdf>

ian conflict that led both factions to sign a temporary ceasefire. Among other things, rising grain prices, fuel shortages and the impact of inflation on multiple commodities such as steel (which shot up by 33% globally in 2022), have led both Riyadh and Tehran to prefer to promote a process of dialogue, in conjunction with UN envoy Hans Grundberg, through a Presidential Council that will aim to negotiate with the Houthis in the short term, especially given the military attrition experienced by the factions close to Iran when they have faced troops not only from Riyadh, but also from the United Arab Emirates over the last year. Needless to say, this truce has also been beneficial to Iran because it includes an agreement to ease an embargo on fuel entering the Houthi-controlled port of Hodeida, as well as an agreement to allow commercial flights to and from the capital, Sanaa, which Tehran's allies have also controlled since 2016. Specifically, the ceasefire in Yemen will allow both Riyadh and Tehran to focus on capitalizing on high energy prices to heal their domestic economies and alleviate the inflation caused by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which, in Iran's case, reached 27% in May 2022.

Consolidation in the Levant?

Iran's presence in the Levant over the past year has also been characterized by a combination of hard and soft power strategies, particularly in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. In these arenas, Iran supported groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas with money and propaganda through actors such as al-Mustafa International University, media outlets such as Al-Alam, foundations such as the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, and cultural diplomacy efforts by the Owj Arts and Media Organisation, Iran's largest media organization run by the Revolutionary Guard. First, in the case of Lebanon, although Hezbollah has remained in the national political system since 2018, when it took control of three government ministries, it lost its majority in parliament in the most recent legislative elections of May 2022. However, this political party's real power lies in the military sphere since, according to certain specialized re-

ports, in the last decade Hezbollah has not only strengthened its military capabilities by assisting Iran in the Syrian conflict, but also increased its weapons potential to an estimated 130,000 rocket and ballistic devices. This is of real concern to Tel Aviv if one recalls the catastrophic results of the 2006 war, in which Hezbollah sustained an average of 4,000 launches over 34 days, preventing the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) from occupying southern Lebanon.³ This has prompted the new Iranian foreign ministry to increase the offer to bring electricity, universities and other services to Lebanon, a country mired in a political and economic crisis in the wake of popular protests in October 2019, the Covid-19 health emergency and a warehouse explosion in the port of Beirut in August 2020. Although Lebanon has reached a minimum agreement with the IMF to obtain \$3 billion in exchange for debt restructuring and fiscal reform, Iran and Hezbollah are insisting on pushing for a Chinese investment programme to rescue Lebanon's fragile economy, an option that could be a serious alternative to the interests of France and Saudi Arabia, allies of the al-Mustaqbal Party, on the Lebanese stage.

The ceasefire in Yemen will allow both Riyadh and Tehran to focus on capitalizing on high energy prices to heal their domestic economies and alleviate the inflation caused by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

The case of Syria is somewhat different from the previous scenarios because of two main characteristics. First, because Iran's influence in Damascus is projected directly onto the Syrian government and not onto non-state actors. Second, because Iran's counterweight in Syria has paradoxically been Russia and not another country in the region. On the first issue, it is necessary to stress that, at least beginning in August 2018, Tehran and Damascus have signed several military cooperation agreements, a

³ SHAIKH, Shaan & WILLIAMS, Ian. "Hezbollah's Missiles and Rockets." *CSIS Briefs*, July 2018. www.csis.org/analysis/hezbollahs-missiles-and-rockets

key part of which has been Iran's strengthening of Syria's air defence systems. Within the framework of these agreements, there have also been negotiations to address the inclusion of some Iranian elements in the Syrian armed forces, such as the National Defence Forces (NDF) and the Local Defence Forces (LDF) which have already been integrated into the structure of the Syrian army, as well as the al-Abbas Brigade, which was integrated into the Republican Guard, all this in direct consultations with Moscow. This brings us to the second issue, which involves, broadly speaking, the lack of agreement on the restructuring of the Syrian armed forces between Iran and Russia: while Tehran is pushing for a greater Iranian presence in the Syrian army in the short term, Moscow is committed to a plan that would allow for greater autonomy of the regime's security structures in the future.⁴

On this phenomenon, it must be said that Iran is trying to increase its influence in Syria by offering salaries double those of Syrian soldiers in certain areas of the country, especially in provinces where battles were fought against the Islamic State and where the al-Quds Forces have enjoyed great popularity, such as Deir al-Zour and Raqqa, which are disputed territories today because of the cross-border area with Iraq's strategic location for the free transit of goods from Tehran to the Mediterranean. Thus, the fact that Bashar al-Assad has remained in power in Syria has not meant the automatic emergence of a nationally shared pro-Iranian sentiment. So Tehran's tactics on the Iraqi-Syrian border are fully intended to produce a social base among communities in the area through welfarist techniques, not to create proxy militias (given the Russian refusal), but to rely on local tribal loyalties in case the Iranians have to leave the country at some point.

With regard to Palestine, it should be noted that in the past year Iran has increased its support for Islamism in Gaza not only through its well-known alliances with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, but also through support for other small groups such as Harakat al-Sabirin, which has a profile closer to the

ideology of Iranian revolutionary Shi'ism. The Hamas government in Gaza already banned Harakat al-Sabirin as of 2015, but has also tolerated its symbolic activities, such as the annual celebrations of the martyrdom of Abul Qasem Soleimani, sponsored by the Imam Khomeini Foundation.⁵ Although Iran is trying to increase the promotion of Shi'ism in Gaza, the truth is that support for such groups is intended to provide militias that can act militarily against Israel in contexts where Hamas, due to its connections with other Arab countries or the pursuit of its own political agenda, does not have the leeway to do so. Clearly, Iran's support for multiple factions in Gaza pursues the same counter-intelligence strategy it does in other theatres such as Iraq, because in the past, relations between Iran and Hamas differed on issues such as the conflict in Syria, the rule of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt, and even internal differences with Khaled Mashal, who preferred to distance himself from the Iranian orbit in order to strengthen ties with what he called moderate Arab regimes. However, since Yahya Sinwar assumed the leadership of Hamas in 2017, Hamas has reinvented its public discourse regarding Iran and has pointed out that the only enemy of Gaza and the Palestinian people is the Israeli occupation and that the support and backing of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah for the Palestinian cause deserve thanks and appreciation, as the activities of the Iranian Committee for Reconstruction in Gaza, or the support for Hamas' military experts in terms of ballistics demonstrate.⁶

Algeria, Iran's Connection for Rebuilding Relations with North Africa

At the same time, Iran has made a bid to reach out to Algeria in the context of Ebrahim Raisi's new policy of restoring ties with the African continent, an area completely ignored by the Hassan Rouhani Administration. Its interest in Africa finds common cause when Iran condemns the West's plunder of its natural resources, just as European colonialism

⁴ AZIZI, Hamidreza. "Integration of Iran-backed armed groups into the Iraqi and Syrian armed forces: implications for stability in Iraq and Syria." *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 33:3, 499-527, 2022.

⁵ "Is Iran behind spread of Shiism in Gaza?." *Al Monitor*, February 2022. www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/02/iran-behind-spread-shiism-gaza

⁶ HAMAS WEB PAGE. "عاطق لابلون جة ين اري ايوة ين ان بل تاد ادي ق و ص ق ر ح ن ك ن ت س ت س ا م ح." ("Hamas denounces the burning of pictures of Lebanese and Iranian leaders in the southern Gaza Strip"), 2022.

did with Africa before the independences. Specifically, Algeria's government maintains a similar regional policy to Iran's when it criticizes the Israeli occupation in Palestine, an issue that has drawn attention lately, as Morocco, Algeria's main regional rival in North Africa, broke diplomatic relations with Iran in 2018 when it accused it of supporting the Polisario Front through its embassy in Algeria.⁷ Friction between Iran and Morocco intensified when Rabat joined the process of normalizing relations with Israel alongside Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, a process wholly rejected by Iran.

In addition to these regional dynamics, another angle of Iran's influence in North Africa through its relationship with Algeria can be seen in the energy sphere. For example, in the framework of the sixth Gas Exporters Summit held in Tehran in February 2022, Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune met with Ebrahim Raisi to strengthen dialogue between them, Qatar and Russia for greater cooperation in the face of high gas prices given the impact of the Covid-19 health crisis on the global economy. An additional element of this relationship is that Algeria has always supported Iran's right to develop nuclear technology and that, following recent rapprochement, mechanisms have been devised for further dialogue through the establishment of a Joint Economic Commission to work on issues relating to finance, education and health, which could be the beginning of a real Iranian policy in the Maghreb.

Iran and the United States on the Nuclear Issue

At the time of writing, neither the success nor failure of the negotiations to bring the US back into the Iran Nuclear Deal has been officially announced. One remaining obstacle to this is the fact that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard remains on Washington's list of terrorist organizations, something that Iran aspires to reverse and which, for Washington, is critical as a political win for the Democratic Party, facing mid-term elections in November this year.

As mentioned above, the international context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is favouring the Iranian oil industry, which expects to receive up to \$84 billion this year, so it is highly likely that Iran's new negotiating team will not be in a hurry to resolve the nuclear issue and will remain in the process, presenting Washington with a conditional position so that it is Biden who makes the decision and, if he withdraws, bears the domestic and international political consequences. In the meantime, Iran is capitalizing on every dollar from oil sales, making it easier for Ebrahim Raisi to fulfil his campaign promises to serve the domestic economy first, regardless of US-imposed sanctions. Finally, in the face of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, we must not lose sight of the fact that, from the first day of the conflict, Iran decided to adopt a cautious narrative but one that is close to Russia, a country with which Tehran has collaborated intensely on security and defence issues. For this reason, it makes no sense for Iran to give up its nuclear programme, as Israel is requesting, especially when it is in a position of negotiating strength given the demand for its energy and when Moscow has announced its intentions to expand the Bushehr nuclear plant, a reactor that Russia has known about since the 1990s.

Iran is capitalizing on every dollar from oil sales, making it easier to serve the domestic economy first, regardless of sanctions

In conclusion, the above data suggest that Iran is highly likely to maintain strategies of cooperation and conflict with the aforementioned countries through a pragmatic and cautious policy where formal and informal actors, despite possible internal disagreements, coordinate irregular military efforts in the Arab world that adapt to the changing structural security conditions not only in the region, but also in the international arena.

⁷ "دن کی معطوق ناری البار و خطب اورش کارم" ("Morocco Severs Ties with Iran"), *Radio Farda*, 2018. www.radiofarda.com/a/morocco-severs-ties-iran/29202884.html

Energy and Green Transition

Europe's Quest for Energy Security and the Renewed Case for a Strong Mediterranean Green Energy Partnership

Simone Tagliapietra

Senior fellow, Bruegel

Adjunct professor,

Catholic University of Milan

Introduction: The Case for a New Euro-Mediterranean Energy Partnership

The European Union (EU) adopted in 2021 a new agenda for the Mediterranean: “Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood.” The strategy recognizes that the Southern Neighbourhood is one of the main hotspots in the world as regards climate change and environmental degradation, and at the same time it outlines that the region is home to some of the world's best solar and wind resources, presenting unparalleled opportunities for clean energy cooperation. By outlining that the European Green Deal represents a unique opportunity for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the strategy postulates that the EU and its partner countries in the Southern Neighbourhood should work together to strengthen environment, energy, and climate change resilience – in view of helping mitigate risks to human lives and livelihoods and promoting sustainable development, job creation and transition to high value sectors.

The strategy notably outlines four focus areas for cooperation in the green transition: i) Climate and environmental governance, its link with public finances and fiscal initiatives, and monitoring of targets; ii) Supporting carbon pricing initiatives; iii) Administrative capacity and targeted technical assistance to implement and enforce legislation both at the central and local levels; and iv) Education and awareness raising, within both the private sector and the population at large as agents of change.

In terms of tools, the strategy outlines that the EU is committed to using all its instruments to ensure the efficient, effective, swift and tailor-made roll-out of the new agenda for the Mediterranean, taking into consideration the region's diversity, interests and needs.

The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and the European Fund for Sustainable Development plus (EFSD+) are viewed as the main instruments for EU cooperation with partner countries in the region. The European Commission (EC) indeed proposes to mobilize up to €7 billion in this area between 2021 and 2027, with the aim of supporting the mobilization of private and public investments of up to €30 billion in the region. On top of financing, policy dialogue with all relevant stakeholders is seen as a cornerstone of cooperation, with particular attention placed on the local level to ensure that the impact of cooperation is distributed geographically in an adequate manner.

After the Russian aggression against Ukraine, this strategy is now more important than ever. The EU indeed seeks to rapidly phase out its energy imports from Russia, by both diversifying oil and natural gas supplies and accelerating the green transition. In both cases, the Mediterranean region can play an important role. This is particularly the case for the green transition, where the case for a stronger collaboration on renewable energy and green hydrogen between the two shores of the Mediterranean is now stronger than ever. But for this vision to turn into reality, significant investments are required. In this article, we review the current status of the green transition in the Southern Neighbourhood, and provide a set of policy recommendations on how to raise private sector investments to boost the green transition in the region – with the aim of fostering both regional sustainability and energy security.

The Green Transition in the Southern Neighbourhood: Current Status

Partner countries in the Southern Neighbourhood are richly endowed with solar and wind energy resources, which are estimated to be among the best in the world. Solar photovoltaic (PV) potential is widespread in the region and can be tapped at both household and utility levels. Concentrated solar power performs optimally in utility-scale projects situated in the region's deserts, where the intensity of solar irradiation is among the highest in the world. Wind power also has great potential in the region, given the favourable wind conditions that characterize all these countries.

In recent years, partner countries have slowly started to exploit this potential. As outlined by the International Energy Agency, over the last ten years regional countries have increased their renewable electricity generation by 40 percent, by adding a total of 4.5 GW of wind, solar PV and solar thermal capacity to their renewable energy power fleet. Modern renewables remain poorly used in the region in the sectors of transport and heating. Traditional biomass continues to be the predominant renewable energy source used in heating, which represents a problem in terms of indoor air pollution, health and overall sustainability. Solar heat market continues to be underdeveloped, notwithstanding the important potential of the region. Likewise, renewables play a marginal role in transport in all regional countries, as electric mobility is still not developed and biofuels are yet to be used efficiently.

Notwithstanding the initial progress on the renewable electricity front, wind and solar were still a minor contributor to partner countries' primary energy mixes in 2019, with shares of 0.01 percent in Algeria, 0.2 percent in Egypt, 2 percent in Jordan, 0.3 percent in Lebanon, 1.5 percent in Morocco and 1 percent in Tunisia.

It should be mentioned here that the reason why renewable energy sources continue to be marginal contributors to these countries' energy mixes relates to the persistent investment focus of these countries on fossil fuels. As illustrated by the International Energy Agency, in 2019, regional countries invested \$30 billion in oil and gas supply, while only around \$7 billion in power supply – only a fraction of which goes to renewables.

Southern Neighbourhood partner countries do have decarbonization plans, as they have adopted in the framework of the Paris Agreement some clear commitments in terms of emission reductions, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), most recently updated at the Glasgow climate summit of November 2021. It should be noted that Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia also included in their NDCs specific targets for the deployment of renewable energy, while Egypt and Jordan adopted similar targets through national energy strategies.

Partner countries in the Southern Neighbourhood are richly endowed with solar and wind energy resources, which are estimated to be among the best in the world

Regional countries' NDCs present different levels of ambition, different targets and different priorities, but they do share a common feature: linking action to external (financial) support. The partner countries have indeed committed to only modest greenhouse gas reductions through their own efforts – and have promised much more substantial action only if external technical and financial support is made available. International climate finance thus has a crucial role to play in fostering the green transition in the Southern Neighbourhood – just as it plays a fundamental role in developing countries all across the world.

Under the Paris Agreement, developed countries committed to mobilizing \$100 billion per year by 2025 from various sources – public and private, bilateral and multilateral – to support developing countries in their efforts to reduce emissions. With a contribution of €20.2 billion in 2016, the EU is the world's largest contributor of climate finance to developing countries.

In recent years, Southern Neighbourhood partner countries have received increasing flows of European and international climate finance – here referred to as purely public sources, and not also the private financing these flows mobilize. Between 2013 and 2016, Germany was the top contributor with a cumulative investment of \$2.8 billion, followed by the

World Bank Group (\$2.4 billion), France (\$2 billion), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD, \$1.8 billion), Japan (\$1.7 billion), the European Investment Bank (EIB, \$1.2 billion) and other EU institutions (\$0.5 billion).

Looking at the latest available year, 2016, we see how half of the energy-related climate finance flows to the Southern Neighbourhood were devoted to renewable energy generation, 30 percent to non-renewable energy generation, 15 percent to energy distribution and two percent to energy policy related activities.

International climate finance thus has a crucial role to play in fostering the green transition in the Southern Neighbourhood

In absolute terms, the Southern Neighbourhood thus received \$0.8 billion of European and international climate finance to support renewable energy projects in 2016. This figure, amounting to 0.8 percent of the annual climate finance pledged by developed countries under the Paris Agreement, could be scaled-up in the future, notably on the basis of a stronger EU commitment to the region.

More robust EU action to foster the development of renewable energy in the region via climate finance should, however, be linked to the implementation of certain energy reforms. These would be directed at removing the key barriers to the private sector's engagement in renewable energy in these countries.

Linking Climate Finance to Better Governance for the Green Transition in the Region

Scaling up renewable energy in the region in line with countries' NDCs will be costly. For instance, the World Bank Group estimates that Egypt, Jordan and Morocco alone would need around \$100 billion in investment in renewable energy generation between 2016 and 2030 to meet their NDC targets.

International private investment is essential to meet this large investment need. However, various barriers in the region continue to prevent international in-

vestors from becoming more engaged in partner countries' renewable energy sectors. Two key barriers stand out.

Legal and regulatory barriers: All Southern Neighbourhood partner countries have renewable energy targets, but achieving them ultimately relies on the presence of sound and stable renewable energy regulatory frameworks. On this front, much remains to be done in the region. Renewables have been "locked out" of many regional countries as a result of distorting fossil fuel subsidies, as well as the simultaneous presence of risk and uncertainties, weak institutions and inadequate grid infrastructure. Frequent changes in feed-in tariff schemes are also a concern for investors in several countries, while in other countries the lack of an independent regulatory authority or of a fully developed regulatory framework is a matter of concern for investors.

Financial barriers: Currency convertibility, inflation and lack of foreign reserves are concerns for investors in several countries. The cost of financing and the limited availability of debt from commercial sources for renewable projects represent a general challenge in several countries, though to different degrees. These barriers are felt either through the non-availability of finance or inflexible grace periods that are not adapted to the characteristics of such investments.

Partner countries have the responsibility of taking action to overcome these barriers, by reforming their energy sectors in order to unleash private investment. However, the EU can support this process by offering individual countries more ambitious climate financing, aimed at cutting the cost of capital for renewable energy projects and leveraging more private investment. But such action should be conditional on the implementation of the reforms necessary to attract further private investment. To be clear, these reforms should not be aimed at replicating in the Southern Neighbourhood the EU frameworks and rules, but to formulating pragmatic solutions to the countries' specific legal, regulatory and financial bottlenecks.

In the legal and regulatory areas, concrete solutions to be promoted in specific countries might include measures to increase clarity and transparency of rules; to provide legal and administrative support to international energy companies willing to invest in the country; to enhance transparency and clarity of rules in dispute procedures and to shorten dispute resolution timeframes; to phase-out fossil fuel subsi-

dies; or to establish one-stop-shops for renewable energy permits. Positive experiences exist in the region. As flagged by the International Energy Agency, Egypt managed to accelerate renewable energy deployment as it identified early the laws and regulations that could enable private investment in the sector. The country notably introduced feed-in tariffs in 2014 and allowed long-term power purchase agreements (PPAs) in 2017 in view of making investments by independent power producers more attractive. Morocco enshrined the right to sustainable development in the Constitution, set clear long-term renewable energy targets and put in place the necessary legislation to pursue this vision – for instance allowing tendering and auctions for large-scale solar and wind projects, and other measures encouraging private investments in the sector. The establishment of the Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Development (MASEN) also helped in this regard, as it increased the country's institutional reliability in the field. In terms of financing, concrete solutions to be promoted in specific countries might include measures to enhance local banks' capacities and ranges of instruments for supporting international investors; to establish a more stable central bank monetary policy; to encourage transactions and power purchase agreements with a more stable currency; or to establish favourable tax regimes for renewables. Greater climate finance support for Southern Neighbourhood partner countries that implement such solutions in practice should be prioritized.

Raising Awareness Is the Other Key Element to Unleash the Green Transformation in the Region

Education and awareness raising in both the private sector and the population at large can also be important drivers of change. That is, the green transition should also be bottom-up. After all, the European Green Deal itself is an illustration of how important it is to mobilize people, foster behavioural change and clarify the costs and benefits of climate action. Civil society organizations can play an important role in influencing climate policy formation and implementation. The complementary role to central gov-

ernment actions is thus important in raising awareness about the transition and promoting it. But how can civil society organizations help shape and support the green transition? There seem to be two sensible actions in this field. First of all, environmental NGOs, social organizations and networks can take up positions to support / call for stronger climate policy. Secondly, cities can play a key role in the green transition, for instance by promoting green mobility solutions. It must be noted that one of the main issues in most of those partner countries is the absence of unimpeded access to information and transparency. That is, NGOs and individuals can do little if access to public policy and public sector information is not guaranteed. The EU can play an important role in getting these countries to adhere to open access standards. This represents a key step in the process of raising awareness to unleash the green transformation in the region. It should also be mentioned that civil society stakeholders are key to dealing with “just transition” issues. It is therefore important to illustrate to civil society the socioeconomic benefits of the green transition (eg., green jobs, green industrial opportunities, etc) and this can also be done with devoted educational programmes. All this is key to ensuring the long-term stability of the green transition – in the Southern Neighbourhood as much as in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

Conclusions

In view of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the EU needs to reinvigorate its energy partnership with southern Mediterranean partner countries. This action should notably focus on the green transition, where the case for a strong collaboration on renewable energy and green hydrogen between the two shores of the Mediterranean is now stronger than ever. But for this vision to become a reality, the two shores of the Mediterranean need to work together to unlock private sector investments. This is the key to boosting the green transition in the region, with an aim of fostering both regional sustainability and energy security – something which is so vital after Russian's invasion of Ukraine.

Energy and Green Transition

The Clean Energy Challenges: Sustainability, Decarbonization and Security of Supply in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

Blanca Moreno-Dodson

Director

Constantin Tsakas

Senior Programme Officer

Silvia Pariente-David

Senior Advisor on energy

The Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI),
Marseille

Recent developments, including the unveiling of the EU Green Deal and worldwide repercussions of the Russian conflict in Ukraine, show that the timing is right to rethink and actively accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy in the Mediterranean region. This makes sense as the EU is a major global consumer, while the southern and eastern Mediterranean (SEM) countries have a vast potential to export energy there in order to respond to increasing needs. Meanwhile, the changing Global Value Chains (GVCs) and the transformation occurring in many sectors are opening up new opportunities,¹ which could lead to reshoring production closer to consuming markets, thereby reducing carbon footprints, digitalizing production and services and channelling investments into green & sustainable projects and processes in SEM countries.

Investments in energy transition can boost GDP growth and create much-needed jobs. In the face of increasing demographic pressure, as well as the progressive degradation of the environment, we ur-

gently need to take action and agree on strategies for the Mediterranean energy transition. Meanwhile, such a transition and the road to decarbonization are becoming increasingly disordered with the energy price crisis of late 2021 and the war in Ukraine. Linking short-term actions to longer-term strategies is thus vital to promoting a sustainable development path. With that in mind, this paper aims to explore key challenges and lessons learned regarding the development of clean energy in the region. It draws from recent CMI analysis (Moreno-Dodson, Pariente-David and Tsakas, 2021),² providing thoughts on what SEM countries need to succeed in their energy transition and the priorities to target, as well as measures to promote the integration of the Euro-Mediterranean energy market.

First, we mention that additional actions are needed with regards to the green stimulus, highlighting the huge potential for investment in the region for “greening” specific sectors such as transport, construction or tourism. Second, we argue that the production of green and blue hydrogen would be a very efficient way to contribute to the energy transition, especially considering that the EU Commission is expected to mobilize financing instruments, including in the context of the Neighbourhood Investment Platform. Third, we stress how the introduction of the EU carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) could act as an additional “motivator” for the SEM countries’ energy transition, as they would try to avoid additional tariffs on their exports to the EU. Fourth, we mention that regional electricity mar-

¹ See: AUGIER, Patricia; MORENO-DODSON, Blanca; BLANC, Pierre; GASIOREK, Michael; MOULEY, Sami; TSAKAS, Constantin; VENTELOU, Bruno. *Post Covid-19: opportunities for growth, regional value chains and Mediterranean integration*, CMI and Euromediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences (FEMISE), February, 2022.

² MORENO-DODSON, Blanca; PARIENTE-DAVID, Silvia; TSAKAS, Constantin. *A Mediterranean Green Deal for an Effective Energy Transition as Part of The Sustainable Post-COVID Recovery*, CMI, Marseille, November, 2021.

ket integration (REMI) could facilitate renewable energy scale-up. A final section offers recommendations, suggestions and the way forward for future research on pressing issues related to the energy transition.

The Need for Green Stimulus and Investment in the Renewables Sector: Creating Green Growth and Jobs, While Reducing CO₂ Emissions

Following the Covid pandemic, governments around the world started using stimulus packages to spur business growth. A little more than a year later, following the war in Ukraine, countries worldwide adopted measures to limit energy price increases for consumers, temporarily delaying coal phase-out and slowing down nuclear shutdowns, while it has become evident that finding new sources of natural gas to replace Russian supplies is fundamental (Pariente-David and Walters, 2022).³ With the EU in the lead, largely thanks to the RePower Europe plan, it has been acknowledged that energy security and the Green Deal are not incompatible. The main solution could be found in the accelerated deployment of renewables and green hydrogen, as well as in intensifying energy conservation efforts, both based on energy efficiency improvements and behavioural changes. The EU's plan calls for replacing 16%-32% of Russian gas imports with hydrogen before 2030. Other sources of energy such as the regasification of LNG are also being explored.

Some examples of “green support” post-Covid can be found in SEM countries. In Morocco, the national recovery plan “Le Pacte pour la relance économique et l'emploi,” plans to enforce the transition to renewable energy and the development of an environmentally-friendly water policy, to promote sustainable tourism, to follow the path of sustainable land use and to preserve biodiversity (Danilina, 2020),⁴ while

also accelerating the digital economy. In Egypt, about 691 green projects were already included in its fiscal plan for 2020-21, at a total cost of EGP 447.3 billion (\$28.4 billion). Also, Egypt launched its first green bond issue on the London Stock Exchange, worth \$750 million for five years, the largest ever in the Middle East and North Africa.⁵ While these are welcome efforts, much more needs to be done. For the SEM countries, unlocking a green recovery stimulus that can address the objective of sustainable growth and job creation, while addressing climate change (adaptation and mitigation), presents a huge opportunity.

Financing important energy infrastructure at the national and regional levels represents a considerable challenge, especially in a post-Covid context and considering the limited fiscal space of SEM economies

Overall, policy design will be key for packages to be successful in delivering the much needed social, economic and climate outcomes. Some sectors are to be prioritized in green stimulus packages in all SEM countries, such as, for example, the transport sector.⁶ In the Mediterranean region, specifically, maritime transport can be an extremely efficient way of transporting goods and people but, currently, it also releases significant volumes of emissions as by-products, including air polluting sulphur, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and greenhouse gas. As the European Commission announced in the European Green Deal that GHG from EU transport, including shipping, should be cut by 90% by 2050, one of the core issues that needs to be discussed is how to un-

³ PARIENTE-DAVID, Silvia and WALTERS, Jonathan “From COP26 to COP 27: A Rough Ride across the Mediterranean?” CMI Blog, May, 2022. www.cmimarseille.org/blog/cop26-cop-27-rough-ride-across-mediterranean?fbclid=IwAR02HYFzaRggYvV1fDvK2Hh02cZul7VLYmC2PN-pZ6ODG-ozxj2p7V6L1Xw

⁴ DANILINA, Vera (2020), “Policy Responses to the Environmental Challenges of COVID-19 in the Southern Mediterranean Region in a Short – and Medium-run Perspective.” *CMI-FEMISE COVID-19 Med Brief*, no 8, November.

⁵ www.arabnews.com/node/1750726/business-economy

⁶ SIEGHART Lia and HEGER, Martin, “A blueprint for a ‘green’ recovery from COVID-19 for MENA countries.” *World Bank Blogs*, 27 July, 2020. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/blueprint-green-recovery-covid-19-mena-countries>

leash the potential for maritime transport decarbonization, as a way to upgrade environmental standards in SEM countries.

The renewables sector in these countries harbours opportunities, most notably with regards to solar energy. For instance, right before the pandemic, the Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy (Masen) had invited expressions of interest from developers for the first phase of its 400MW Noor PV II solar programme. However, while the timing is right to revive the renewables sector and to increase integration of Mediterranean energy markets, we should also keep in mind that financing important energy infrastructure at the national and regional levels represents a considerable challenge, especially in a post-Covid context and considering the limited fiscal space of SEM economies. Meanwhile, the SEM region still represents additional risks for investors, traditionally associated with macro and political instability, putting a strain on the costs of capital for RES projects.

North Africa, as well as the rest of the MENA region, have been identified as favourable locations to supply Europe with green hydrogen

Overall, a key challenge for SEM governments is how to fund important renewable energy projects. While governments could take on a share of financing for some new projects and for repair/maintenance projects, an effective private sector needs to lead the transformation. In addition, most SEM governments need to create policies, regulations and procedures that encourage private investors. Furthermore, in order to maximize the regional benefit of

renewable energy, Mediterranean grids should also be transnational, which will require bilateral dialogue and a regional approach.

Green (and Blue⁷) Hydrogen: Potential, Incentives and Strategies

When produced with low carbon emissions, hydrogen would be a very efficient way to contribute to the energy transition. The European Union has thus included green hydrogen as part of its plans to meet decarbonization targets. An element of the EU's New Industrial Strategy proposed in 2020 is the new hydrogen strategy, which aims to create an enabling environment to scale-up renewable hydrogen supply and demand for a climate-neutral economy. The EU recognizes that not all the required volumes can be generated within Europe. North Africa, as well as the rest of the MENA region, have been identified as favourable locations to supply Europe with green hydrogen. It is evident that there are a number of opportunities open to SEM countries, as they could become a possible source for a substantial amount of Europe's future hydrogen supply. However, developing green hydrogen effectively on a wider scale needs an important amount of renewable electricity. Meanwhile, the production of green hydrogen still presents technical and financial issues that need to be addressed. Markets for green hydrogen also need to be developed. The unfolding of a hydrogen economy greatly depends on government investment in the initial phases.⁸

Meanwhile, to support investments in clean hydrogen in the European Neighbourhood, the Commission is expected to mobilize the available financing instruments that include the Neighbourhood in the context of the Investment Platform.⁹ However, key

⁷ As hydrogen technologies are being considered in post-Covid industrial plans worldwide, it is important to understand how they are codified.

The main colours that have been attributed to hydrogen are the following:

- grey (or brown/black) hydrogen, produced by fossil fuels, and causing the emission of carbon dioxide in the process;
- blue hydrogen, through the combination of grey hydrogen and carbon capture and storage (CCS), to avoid most of the GHG emissions of the process;
- turquoise hydrogen, via the pyrolysis of a fossil fuel, where the by-product is solid carbon;
- green hydrogen, when produced by electrolyzers supplied by renewable electricity (and in some cases through other pathways based on bioenergy, such as biomethane reforming or solid biomass gasification);
- yellow (or purple) hydrogen, when produced by electrolyzers supplied by electricity from nuclear power plants.

Within each "colour" there may be a significant variability of carbon intensity.

⁸ www.power-technology.com/comment/standing-at-the-precipice-of-the-hydrogen-economy/

⁹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/5602f358-c136-11ea-b3a4-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

issues still need to be discussed and addressed, including identifying regional hydrogen projects and PPPs to export green hydrogen from SEM countries, the role of green hydrogen in renewable energy in connection with the water-food nexus, the incentives that the North can provide to SEM countries for accelerating hydrogen production and the possibility of creating a Mediterranean Hydrogen Alliance.

The Role of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and the Right Economic Policy Tools for the Energy Transition

The EU's Fit for 55 package includes a proposal for a carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM). The main objective is to prevent carbon leakages and to preserve the competitiveness of Europe's industry, as the region adopts more stringent climate objectives.

The proposed CBAM will affect the exports of various products and equipment according to their carbon content. Under the current proposal, the CBAM system will initially target a selected number of carbon-intensive goods, including cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilizers and electricity. This could severely affect the economies of SEMs. Right now, for SEM trade partners, the gradual introduction of the EU's CBAM would essentially mean additional tariffs, which would hinder their exports to the EU. In terms of absolute embedded CO₂ emissions in exports to the EU, Libya and Algeria (both with more than 10 million tonnes of embedded CO₂ equivalent emissions), followed by Turkey and Egypt, would be among the most concerning. Meanwhile, several non-EU Mediterranean countries are interconnected with the EU power system and already trade electricity regularly with EU countries. According to the current proposals, they would be subject to the CBAM, unless their electricity markets are coupled with those of the EU, they have adopted ambitious CO₂ reduction targets commensurate with those of

For SEM trade partners, the gradual introduction of the EU's CBAM would essentially mean additional tariffs, which would hinder their exports to the EU

Europe, or they are implementing an ETS or analogous carbon pricing measures (CMI, 2021).¹⁰

The EU has announced that a reporting system will apply as of 2023 for CBAM-related products with the aim of facilitating a smooth roll out and to facilitate dialogue with third countries. Meanwhile, importers will start paying a financial adjustment in 2026. However, in the meantime, it would be essential that our discussions also focus on how to protect SEM countries from potential growth and job losses resulting from the CBAM impact.

Regional Cooperation and Euro-Mediterranean Energy Market Integration

Regional electricity market integration (REMI) has always been known to offer numerous benefits to the power systems and economies of participating countries: enhanced energy security and power system reliability, reduced need for back-up capacity thanks to reserve sharing, supply mix diversification, more efficient use of power plants, lower power system costs (both investment and operating), and therefore expected lower consumer prices.¹¹ However, with more ambitious climate mitigation objectives in the EU, the climate benefits of REMI are increasingly acknowledged as being as important, if not more so, as the energy and economic benefits. Some of the climate positive externalities result from the increased efficiency of the power system due to regional integration; but most of them are derived from the fact that REMI facilitates renewable energy scale-up.

¹⁰ MORENO-DODSON, Blanca; PARIENTE-DAVID, Silvia; TSAKAS, Constantin. *A Mediterranean Green Deal for an Effective Energy Transition as Part of The Sustainable Post-COVID recovery*, CMI, Marseille, November. 2021. www.cmimarseille.org/sites/default/files/newsite/energy_report_final_final_online_0.pdf

¹¹ WORLD BANK. *Regional Power Sector Integration: Lessons from Global Case Studies and a Literature Review*. Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP); Brief note 004/10. Washington, DC, 2010.

REMI facilitates the large-scale development of renewable energy (RE), by improving power system flexibility and optimizing investments. According to the International Energy Agency (2014), flexibility is “the ability of a power system to reliably and cost-effectively cope with the variability and uncertainty of demand and supply across all relevant time-scales, from ensuring instantaneous stability of the power system to supporting long-term security of supply.” Two key solutions to increase flexibility are storage (batteries, thermal storage, pumped hydro, etc.) and, especially, regional market integration through interconnections.

As discussed before, the EU Green Deal and Recovery Plan emphasize the need for cooperation, partnership and REMI to achieve the goal of climate neutrality at the lowest possible cost. Regional cooperation, coordination of national policies and of power system operations and REMI are also a central part of the EU “Clean Energy for All Europeans” (CE4ALL) Package.¹² Broadening regional electricity market integration to include the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean would make the EU goal of reaching carbon-neutrality easier to achieve and less costly, as it would give Europe access to a vast almost limitless reserve of carbonless energy. An integration of the Euro-Mediterranean energy market would have benefits for both northern and southern countries, both in the short term and in the long term, by allowing the optimization of resources and infrastructures, as well as reducing income disparities between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The Green Deal sets out for the EU to use trade and investment policy, and build partnerships with its neighbours. The EU’s Fit for 55 package is a central global blueprint for converting climate ambitions into innovative policies, including in cooperation with its southern and eastern neighbours. However, substantial progress cannot be expected without efficient and trusted communications, in-depth pedagogy and long-term technical as-

sistance, which would generate ownership and a broader consensus among SEM countries, enabling them to align with the EU Green Deals’ ambitions.

Broadening regional electricity market integration to include the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean would make the EU goal of reaching carbon-neutrality easier to achieve and less costly

2. There is a clear need to generate knowledge that provides a comparative analysis of countries’ hydrogen strategies, which would provide a more in-depth view regarding advancements in SEM countries, investment potentials, bottlenecks and recommendations moving forward. This is more relevant than ever following the repercussions of the war in Ukraine. Furthermore, there is also a need to generate knowledge on efficient transportation and logistics in the Mediterranean, including an assessment of the green investments needed. One needs to answer questions such as: What could the main decarbonization pathways be for Mediterranean maritime transportation to align with the European new Green Deal? What technical and operational strategies could be put in place to reduce fossil fuel consumption? What is the cost of inaction for SEM countries? How can regional cooperation contribute to shipping decarbonization? Last but not least, additional research is needed on the impact that the CBAM will have on SEM countries’ growth and employment.

3. The massive RE scale-up necessary to reach the objectives of the Paris Agreement requires a propitious policy framework and market organizations that encourage the flexibility power systems need to integrate a high level of renewables. Euro-Mediterranean energy market integration provides that enabling environment. Developing a green integrated energy market requires:

¹² EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Communication from the Commission, Clean Energy for All Europeans, COM(2016) 860 final

- *The massive development of renewables*: this is already happening, as RE costs are falling rapidly. Accelerating that trend even further requires policies that support the development of RE projects. Most of those policies are developed at the country level. However, regional policies to support this process are still needed, such as, for example, harmonizing regulations, cross-country auctions for large new RE power-generating projects (as are developing in Europe under the Renewable Energy Directive), and creating an enabling framework for cross-border Corporate PPAs.
- *The development of the necessary physical infrastructure*: in order to enable energy trade across and around the Mediterranean, in support of energy market integration, additional physical infrastructure may be needed. However, those are costly investments, and they should be undertaken using a solid cost-benefit approach. The first phase is to identify what interconnectors and pipelines are required. To avoid stranded investment and take into account the increased interlinkages between the electricity and gas systems, the planning should be undertaken jointly for electricity and gas infrastructure, as is done now in Europe by ENTSO-E and ENTSO-G, when they prepare joint scenarios for use in their Ten-Year Network Development Plans (TYNDP).
- *The harmonization of market design and the interoperability of networks*: it is not enough to have physical infrastructure to ensure that regional market integration will be effective and energy trade can take place unhindered. Market design in different countries needs to be aligned so that electricity can flow across borders in the most efficient way. The network codes also need some harmonization to ensure the system's reliability and stability.
- *Regulatory convergence*: collaboration and some harmonization at the regional level of regulation are required, so that a regional market can function and regional integration can become a reality. In particular, the allocation of cross-border transmission capacity needs to be defined, as well as the cost of such allocation. Most SEM countries still do not have energy regulators in place, but regulation at the regional level can help the process of preparing harmonized national regulations.
- *Appropriate governance*: institutional support at the regional level will be needed to coordinate the national entities and ensure efficient operation of the regional energy market. Under the auspices of the European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean, institutions have been established to enable the coordination and cooperation of Mediterranean stakeholders, in particular the Association of Mediterranean Transmission System Operators (Med-TSO) and the Association of Mediterranean Regulators (MEDREG). The creation of Regional Coordination Centres (RCC), modelled on what is proposed in the EU Governance Directive, is under consideration.¹³ Additional institutional support might be needed as the hydrogen market develops.

A harmonized guarantee of origin system for the Euro-Mediterranean area is necessary to create an integrated energy market where green energy can move freely

- *A regional green certification system*: when European countries buy electricity or gas from countries on the south and east shore of the Mediterranean, they need proof that they are buying decarbonized energy. A harmonized guarantee of origin system for the Euro-Mediterranean area is necessary to create an integrated energy market where green energy can move freely.
- *Positioning as a front-runner in hydrogen, including the preparation of a regional strategy to establish a Mediterranean hydrogen market*: the Mediterranean region is both a region with

¹³ MEDREG (2021), Regional Integration: sub-regional regulatory convergence

a potentially high demand for hydrogen and with a high supply potential, given its huge renewable potential. A local market already exists in countries with a large phosphate sector and with a refining industry. In the medium run, new demand could develop for shipping and in the cement, steel and other industries. The development of a hydrogen sector could also contribute to flexibility in the electricity system, enabling a massive RE development. Hydrogen transport infrastructure could be initially established through existing natural gas pipelines, before dedicated pipelines are developed. Trading hubs could be created at industrial ports, which are major hydrogen demand centres, as well as nodes of transport infrastructure. Creating a Mediterranean Hydrogen Alliance, including European and MENA Hydrogen Alliances, would gather all the stakeholders to define the Euro-Mediterranean strategy, and then implement it.

4. Last but not least, energy transitions are primarily about people. From a social perspective, the energy transition can first and foremost expose SEM countries to the risk of abrupt shocks in their primary sectors and in their labour markets. If parallel sector policies are not implemented in a timely fashion, the SEM region runs the risk of being left with outdated/low skills for their human capital, low mobility and low diversity in the labour markets, and poor job prospects. There is therefore an opportunity to couple their energy transition with policies

and initiatives that induce an inclusive labour transition. Specifically:

From a social perspective, the energy transition can first and foremost expose SEM countries to the risk of abrupt shocks in their primary sectors and in their labour markets

- Policies need to clearly define the targets to be met, the end beneficiaries, and the present and future capacity of the domestic economy to meet evolving needs.
- SEM policymakers could promote legislation that contributes to the transition towards renewables, such as eliminating fossil fuel subsidies, and introducing carbon pricing measures.¹⁴
- The energy transition also calls for overcoming systemic weaknesses of human capital and technology, such as a lack of scientific approaches, engineering knowledge and cross-cutting skills. It is recommended that SEM countries identify and implement education policies that address skill gaps, gender inequality and industry needs for specific cross-cutting skills. North-South collaboration will also be needed to achieve these goals.

¹⁴ UNEP and INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (2020), "Green approaches to COVID-19 recovery: Policy note for parliamentarians." available at www.unep.org/resources/report/green-approaches-covid-19-recovery-policy-note-parliamentarians

Tackling the Sustainability Crisis with a New Mediterranean Institute for Ecological Finance

Thomas Lagoarde-Segot

KEDGE Business School
and Sustainable Development Solutions
Network France

This short article proposes an innovative financing mechanism to achieve the SDGs in the Mediterranean. The objective is to rapidly increase the amount of bank deposits available to SMEs and have an impact on businesses in the most vulnerable Mediterranean regions, while ensuring that the impact of these deposits on the SDGs is maximized. Transparent, assessable and based on “top down” and “bottom up” logics, the proposed strategy is neutral in terms of public finance, presents no risk for banking stability and could strengthen the economy of the most marginalized Mediterranean territories.

The remainder of this article describes the broad outlines of the proposed strategy using double-entry balance sheets. The first section describes the status, role and missions envisaged for the Mediterranean Institute of Ecological Finance. The second section describes the functioning of an ecological risk-free asset. The third section details its issuance process and its effects on the territories. The fourth section describes the settlement of the transaction from the perspective of the financial sector. The fifth section describes the effects on the banking sector. Finally, the sixth section presents the convertibility mechanisms of the ecological risk-free asset.

Introduction

Climate change poses a serious threat to economic and financial stability and has now triggered an irreversible decline in biological well-being. The challenges of the 2030 Agenda are more prevalent in the Mediterranean than in other regions of the world. The Report on the State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (Plan Bleu, 2020) indeed indicates that climate change affects the Mediterranean much more than the global average, in particular with warmer air and sea surface temperatures throughout the year (+1.5 versus 1.1 degrees). In addition, the economic and social effects of climate events are amplified by an economic model based on urbanization and land artificialization in coastal regions. They hit countries marked by strong social and territorial inequalities, high youth unemployment, and rampant political instability. As elsewhere in the world, radical changes in consumption and production models, and therefore in the financing and evaluation of activities, are therefore required in the Mediterranean.¹

Accordingly, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals outline a desirable future in which the economy would be embedded within ecosystem constraints, while ensuring shared prosperity that limits inequalities in standards of living. However, while it has now been accepted that the structure, tools and culture of the financial system need to be changed if the SDGs are to be achieved (HLEG, 2018), to date

¹ According to the same report, “To ensure the necessary transition to an inclusive and sustainable future, governments and businesses in the Mediterranean region should rely on: I) a mix of regulatory and economic instruments, ensuring adequate pricing, taxation and subsidies; II) technological and social innovations; III) multiple sources of financing (in line with the 2015 Addis Ababa agreement) that target sustainable investments and the abandonment of financing of polluting activities: domestic and international, public and private, conventional and non-conventional, micro-credit; and IV) monitoring of the progress actually made, through tools such as indicators and data.” (p.6)

there is no consensus on the appropriate macroeconomic strategies and tools to be adopted.

It has now been accepted that the structure, tools and culture of the financial system need to be changed if the SDGs are to be achieved

This short article proposes a mechanism aligned with the so-called “reformist green finance” agenda, in which public finance structures provide a key driver for transforming the financial sector and aligning financial flows with climate and societal imperatives. The outlined strategy proposed in this policy brief is in line with the report coordinated by FEMISE and the European Investment Bank (2014), which highlighted the challenges of territorial development, proximity and the measurement of social impacts. Said report recommended the creation of coordination platforms to accelerate the implementation of development projects, while measuring progress through microeconomic monitoring indicators. In what follows, we propose a social innovation that could strengthen the social and solidarity economy (SSE) sector and contribute to inclusive and sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

Status, Role and Missions of the Mediterranean Institute of Ecological Finance

The proposed mechanism consists of the issuance by a new *Mediterranean Institute for Ecological Finance* (MIEF) of “ecological risk-free assets” focused on the SDGs, in partnership with civil society and the central banks of Mediterranean countries. This institute would be attached to various institutional actors such as the World Bank, the European Investment Bank and the United Nations, and connected to actors in the socially responsible investment (SRI) market, in close partnership with actors from the southern countries, in first place the central banks. Its first role would be to identify a set of territorial projects with a strong SDG impact. It would

then certify the predictive and retrospective social return on investment (SROI) of these projects in partnership with the territorial authorities. Finally, it would organize the financing of these projects, in partnership with the SRI market and the central banks concerned. The MIEF would, therefore, have four main missions:

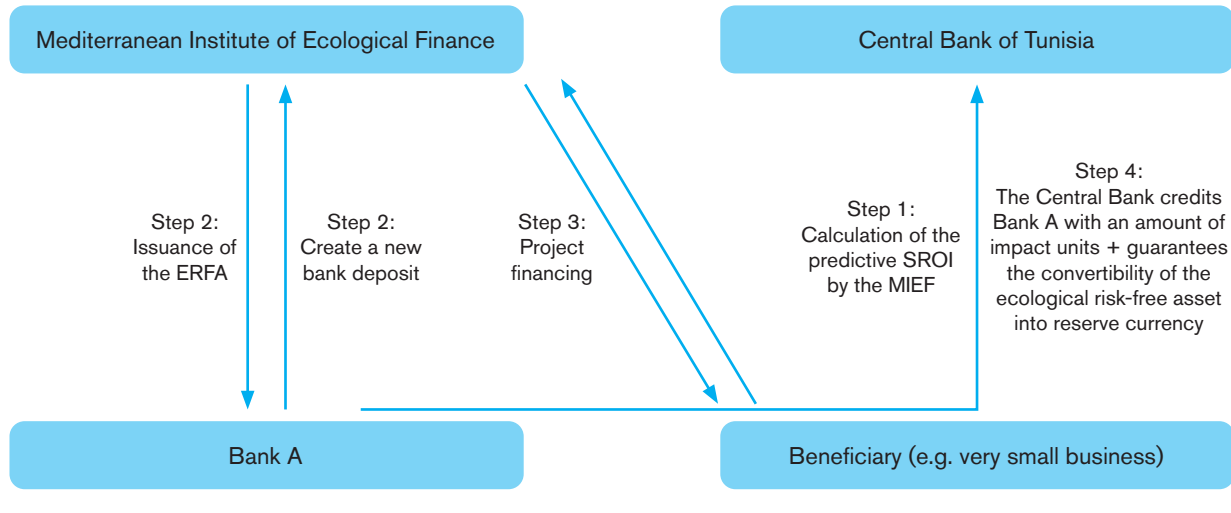
- Identify promising SDG-compatible territorial projects
- Issue ecological risk-free assets to finance such projects
- Measure the social and ecological impact of these projects
- Manage the *ecological stock exchange*

In what follows we discuss this in more detail.

Presentation of the Ecological Risk-Free Asset

Unlike a traditional bond, the ecological risk-free asset (ERFA) does not give the right to a monetary coupon, but to ecological and *social impact units*. These impact units are digital impact certificates issued by the Central Bank via a digital clearing house. They measure social impact, at parity with the national currency (for instance 1 impact unit = 1 Tunisian dinar). However, impact units cannot be converted into bank deposits.

The ERFA would take the form of a zero-coupon bond calibrated to the predictive SROI of the financed project. This SROI would be calculated by the MIEF, in partnership with the stakeholders and local authorities, according to the guidelines recommended by the UK *Office of the Third Sector* (2015). The selling price of the ERFA is equal to the amount to be financed (denominated in local currency, for example the Tunisian dinar DT). Its face value is equal to the monetized value of the externalities (SROI). Its maturity corresponds to the time horizon of the project. For example, issuing an ERFA asset could finance investments of 9,000 Tunisian dinars to support very small businesses in Kabbarya, the working-class district south of the “poverty belt” surrounding Tunis. Such a project directly benefits SDGs 8, 10 and 11 and is likely to have a strong positive impact on society and the environment.



Let's imagine that the value of the externalities (i.e. the monetization of the impact felt by the project's stakeholders), calculated in the form of a Social Return on Investment (SROI), has been evaluated by the extra-financial experts of the MIEF to be 10,000 dinars. The prospectus for the ERFA would therefore state:

"The Mediterranean Institute of Ecological Finance undertakes to deliver 10,000 impact units to the purchaser of this asset, to organize the financing of the project described in the specifications, and to evaluate the retrospective SROI."

For the purchaser, the extra-financial return, measured in impact units (IU), is therefore :

$$\frac{(10000_{IU} - 9000_{DT})}{9000_{DT}} = 11.11\%_{IU}$$

Issuing Process of Ecological Risk-Free Assets

From the point of view of banks (for example, in the northern Mediterranean) wishing to increase their extra-financial performance, and to value it on the SRI markets, ERFAs would be very attractive. First, these assets are denominated in Tunisian dinars, and therefore inexpensive given the exchange rate. Secondly, ERFAs allow (thanks to the informational intermediary role played by the MIEF) the targeting

of marginalized populations and territories. Their ecological and social impact is guaranteed by public institutions, and calculated according to a transparent and objective methodology.

Let's review the issuing process. Imagine an SRI fund attached to Bank A acquires an ERFA. Bank A would thus finance very small businesses in Kabbar-ya, and in return accumulate a new ecological risk-free asset on its balance sheet. As shown in Chart 1, this transaction would involve four actors: the MIEF, Bank A, the Central Bank of Tunisia and the targeted very small business.

The transaction goes like this. First, the MIEF transfers the ERFA to Bank A in exchange for a bank deposit of 9,000 dinars. Simultaneously, the Central Bank of Tunisia authorizes the MIEF to credit Bank A's account with 10,000 impact units in a digital recording platform.

These impact units are recorded as a liability for the MIEF, which thus undertakes, via the calculation of the retrospective SROI, to provide proof of impact at the maturity of the asset without ecological risk. These four accounting entries are described in Table 1 below. For greater readability, the impact units appear in italics.

At this stage, the beneficiary has not yet been impacted by the transaction. But as soon as the funds are received, the MIEF executes the specifications of the ERFA's prospectus, and transfers the 9,000 DT bank deposit to the targeted very small business.

The impact of this transaction on the relevant balance sheets is described in Table 2. Bank A's balance sheet is therefore unchanged, but its liabilities (bank deposits) are now held by the beneficiary (and no longer by the MIEF).

TABLE 1 Issuing Process of ERFA

IMFE	
Assets	Liabilities
Bank deposit : 9000 DT	<i>ERFA (principal): 9,000 IU</i> <i>ERFA (interest): 1,000 IU</i> <i>Net wealth: - 1,000 IU</i>
Bank A	
Assets	Liabilities
<i>ERFA (main): 9,000 IU</i> <i>ERFA (interest): 1,000 IU</i>	Bank deposit: 9,000 DT <i>Net wealth: 1,000 IU</i>

Note: 1IU = 1 DT.

At the end of this process, the net financial wealth of the very small business has thus increased by 9,000 dinars. This money is immediately put to use for investments and jobs in the specifications of the ERFA's prospectus.

TABLE 2 ERFA Issuing Process

MIEF	
Assets	Liabilities
0	<i>ERFA (principal): 9,000 IU</i> <i>ERFA (interest): 1,000 IU</i> <i>Net wealth: - 10,000 IU</i>
Bank A	
Assets	Liabilities
<i>ERFA (main): 9,000 IU</i> <i>ERFA (interest): 1,000 IU</i>	Bank deposit : 9,000 DT <i>Net wealth: 1,000 IU</i>
Very small business	
Assets	Liabilities
Bank deposit A : 9,000 DT	Net wealth : 9,000 DT

Given the high propensity to consume of the low-income populations that benefit from it, these 9,000 dinars (about 3,000 euros), which account for nearly two years' minimum Tunisian salary (400 dinars/month), will probably circulate rapidly, thus triggering spending, income, new spending... and a dynamic local multiplier effect, which will also generate tax revenues for the Tunisian government. This territorial expansion, in addition to benefitting the poorest populations, initiates a qualitative transformation of the economy, in that it is based on projects targeted by the MIEF and supported by all its stakeholders.

Settlement of the Transaction

In accordance with the terms of reference, the MIEF accompanies the very small business in the deployment of the project and monitors the calculation of the retrospective SROI. If the objective is reached, the Central Bank of Tunisia credits the MIEF's account with a corresponding amount of impact units. As shown in Table 3, the MIEF's balance sheet then returns to its original position.

TABLE 3 Settlement of the Transaction

Central Bank of Tunisia	
Assets	Liabilities
	10,000 IU <i>Net wealth: - 10,000 IU</i>
MIEF	
Assets	Liabilities
+10,000 IU	<i>ERFA (main): 9,000 IU</i> <i>ERFA (interest): 1,000 IU</i> <i>Net wealth: 0</i>

Note that in the above balance sheet, the impact units appear as liabilities of the Central Bank of Tunisia. This simply means that the Central Bank of Tunisia is the guarantor of the tangibility of the impact achieved. However, the amount of impact units issued in this way has no impact on monetary policy, interest rates or prices. Indeed, the impact units are only digital impulses and cannot be converted into bank deposits or fiduciary money.

Implications for the Banking Sector

When measured in non-convertible impact units, Bank A's net wealth is +10,000; however, in euros, Bank A's net wealth is -9,000 TD. So, why would Bank A accept the transaction?

First, the impact units can be exchanged for euros with another bank wishing to acquire a "proof of social impact." Bank A can thus make a capital gain in the transaction. Let's imagine for instance that the impact units are resold to Bank B, this time in euros, for an amount of 3,500 euros. Assuming an exchange rate of 1 TD = 0.3 euros, the impact on the balance sheets of banks A and B is described in Table 4.

An alternative strategic choice for Bank A would be to keep the ERFA on its balance sheet, which can

help increase the value of its equity. Indeed, a large body of financial literature indicates that “green” investments can benefit from a reputational signalling effect (Friede, 2015).

TABLE 4 Resale of Impact Units	
Bank A	
Assets	Liabilities
Bank deposit: 3,500 euros <i>ERFA: +0,000 IU</i>	Bank deposit : 9,000 DT = 2,700 euros Net wealth : 3,500 – 2700 = 800 euros
Bank B	
Assets	Liabilities
<i>ERFA: 10,000 IU</i>	Bank deposit: 3,500 euros <i>Net wealth: 1,000 IU</i>

Finally, it is possible that the impact beneficiary fails to achieve the targeted SROI. In this case, the risk to financial stability is zero, since Bank A can liquidate its investment at any time using the Central Bank’s balance sheet.² The liquidity of the system relies in fact on the convertibility of the ecological risk-free asset into reserve money, realizable on demand from the Central Bank, up to the issue price. Such an exchange is described in Table 5.

TABLE 5 Impact Unit Convertibility	
Bank A	
Assets	Liabilities
Ecological risk-free asset: 10,000 IU Reserve currency = 9,000 DT	Bank deposit= 9,000 DT
Central Bank	
Assets	Liabilities
<i>Ecologically safe active ingredient: 10,000 IU</i>	Reserve currency = 9,000 DT

Convertibility into reserves constitutes a strong signal that would increase the market’s appetite for ERFAs. However, Bank A has no real interest in choosing this option insofar as these bank reserves are not remunerated, or, if so, at very low rates. Note that the targeting of bank deposits to marginalized territories and businesses helps the SROI target to be met. Moreover, the increase in financial wealth of impact beneficiaries has a strong expan-

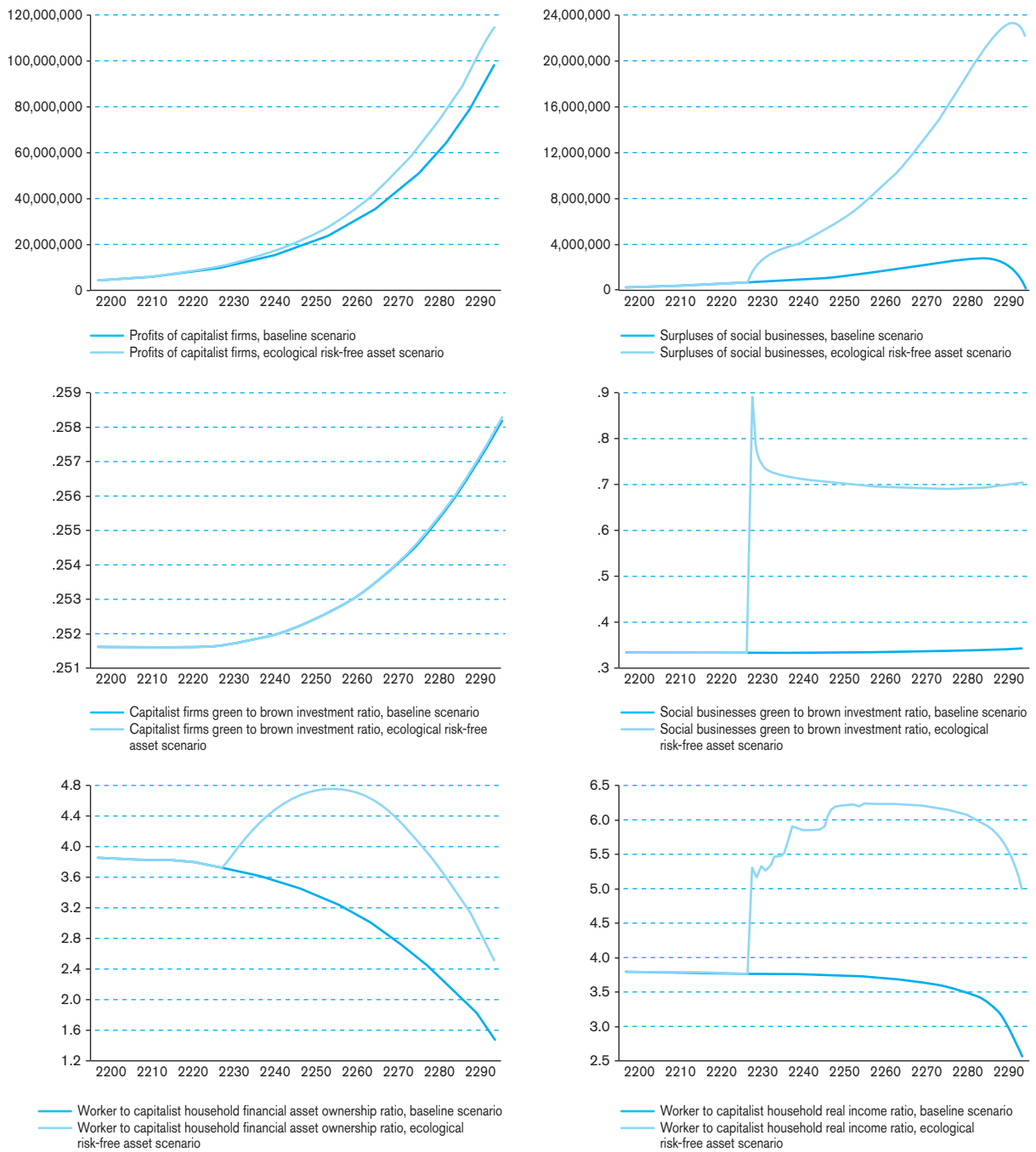
sionary effect on the territorial economy, contributing strongly to SDGs 8 and 10. But in the event of a series of non-performing ERFAs, which would undermine the credibility of the mechanism, the Central Bank can react by devaluing the theoretical value of impact units against the dinar. This would be done by applying a discount rate (equal to the devaluation) in the above convertibility operations. As shown in Table 6, this decision would mean that Bank A would incur a financial loss equal to the rate of devaluation (in this case 5%). This announcement would decrease the monetary value of the impact units and thus the value of the ecological risk-free assets.

TABLE 6 Convertibility of Impact Units with 5% Devaluation	
Bank A	
Assets	Liabilities
<i>ERFA: +0,000 IU</i> Reserve currency = _8,550 DT	Bank deposit = 9,000 DT Net wealth = – 450 DT
Central Bank	
Assets	Liabilities
<i>ERFA: 10,000 IU</i>	Reserve currency = 8,550 DT

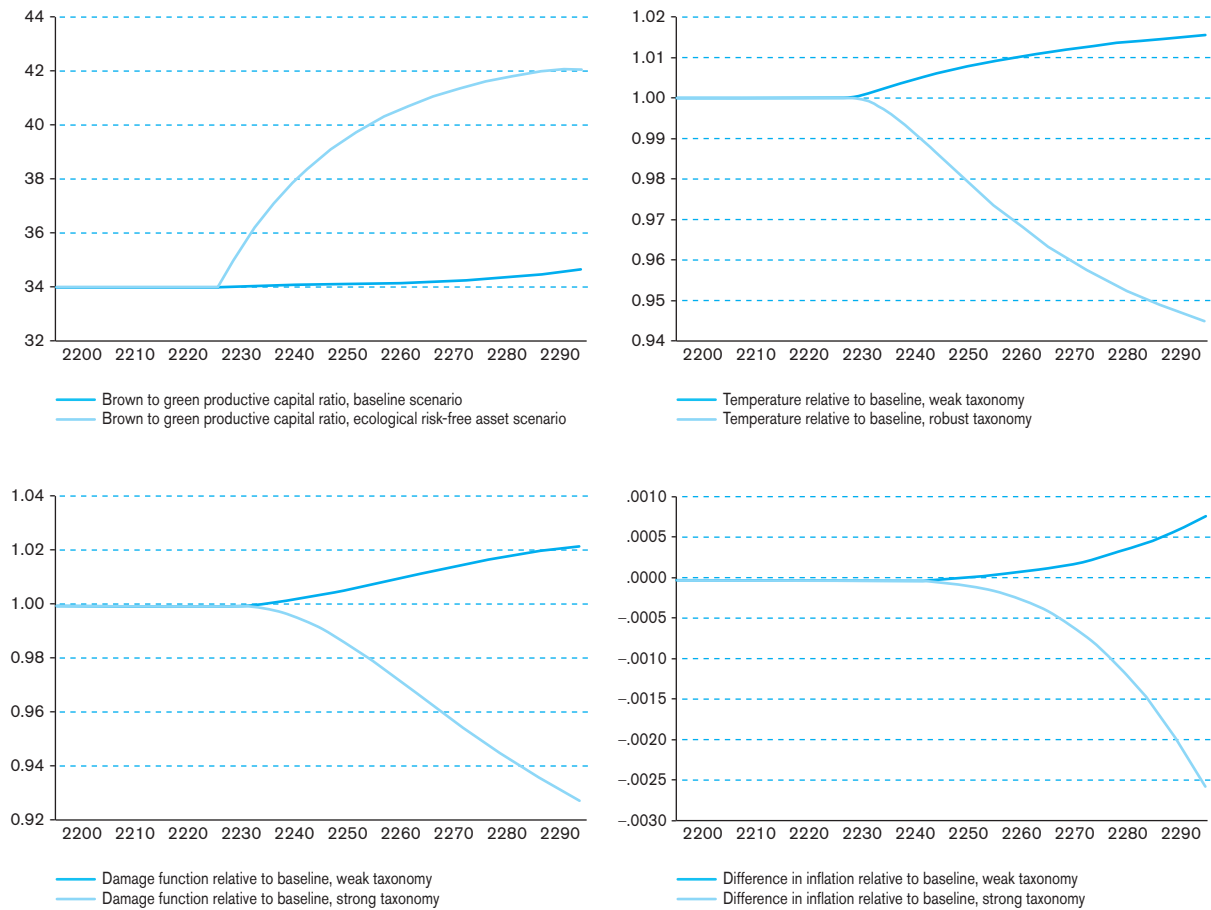
This mechanism would therefore encourage the MIEF to carefully select financed ventures, and monitor the SROI. However, it would have no impact on financial stability, as the value of the ecological risk-free asset remains under the control of the Central Bank. In previous work we have simulated the impact of ERFA strategies on SDGs using Philia 1.0, a new ecological macroeconomic stock-flow consistent model with 321 equations (Lagoarde-Segot, 2022; Lagoarde-Segot and Revelli, 2022). As shown below, simulations suggest that, compared to a baseline “business as usual” scenario, this strategy has the potential to reduce income and wealth inequalities, while increasing growth and potentially reducing energy and material footprints. The impact on the ecosystem, however, appears to depend upon the stringency of the taxonomy adopted by policymakers to identify “green projects” and sources of energy (Chart 2).

² Note that in the event that requests for conversion of the ecological risk-free asset into reserves threaten to deviate its base rate from its target, the Central Bank can react by selling other assets on the open market in order to drain reserves back onto its balance sheet.

CHART 2 ERFAs and the Economy



Source: Lagoarde-Segot and Revelli (2022).



Source: Lagoarde-Segot and Revelli (2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The urgency of climate change and inclusive development in the Mediterranean call for social and financial innovations that “*count where it really matters.*” This proposal contributes to tracing the paths for inflexing modes of production and consumption in the Mediterranean, in response to the rise of systemic perils. However, when it comes to economic policies and strategies, the “*map is not the territory.*” The strategy presented will thus need to be refined and adjusted through stakeholder dialogue. We therefore call for the creation of a task force, composed of about thirty extra-financial rating practitioners, experts and grassroots economic actors, in order to carry out an initial small-scale experiment in a given territory.

References

- COONEY, K. “Legitimation dynamics: How could SROI mobilize resources for new constituencies?” *Evaluation and Program Planning*, Volume 64, 2017. 110-115.
- FEMISE, *Social and solidarity economy: vector of inclusiveness and job creation in the Mediterranean partner countries*. Report prepared for the European Investment Bank (EIB), 2014.
- FRIEDE, G., BUSCH, T., BASSEN, A. “ESG and financial performance: aggregated evidence from more than 2000 empirical studies.” *Journal of Sustainable Finance & Investment*, 5:4, 2015, 210-233.
- LAGOARDE-SEGOT, T. “Towards a reformist green finance consensus for the SDGs? Analytical in-

sight using Philia 1.0, a new ecological macroeconomic model.” *PoCfiN WP 2022/02*. Available at <https://pocfin.kedge.edu/documents-de-travail>

LAGOARDE-SEGOT, T.; MARTINEZ, E. “Ecological Finance Theory: New Foundations.” *PoCfiN Working Paper 03/2020*. Available at <https://pocfin.kedge.edu/documents-de-travail>

LAGOARDE-SEGOT, T.; REVELLI, C. “The Ecological Risk-Free Asset. Analytical insight using Philia 1.0.” *PoCfiN Working Paper 03/2022*. Available at <https://pocfin.kedge.edu/documents-de-travail>

PLAN BLEU. *Report on the State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean*. 2020. Available at the following link: <https://planbleu.org/soed/>

Appendix: The SROI Method

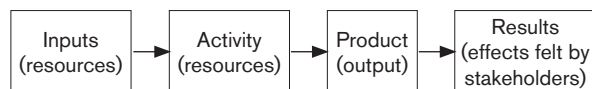
Social return on investment (SROI) is a metric that allows the overall performance of a company or a specific project to be assessed, taking into account all stakeholders. The SROI can be *evaluative*, i.e. conducted retrospectively on the basis of past results, or *predictive*, seeking to anticipate the value created by a given action. The calculation of a *predictive* SROI is particularly useful in the constitution of a strategic plan or a *business plan*. The SROI calculation should document how much value has been destroyed or created, and for whom. The SROI calculation involves the following steps:

Identifying Stakeholders

Stakeholders are defined as people or organizations that experience a change, either positive or negative, as a result of the activity being analysed. They may include employees, customers, other businesses, local residents, government agencies, taxpayers, etc.

Developing a “Theory of Change”

The purpose of this step is to detail and then document how the project under review uses resources (inputs) to carry out activities that lead to various outcomes for each of the stakeholders included. Measuring outcomes is the only way to ensure that changes for stakeholders are real.



Monetizing the Results

The next step is to monetize the results of the activity. Monetization thus requires “inventing prices” through the use of various methods. In the case of SROI, the most frequently used methods include:

- i. The calculation of savings (e.g., medical expenses avoided) or monetary gains to stakeholders (e.g., income for a person obtaining employment);
- ii. Contingent valuation, which involves assessing the implicit price of an outcome (e.g., how much additional income would you demand to continue living in your neighbourhood in the event of a persistent noise nuisance?);
- iii. The revealed preference technique, which consists in deriving the price of a non-market good from the price of market goods. The economic value of good air quality can be estimated by observing the average property price differential between polluted and unpolluted areas;
- iv. The travel cost technique, which asks people how far they would be willing to travel to access the service. The total transport cost can be used to monetize access to the service.

Establishing the Impact

The purpose of this step is to determine the extent to which the observed outcomes are actually caused by the project. Two concepts are important:

- (i) The calculation of the dead weight, i.e. the measurement of the result that would have been observed even if the activity had not taken place.

The urgency of climate change and inclusive development in the Mediterranean call for social and financial innovations that “count where it really matters”

For example, suppose that an urban regeneration programme has resulted in a 5% increase in economic activity in the area in question. However, national GDP growth is 2%. Therefore, part of the observed increase in economic activity is due to macroeconomic trends rather than the programme itself.

- (ii) The calculation of the attribution bias, i.e. the part of the result that is due to actions taken by other institutions.

Calculation of the SROI

The SROI is equal to the ratio of the discounted monetized value of externalities divided by the value of inputs. The SROI is therefore based on the discounting of annual impacts over the entire study period. It is therefore generally recommended, in the spirit of the Stern Review on Climate Change, that a low discount rate of around 3% be used for the calculation of the SROI. Table 7 gives a fictitious and simplified example of a predictive SROI calculation, using a breakeven point of 10% and an attribution rate of 35%.

	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
a. Inputs	-1000					
b. Financial proxy		50,00	50,00	50,00	50,00	50,00
c. Outcome indicator		10,00	9,00	8,10	7,29	6,56
d. Gross social value ($b \times c$)		500,00	450,00	405,00	364,50	328,05
e. Dead centre ($10\% \times d$)		50,00	45,00	40,50	36,45	32,81
f. Net social value ($d - e$)		450,00	405,00	364,50	328,05	295,25
g. Allocation ($35\% \times f$)		157,50	141,75	127,58	114,82	103,34
h. Total impact ($f - g$)		292,50	263,25	236,93	213,23	191,91
i. NPV@3%.	€103,94					
j. SROI (i/a)	10.39%					

The Future of Politics

Political Dynamics in the Arab World and the Future of Ideologies

Lise Storm

Associate Professor of Party Politics,
Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies
University of Exeter

Over the past decade, since the eruption of the Arab uprisings in late 2010, the Arab world has witnessed a rather schizophrenic period. On the one hand, the region has experienced a tumultuous time politically, in terms of an unprecedented level of change at the highest office. On the other hand, the Arab world remains governed by authoritarian regimes in various shapes, and thus remains remarkably stable on the regime front in light of the extensive civilian unrest that manifested itself across the region.

It is against this backdrop that this article analyses the political dynamics in the Arab world and the future of ideologies, focusing in particular on political change in terms of the flavour of authoritarian regime, most notably the resurgence of military regimes and the emergence of technocratic populism. The article queries the importance of ideology, not only in this changing political landscape, but also in the perpetuation of authoritarianism in the region. The main conclusion reached is that across the various Middle Eastern regimes, whether Arab or non-Arab, regardless of the type of authoritarianism they represent and the varying extents of political upheaval experienced, there are certain commonalities. Most notably there is a decline in the importance of ideology, which manifests in a growing reliance on technocrats in government and service MPs in parliament, which has further accelerated the decline of political parties. The long-term perspective is thus one of authoritarian resilience coupled with political fragmentation and related instability.

Setting the Stage: The Emergence of Authoritarianism in the Arab World

The Arab world has been dominated by authoritarian power structures for most of the past few decades. In the wake of the withdrawal of the colonial powers from the early 20th century onwards, various forms of authoritarian governments were introduced across the region as existing states had to deal with the power vacuum left behind and new states emerged. Some of these authoritarian regimes were authoritarian by design, i.e., from the very outset, others more by chance, as the new rulers moved to shrink space for contestation and thus limited civil and political rights with a view to secure their regime's survival for posterity.

The tight grip of authoritarianism in the Arab states is somewhat of an anomaly if compared to other regions of the world. While authoritarianism remains the norm globally, no other region has as strong a concentration of authoritarian regimes nor as limited an experience with democratic rule during the years 1973-2021, which is the period for which Freedom House holds comparative statistical data, although observers of the Arab world will be acutely aware that this holds true for a much longer timespan. Within this context of long and deep-seated authoritarianism, the Arab uprisings came as an enormous surprise to most, presenting an unexpected opportunity for political change; a so-called potential democratic moment. Yet, notwithstanding the unprecedented level of civil disobedience, the involvement of actors from across the political spectrum and from different strata of society, the Arab uprisings resulted in limited change in terms of the nature of the region's regimes: while heads of states were replaced in some Arab countries, the power structures remained authoritarian. As discussed in more detail

below, this reality can to some extent be explained by weak political ideologies, feeble political parties and, eventually, the resurgence of the strongman, whether in military uniform or civilian robes, thus in some ways mirroring the early post-independence period in many states.

The Resurgence of Military Regimes

The military played a central role in politics across the Arab world following the Bakr Sidqi coup in Iraq in 1936 – the first military coup in the region’s so-called modern history. Over the next couple of decades, i.e., throughout the 1930s-1960s, military regimes were also brought to power via a series of coups – some violent, others more administrative in nature – in states such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. In the kingdoms of Jordan and Morocco, the regimes remained civilian, but the monarch relied heavily on the military, thus mirroring the state of affairs in the non-Arab states of Israel and Turkey. As the military became a progressively more pervasive and institutionalized actor in the political sphere, divisions within the various regimes began to grow as heads of state sought to shore up their dominance and sideline the military in politics. Furthermore, the previously stable military regimes of Latin America were beginning to fall by the late 1970s, and Arab leaders were clearly gripped by a sense that the era of military rule was perhaps beginning to near its end.

Consequently, several Arab leaders initiated a process of “civilianization,” i.e., distancing themselves from their military background and restricting the military’s overt role in politics. By the late 1980s, as the third wave of democratization swept across the globe, most Arab states outside of the Arabian Peninsula had adopted some form of competitive legislative elections, even if in a heavily engineered form. By the early 2000s, several countries in the region had also introduced competitive presidential elections, although these were largely nominal, thus frequently earning themselves the label “façade elections.” Hence, on the eve of the outbreak of the Arab uprisings on 17 December 2010, the Arab Middle

East was dominated by civilianized military regimes,¹ many of whose leaders had been in power for decades and which were therefore presumed to be stable. Examples include Algeria’s Abdelaziz Bouteflika (1999-2019), Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011), Libya’s Muammar al-Gaddafi (1969-2011), Sudan’s Omar al-Bashir (1989-2019), Syria’s Bashar al-Assad (2000-), Tunisia’s Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2011), Yemen’s Ali Abdullah Saleh (1990-2012) and the succession of military figures in Mauritania (most notably Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, 2008-19, and Maaouya Ould Sid’Ahmed Taya, 1984-2005).

The Arab Uprisings: Fragmentation and the Lack of Ideology Present an Opportunity

The point of this historical lens is to illustrate that what happened on the regime front in the wake of the Arab uprisings was far from novel. Many an Arab state had found itself at this junction previously. However, whereas the Arab electorate had looked to the military as a source of progress and stability while also buying into its nationalist, socialist and, at times, pan-Arab ideology, the resurgence of military rule in the Arab region post-2010 was brought about by different mechanisms, in light of the corresponding political context.

Prior to the uprisings, the Arab world had already begun to witness a decline in ideological identification in line with trends across the globe. That said, the ideological downturn in the Arab states was somewhat delayed as Arab voters initially looked to the newly legalized Islamist parties for political solutions, having exhausted their other options. As these proved unable to deliver once in power, as demonstrated in e.g., Turkey (under the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) and Morocco (with the ascent of the *Parti de la justice et du développement*, PJD), political apathy grew, particularly amongst the youth, who by the time the uprisings broke out had become increasingly engaged horizontally and outside of the traditional political arena. The youth were thus not disengaged, but rather differently engaged. Unlike previous generations, which had been committed to ideologies such as e.g., nationalism, socialism and

¹ Some of these were police states (Tunisia) and/or known as *mukhabarat* (intelligence) states (Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen and the Palestinian National Authority).

Islamism, the youth of the Arab uprisings era were largely engaged on an *ad hoc* or issue-based basis. The uprisings were one such issue, which mobilized youths as well as other population strata with the objective of overthrowing the incumbent regime. However, the protestors as well as the silent supporters of the uprisings did not commit to a shared political platform, partly because of the decline in the appeal of ideology, but also as a consequence of the fact that they did not make up a unified movement. Some members were ideologically committed, but to different ideologies, others were not ideological in outlook at all, some were members of existing movements or parties, others were unaffiliated. They all shared the desire to see the incumbent regime brought down, but their reasons for this differed, and so did their objectives for the future, in the instances where protesters had determined such goals. These two factors resulted in fragmented protest movements devoid of a clear agenda and objectives, and without long-term political ambitions. There was never the desire to institutionalize and become part of the political establishment, with a view to changing things for the better from the inside.

The protestors as well as the silent supporters of the uprisings did not commit to a shared political platform as a consequence of the fact that they did not make up a unified movement

Hence, whereas the first wave of military regimes in the Arab world had been supported by the citizenry, largely for ideological reasons tied to socialism, nationalism and the new state-building project in the post-colonial era, the mood had changed by 2010. The Arab uprisings were very much dominated by a focus on what was wrong with the individual Arab states, which many protesters argued took away their dignity, largely as a consequence of growing poverty, corruption and nepotism. They wanted more

and better opportunities, a more positive outlook, but, *qua* their lack of shared ideology, offered very little in the way of achieving this beyond getting rid of the incumbents. The absence of a shared ideology and long-term political ambitions eventually also bred instability at the highest level. As long-seated heads of state were forced out in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen and eventually also Algeria and Sudan, there were no clear and credible alternatives, which were palatable to the majority of the electorate or, indeed, the elite to succeed them. Thus a period of political upheaval and uncertainty ensued.²

Saving the Nation: Lessons from Algeria, Egypt and Sudan

In Algeria, Egypt and Sudan, the military capitalized relatively quickly on the weakness of the incumbent leaders and the fragmented nature of the protest movements. The first to act on the situation was Egypt's General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who overthrew the country's first democratically elected president, Mohammed Morsi, in a military coup in the summer of 2012. Met with little domestic, regional and international resistance to his actions, and with many observers reluctant to label the coup a coup, the military moved to institutionalize its grip on power, staging presidential elections in which General Abdel Fatah el-Sisi won landslide victories, thereby lending a fig leaf of legitimacy to the new military regime, before doing away with such popular consultation following amendments to the constitution in 2019.

While the military's ascent to power in Egypt went against the official discourse of Western support for democracy, the lack of sanctions against the el-Sisi regime very clearly demonstrated the West's willingness to tolerate military regimes if they provided stability and a bulwark against Islamist actors gaining power. In that respect, el-Sisi proved to be a trail blazer – *avantgarde* – showing generals elsewhere that power could, indeed, be had and maintained without consequence. Hence, when political upheaval directed at the incumbent regime escalated in other Arab states, generals with aspirations of power took a leaf out of el-Sisi's book.

² In Yemen, the transition was relatively smooth as Ali Abdullah Saleh's second in command, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, had already been the acting President for some time.

In war-torn Libya, General Haftar did his utmost to take the country's highest office; in Algeria, General Ahmed Gaid Saleh effectively forced ailing President Bouteflika to resign on 6 April 2019, after the army withdrew its support and threatened to have Bouteflika declared unfit for office; in Sudan, only a week after the fall of Bouteflika, the military deposed President Omar al-Bashir and installed Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan as the country's new head of state. In Algeria, promises were made to hand over power to a civilian president, and while this transfer did transpire in the sense that the current President, Abdelmajid Tebboune, is a civilian, power remains in the hands of the military, which, unlike in Egypt, rules from behind the scenes. In Sudan, power was to be returned to a civilian interim president in 2019 and subsequently to a popularly elected civilian president in 2022, but just prior to the 2019 transfer, President Burhan and the army staged a second *coup d'état*, purging the government of its civilian members. Like el-Sisi in Egypt, Burhan remains in power in Sudan.

In all cases, the military's intervention in politics was justified as necessary; as the only means to save the nation, the reform project set in motion by the protesters, and to avoid instability and, potentially, descent into civil war, as had happened in Libya, Syria and Yemen. But there was little in terms of promises for the future. No programmes or clear deliverables and objectives with ideological underpinnings. The military justified its political interference – and permanence in politics – *qua* its status as an expert in delivering strong leadership, stability and security. And this is where the post-uprising military regimes connect with the civilian authoritarian leaders – new and incumbent – in the other Arab states: the reliance on experts coupled with populist tendencies.

The Rise of Technocratic Populism

Compared to the cases of Algeria, Egypt and Sudan, where the military has strengthened its grip on power, Mauritania, where the military remains unscathed at the helm, and the war-torn states of Libya, Yemen and Syria, where the military continues to

play a central role in politics, Tunisia is somewhat of an outlier in the sense that the military remains – at least for now – a much less central political actor. In some ways, Tunisia's set-up following President Kais Saied's constitutional coup in the summer of 2021, appears closer to its non-Arab cousin, Turkey, where President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has gradually sidelined the military, while relying increasingly on experts as well as more traditional methods/actors such as e.g., the police, the judiciary and the press, since his arrival in power in 2014.

That said, as already alluded to above, if one scratches the surface a little, it becomes readily apparent that most of the post-uprising authoritarian Middle Eastern states, whether Arab or non-Arab, and regardless of their brand of authoritarianism, are very similar in terms of the practices they have institutionalized – or are beginning to institutionalize – in order to guarantee the survival of their regimes.³ At the core of this new mode of authoritarianism appears to be the phasing out of a unifying ideology in favour of what some have labelled “technocratic populism,” i.e., a situation where the State is managed like a firm and experts are used to bypass accountability. Hence, while ideology is largely irrelevant, loyalty is central to the functioning of technocratic populism, as is a passive citizenry, something which is achieved via the gradual erosion of institutional checks and balances as well as the demobilization of the general public by undermining the confidence in the country's representative institutions in conjunction with the increasing reverence of (loyal) experienced personalities unbound by ideological ties.

Turkey under Erdogan, Egypt under el-Sisi as well as Tunisia under Saied are arguably the most prominent examples of technocratic populism in the region at present. All three cases display similar traits: the erosion of core institutions legitimized as necessary to save the national project; the vilification of opponents as foreign agents and enemies of the people; the increasing reliance on experts (loyalist technocrats) to stifle the opposition and the emergence of political alternatives; and, finally, the reverence of the saviour leader, who is above the law and who needs to stay in power to oversee the successful implementation of the revolutionary project.

³ Disregarding Bahrain, Oman, the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, where contestation is limited and political parties prohibited, as well as Libya, Syria and Yemen, which are presently plagued by civil war.

At the core of this new mode of authoritarianism appears to be the phasing out of a unifying ideology in favour of what some have labelled “technocratic populism”

Despite these commonalities, there are also plenty of differences. Perhaps most interesting, are the divergent paths these technocratic populist dictators took to arrive in power, thus illustrating how it would be a mistake to assume that there is only one route to populism, i.e., that it is a path-dependent phenomenon. Erdogan had been a prominent figure in Turkish politics and within the AKP and its predecessors before he turned to populism and distanced himself from the party and other ties, thereby elevating himself above the system, presenting himself as the saviour expert, who could take Turkey forward. In Egypt, following the 2012 military coup, el-Sisi cultivated his persona as a man of the people, speaking on behalf of Egyptians as the saviour of the nation in troubled times, thus evolving from being a saviour based on his military credentials to simply el-Sisi, the saviour. Finally, in Tunisia, Saied arrived in power in competitive presidential elections stretched over two rounds. Without much fanfare, all party-affiliated candidates were eliminated in the first round, before Saied relegated the other independent, Nabil Karaoui, to second place. Alarm bells were not set ringing when two candidates without party affiliation competed for the nation’s highest office, despite the rhetoric presenting charismatic, paternalistic strongmen as saviours of the “Tunisian revolution,” nor did anyone sound the alarm in light of the two candidates’ lack of ideological commitment, which saw Saied in particular mix left and right-wing messages in his campaigning in classic populist style. Saied’s emphasis on combating corruption via the application of the Constitution to the letter struck a chord with many Tunisians and initially earned him the support of the powerful union, the *Union générale tunisienne du travail* (UGTT), which had played a central role in the Jasmine Revolution in 2010/11. Thus, most people did not take much notice of the President’s declared intention to revise the Constitution with a view to getting rid of some of the red tape that was preventing him from achieving his

goals. Alarm bells only started ringing when the constitutional coup was well under way and it became very clear indeed that Saied’s project is about more than combating corruption. But by then it was too late to stop – or even reverse – the coup via democratic means.

The Importance and Implications of the Growing Reliance on Technocrats

At present, there is a preoccupation with populism given the arrival in power of populist leaders across the globe. However, as the three examples above illustrate, not all populist leaders are populist at the time they arrive in power. Some become populist once in office – populism is often creeping. Hence, what observers need to be watching out for is, on the one hand, the gradual circumvention of the system of checks and balances and the weakening of institutions such as the media, the judiciary, parliament and security forces, either by their co-option or their stifling. On the other hand, a close eye needs to be kept on the space afforded the opposition, whether individuals or organized groups. The exclusion of broad swathes of society, e.g., members of the media, the intelligentsia, certain ethnic or religious groups, and members of various political parties by their labelling as enemies of the people and foes is another warning sign. As the groups of people that cannot be trusted grow in volume, the doors are open for the legitimate introduction of experts, which are predominantly chosen for their loyalty to the firm, and which can be replaced with relative ease should said loyalty falter.

Casting a quick glance at the various Middle Eastern governments in office today, there are good grounds for ringing alarm bells. From the data available, it is readily apparent that the reliance on technocrats is a central element of most authoritarian regimes in the region at present. To list just a few examples: in Algeria, following the 2021 elections, 25 out of 34 cabinet ministers are technocrats; in Tunisia under Saied, all 25 cabinet ministers are technocrats; in Morocco, the figure is 5 out of 20 following the elections of 2021; in Egypt, all cabinet ministers are presently technocrats; while in Turkey, the cabinet is made up of 11 technocrats and 8 with party affiliation.

The growing preference for technocrats in government, in some cases coupled with a reliance on in-

dependents and/or so-called “service MPs”⁴ in parliament, has contributed to the further erosion of political parties, which had already begun with the onset of the decline in the importance of ideology amongst the electorate from the early 2000s onwards. While to many people, the marginalization of political parties is perhaps not the most pressing issue, given their waning popularity amongst the populace, it is a very worrying trend from the perspective of democracy. Political parties are an integral part of democracy, and democratic transition and consolidation is also less likely without political parties, which can aggregate and represent citizen demands much more effectively than individuals or alternative vehicles, such as e.g., movements, groups and lists. Arguably, one of the main reasons why authoritarian leaders in the Arab world have come to rely so heavily on technocrats is the reality that political parties strengthen the voice of the opposition and have the potential to foster alternatives to the incumbent regime. Replacing party leaders and cabinet ministers with party affiliation is not impossible, but it is trickier than replacing one technocrat with another, because the latter do not have the same kind of committed support structure behind them.

A further problem with the rise of technocrats, which is invariably accompanied by a further decline in the role of ideology and the perceived failure of institutions, is that it fosters a growing emphasis on local identities too. This issue is of particular relevance to the Middle Eastern region, which is already marred by tribal, ethnic and sectarian conflict, both within and between states, as the conflicts in Libya, Syria and Yemen bear witness to, and the inability to form lasting governments in e.g., Iraq and Lebanon. So-called “service MPs,” who emphasize transactions over ideology, and which have long been a well-known phenomenon in Jordan, can now also be found in Egypt and Kuwait for instance. And the situation in Iraq, where the government-formation process is effectively a bargaining exercise between different ethno-sectarian leaders, is another reminder of how politics is in-

creasingly becoming a question of the amassing and division of spoils amongst one’s kind, rather than citizen representation based on shared issues cutting across cleavages and grounded in ideological beliefs. The result is a move towards a zero-

The growing preference for technocrats in government has contributed to the further erosion of political parties, which had already begun with the onset of the decline in the importance of ideology amongst the electorate

sum game in a context where the stakes are high, as resources are depleting fast, inequality is growing and corruption is rife. This does not bode well for the future, whether in terms of prospects for democracy, stability or social justice.

Further Reading

- APRASIDZE, David and SIROKY, David, “Technocratic Populism in Hybrid Regimes: Georgia on My Mind and in My Pocket.” *Politics and Governance* 8(4): 580-89, 2020.
- CAVATORTA, Francesco; STORM, Lise and RESTA, Valeria (eds), *Routledge Handbook on Political Parties in the Middle East and North Africa*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2020.
- KAMRAVA, Mehran, “Military Professionalization and Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East.” *Political Science Quarterly* 115(1), 67-92, 2000.
- MARCH, Luke, “Populism in the Post-Soviet states.” in KALTWASSER, Cristobal; TAGGART, Paul; OCHOA ESPEJO, Paulina and OSTIGUY, Pierre (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 214-31, 2017.

⁴ Effectively clients with clients of their own.

The Future of Politics

Maghrebi Elites, the Pandemic and the Counter-Revolution Political Economy

Isabelle Werenfels

Senior Fellow

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), Berlin

The term counter-revolution has gained prominence in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) since the early days of the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, when power-holding status quo actors sought to push back, undermine, or prevent political change away from authoritarianism. A decade later, such counter-revolutionary actors clearly had the upper hand across the core Maghreb: in 2021, Tunisia, the only beacon of democratic hope in the entire MENA region, began to see a sharp U-turn toward authoritarianism. Algeria's ruling elites managed to weaken the Hirak mass protest movement, which in 2019 had made a peaceful attempt at altering the authoritarian status quo. In Morocco, the King's political reform promise made in 2011 failed to materialize and was instead transformed into a development and modernization agenda. As a result, all three countries in 2021 fared worse in democracy and freedom indexes than only five years earlier.¹

This article argues that to explain the most recent dynamics of counter-revolution in the Maghreb, we need to look beyond the narrow confines of the political sphere. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, ruling elites have clearly used the situation to curb freedoms. They have also built on regional conflicts to boost nationalist reflexes and frame contesting actors as enemies of the nation. But understanding counter-revolutionary dynamics also calls for dissecting how ruling elites make use of domestic and regional economic set-ups and interests

to consolidate their power and marginalize dissent. This can take different forms. Yet, in all three Maghreb countries, similar factors have fed counter-revolutionary dynamics. Namely and quite paradoxically, rampant corruption, governance failures, and economic crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic, have – at least in the short run – served those elites that are resisting democratic change. The consequent grievances opened the door for populist promises, discredited elected institutions, and enhanced a popular desire for strong leaders capable of delivering. Moreover, on the international level, the growing commercial and geopolitical interest in the Maghreb among external actors has been playing into the incumbent elites' hands, consolidating their hold on power.

In all this, European states have not only been bystanders. Initial support for political reform soon relapsed into prioritizing security and stability in cooperation with the Maghreb states. As a consequence, Europeans have – arguably – involuntarily promoted counter-revolutionary orders and figures. Furthermore, they underestimated the political repercussions of authoritarian elite networks' vested economic interests across the Maghreb and have shied away from addressing the latter.

Yet, the road ahead may become rockier for counter-revolutionary forces. While authoritarian elites having managed to profit from the pandemic politically – and even from the related economic grievances – new economic shocks, such as rising food and gas prices induced by the Russian war against Ukraine, will further aggravate already strained socioeconomic situations. Even in Algeria, where high oil and gas prices are providing the ruling elite with a renewed – if potentially short – lifeline, a sustainable econom-

¹ PUDINGTON, Arch and ROYLANCE, Taylor. *Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy*. Freedom House, 2017. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FIW_2017_Report_Final.pdf

ic turn is not in sight. Thus, in all three Maghreb countries renewed revolutionary dynamics may be on the horizon, only this time they are likely to focus more on improved socioeconomic perspectives and better state services than on political system change. The question will then be if the counter-revolutionaries can deliver.

Profiting from the Pandemic and Making Use of Economic Settings

The pandemic presented both a challenge and an opportunity for ruling elites in the Maghreb. On the one hand, it bluntly exposed governance failures and became an additional burden for already strained state budgets. In Tunisia and Morocco, the strategic tourism sector was hit particularly hard by lockdowns and travel restrictions; in Algeria hydrocarbon revenues, the State's most important source of income, dropped by 30% in 2020 compared to 2019 due to pandemic-related low oil and gas prices.² On the other hand, and arguably more importantly, the pandemic provided the chance to ban protests, enhance (digital) control of societies, promote national solidarity, make fundamental reform promises and display decisive leadership. Polls taken in the spring of 2020 during the first wave of the pandemic showed high popularity ratings in Tunisia for politicians and a government that took decisive and successful measures against Covid-19.³ Surveys published later in 2020 found that in Tunisia 61% and in Algeria almost half of those questioned favoured abandoning parliament and installing a strong leader.⁴ This stated preference became a reality in Tunisia less than a year later.

On 25 July 2021, the Tunisian President Kais Saied used the broad dissatisfaction over how the pandemic was managed to declare a state of emergency, fire the Prime Minister, dismiss the government, freeze parliamentary activity, engage the military in health affairs and rule by decree – to name but a few

of the largely unconstitutional measures taken. In neighbouring Algeria, the pandemic prevented the Hirak protest movement from continuing its marches, and anti-Covid-19 measures served to contain and reduce the protests during contested parliamentary and local elections in 2021 to a minimum. In Morocco, media control was enhanced and, during the pandemic, digitalization once again proved a double-edged sword. The use of new smartphone applications to monitor and restrict citizens' movements and transfer funds to the informal sector made sense in fighting the pandemic and its effects. At the same time it provided opportunities to enhance the surveillance of citizens.

The pandemic provided the chance to ban protests, enhance (digital) control of societies, promote national solidarity, make fundamental reform promises and display decisive leadership

The pandemic thus appeared to promote authoritarian consolidation. Paradoxically, counter-revolutionary elites – at least initially – even managed to profit from what most likely would turn into their most serious challenge: the resulting dire economic situations.

Successfully Shifting the Debate to Corruption and Development Promises

Ruling elites in all three Maghreb countries sought to deflect responsibility away from themselves. They blamed predecessors for bad governance, engaged in high profile anti-corruption campaigns, and presented themselves as saviours. Tunisia's new strongman, Kais Saied, brought this kind of manoeuvre to

² "Algérie: 22 milliards de dollars de recettes pétrolières en 2020." in *Algérie Presse Service*, 25 January 2021. www.aps.dz/economie/116506-algerie-22-milliards-de-dollars-de-recettes-petrolieres-en-2020

³ "Les cotes de popularité de Fakhfakh et Mekki en forte hausse." in *Mosaïque FM*, 21 April 2020. www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/actualite-politique-tunisie/727983/les-cotes-de-popularite-de-fakhfakh-et-mekki-en-forte-hausse

⁴ KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG. *10 Years after the Arab Uprisings: Where does Public Opinion in the Region Stand Today?* Tunis, 27 January 2021. www.kas.de/en/web/poldimed/veranstaltungen/detail/-/content/10-years-after-the-arab-uprisings-where-does-public-opinion-in-the-region-stand-today

perfection. The President's populist rhetoric, in order to justify his unconstitutional and increasingly authoritarian measures, played on popular frustration with a dysfunctional government and parliament, political parties in general and the Islamist Ennahdha in particular. These actors and institutions were broadly perceived as engaged primarily in power struggles and/or serving themselves. Thus, in the name of fighting corruption and bringing a "truly" democratic system to the Tunisian population, the President seized executive, legislative and judicial powers, and began to systematically dismantle constitutional institutions. Despite these brute measures he managed to maintain high popularity ratings for much longer than observers expected, even if his de facto ability to mobilize people remained rather limited. In Morocco, voters ousted the Justice and Development Party (PJD), for a number of reasons. These include its then Secretary General, Prime Minister Saad Eddine El Othmani, being forced to sign the normalization deal with Israel and the party's former and very popular leader having been successfully undermined by the King. But arguably the main reason was that the PJD had not managed to deliver what citizens expected, particularly during the pandemic. The King seized the opportunity to intervene. He set up an emergency fund and sidelined the government. The monarchy, which, since 2013, had been increasingly steering the public debate away from political reform and towards modernization and development, in the autumn of 2021, sought to rally the nation around a new development model, the creation of which had been announced prior to the pandemic. However, the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic and its blunt exposure of deficits in health and other critical infrastructure played into the monarchy's logic of seeking to upgrade the authoritarian system to provide citizens with decent services, better infrastructure and socioeconomic opportunity, while curbing their political freedoms, thereby aspiring to a system of "benevolent authoritarianism" resembling certain Asian governance models.⁵ Only the Algerian incumbent elite failed to instrumentalize the health crisis to boost its contested legitimacy. President Tebboune's main strategy was to arrest and blame corrupt elites from the previous

Bouteflika era and to engage in reform rhetoric. From late 2021, with oil and gas prices on the rise again, pressure for fundamental reform away from the hydrocarbon-dependent rentier model dwindled. The boost in state revenues allowed for the creation of an unemployment benefit programme and the reversal of austerity measures in February 2022, announced only a few months earlier, such as new taxes on foodstuffs and electronics. The new measures were likely designed to prevent protest in view of rising prices and to pre-empt broad support for a potential new wave of Hirak-related contestation.

In the name of fighting corruption and bringing a "truly" democratic system to the Tunisian population, the President seized executive, legislative and judicial powers, and began to systematically dismantle constitutional institutions

As citizens across the Maghreb, in the third year of the pandemic, struggled to make ends meet in their daily lives, there was little sign of a broad mobilization for political (system) change – even as protests against governments due to skyrocketing food prices were on the rise. In Tunisia, a fragmented opposition managed to bring only a few thousand protesters onto the streets to demonstrate against the President, and mobilization in Algeria and Morocco in support of a growing number of political prisoners took place mainly among activists, but did not translate into a broader movement.

Old Networks and Reflexes Undermining Reform

Even when far-reaching reform promises were made, their implementation was far from certain. Vested economic interests hampered the political will to ac-

⁵ FAKIR, Intissar and WERENFELS, Isabelle. *In Morocco, Benevolent Authoritarianism Isn't Sustainable*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 29 July 2020. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/29/in-morocco-benevolent-authoritarianism-isn-t-sustainable-pub-82395>

tually or fully implement reforms – in some cases, such reform could threaten activities of the very elites that had promised them. The Moroccan monarchy's dominance in the economy is but one example. The country's largest economic conglomerates remain in its hands, and members of the elite close to the Palace, such as Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, are among the wealthiest people in the country. Hence, conflicts of interest are unavoidable when it comes to establishing full economic competition and financial transparency. This presents a challenge for full-fledged private sector development, as it establishes a glass ceiling for economic actors with no ties to the Palace.

In Algeria, vested elite interests were shaken during and in the aftermath of the 2019 Hirak protests, as civil and military protagonists of the Bouteflika years ended up in prison on charges of corruption or conspiracy against the State. Yet, this did not result in the emergence of new reform-oriented elites. Rather, counter-revolutionary elites, sidelined by the former President and his entourage, were able to make a comeback. And it is not only the composition of the High Security Council that testifies to this.⁶ Algeria's deep state has an enormous repertoire of actors, and its nature – competing clientelist networks composed of military, private sector, administrative and political elites – means that change merely implies *alternance* within the system and thus path dependency. Given the age of major decision-makers – the President, the Head of the Army, members of the High Security Council as well as senior advisors and political figures are all in their 70s or 80s – it appears logical that none of these actors wants to rock the boat, politically or economically. This implies abstaining from deep fiscal and economic reform or energy sector transformation toward renewables.

Tunisia is possibly the most interesting case with regard to counter-revolutionary forces, as it is less associated with a deep state than Algeria. Nevertheless, here too, elites from the former Ben Ali era successfully resisted reform in strategic sectors. Economic elites continued their rent-seeking practices and worked against fiscal reform and trade regulations that would have enhanced transparency

and competition; the Interior Ministry averted external pressure for profound security sector reform; and bureaucratic civil servants managed to maintain ineffective silo practices.

Elites of the old system did not appear to focus primarily on undermining the democratic process, but did tend towards supporting parties protecting elites of the old system. In 2022, this was the Free Destourian Party (PDL), which was founded by members of former dictator Ben Ali's party and fuelled nostalgia for the good old days. Even if Kais Saied appeared to show an interest in dismantling monopolistic and/or corrupt economic networks and issued decrees targeting them, his *modus operandi* resembled the policies of the former dictator: instrumentalizing the judiciary, involving security sector actors and using state media to campaign against "traitors." The latter included all actors fundamentally opposing his measures and whom he sought to exclude from participating in any national dialogue on Tunisia's future. In doing so, the counter-revolutionary President, who saw himself as a revolutionary but had no organized political basis, ended up relying on elites of the authoritarian Ben Ali regime.

External Actors Feeding Counter-Revolutionary Dynamics

Research over the past decade has widely documented how different Gulf states have sought to influence the course of the 2011 revolutions in the MENA region. In the Maghreb, even if less ostentatiously than in Egypt, the UAE and Saudi Arabia were also pushing their counter-revolutionary agendas. After 2011, the UAE and Saudi Arabia were not forthcoming with financial support to Tunisia, mainly due to the Islamist Ennahdha's participation in government. After 25 July 2021, not surprisingly, both the UAE and Saudi Arabia, even if to varying degrees, expressed support for Kais Saied's moves targeting Ennahdha. Shortly before 25 July, Riyadh promised the Tunisian President a donation of much-needed vaccinations and medical equipment, which was then distributed after Kais Saied's power

⁶ "Algérie: M'henna Djebbar, le «monsieur anti-subversion» du pouvoir." in *Jeune Afrique*, 21 January 2022. www.jeuneafrique.com/1299329/politique/algérie-mhenna-djebbar-le-monsieur-anti-subversion-du-pouvoir/; ARROUDJ, Adam. "Algérie, l'Etat profond a repris les rênes." in *Le Figaro*, 22 February 2022. www.lefigaro.fr/international/algérie-l-etat-profond-a-repris-les-renes-20220221

grab.⁷ Both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi also made financial promises to Tunisia after 25 July, but apparently have been asked to hold back by the US.⁸

The Moroccan monarchy, while having experienced hiccups in the past with the Emirates and Saudi Arabia, has nevertheless received strong backing from not only these two countries, but all of those that form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). They have offered their symbolic support by siding with Morocco on the Western Sahara question, and have also given financial backing. In 2011, when the North African monarchy was confronted with substantial protests, the Gulf countries pledged billions of dollars in financial aid to Morocco, and have apparently invested heavily in the Moroccan security sector in the past decade, even if exact figures regarding these donations are difficult to obtain.⁹

Finally, in Algeria, counter-revolutionary influence from the Gulf countries has been more marginal, as the oil-exporting country was not in need of financial support. Yet, perceptions of external meddling played a role throughout the Hirak mass protests and beyond. There was a widespread fear of Emirati and Saudi support to the regime. At the same time, rumours of support from Turkey and Qatar, two actors considered “pro-revolutionary” in Algeria, to Islamists close to the former Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which has been banned since 1991, and even to the separatist Movement for the self-determination of Kabylie (MAK), surfaced in 2001. Regardless of where they originated, the Algerian government strongly promoted such rumours in order to spread fear and discredit the Hirak, by insinuating its Islamist takeover. Hence, in this context, Qatar’s – perceived or real – activities served to discredit the Hirak movement as a “revolutionary” actor. In the Tunisian case, both Qatar and Turkey condemned President Saïed’s power grab and overtly anti-Islamist agenda after 25 July 2021. Yet, it is open to debate whether this was done with the goal of supporting democratic competition or whether it was more

about giving their clients a place within systems, that is, not about the systems per se – at least, this is what Qatar’s close and growing economic ties with Algeria and Morocco would insinuate, as both these countries have inserted Islamist actors into their clientelist authoritarian systems.

The presence – albeit to very different degrees – of two other regional actors, Israel and Iran, also serves the authoritarian status quo in Morocco and Algeria. Israeli-Moroccan security cooperation gives the Palace a boost and strengthens its military and surveillance capacities. While parts of the population reject normalization with Israel, the fact that it was linked to US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara helped prevent its broad contestation. At the same time, Algeria’s decision-makers in the military and Presidency used the Moroccan-Israeli normalization to play on (real) fears in the population about the Zionist enemy standing on the countries’ western borders in order to unite the population around the regime, and to frame contesters as a threat to national unity and as being supported by foreign powers. Conversely, the Moroccan elites’ threat perception and narrative to rally the population focuses on an alleged Algeria-Iran axis and related Iranian support to the Polisario via Algeria.¹⁰ More generally, Morocco and Algeria’s strained relations, which resulted in Algeria cutting diplomatic ties between the two countries in the summer of 2021, serve the elites in both countries to consolidate their domestic power. Last but not least, Maghrebi elites could count on implicit or explicit support from China and Russia, the two most important non-Western and non-regional actors present in the Maghreb. Russia’s activities have – due to the Cold War and the non-aligned movement – focused strongly on Algeria, with which it maintains a strategic partnership. Cooperation focuses primarily on the security and energy sectors – both domains that are key for maintaining the authoritarian status quo in Algeria. During the Hirak, Moscow repeatedly made overt gestures of support

⁷ “Tunisie/Arabie saoudite: Une importante aide d’un million de doses de vaccin, 190 respirateurs, 150 lits de réanimation...” in *GlobalNet*, 13 July 2021. <https://news.gnet.tn/tunisie-arabie-saoudite-une-importante-aide-dun-million-de-doses-de-vaccin-190-respirateurs-150-lits-de-reanimation/>

⁸ Author’s interviews with Tunisian officials and foreign diplomats, Tunis November 2021 and March 2022.

⁹ FAKIR, Intissar. *Morocco: Era of Strategic Partnership is Over*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 9 June 2020. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/09/morocco-era-of-strategic-partnership-is-over-pub-82011>

¹⁰ EL OUARDIGHI, Samir, “Conflit du Sahara: faut-il s’inquiéter d’un axe Alger-Téhéran aux portes du Maroc?” in *MEDIAS24*, 24 November 2021. <https://medias24.com/2021/11/24/conflit-du-sahara-faut-il-avoir-peur-dun-axe-alger-teheran-aux-portes-du-maroc/>

to the regime. Morocco and Tunisia's ruling elites, in their efforts to diversify international cooperation and trade, have also built closer relations with Russia. Moreover, Morocco's no-show for the UN vote on Russia's attack on Ukraine in March 2022, is evidence of Rabat's efforts not to alienate the UN Security Council veto power on the monarchy's key foreign policy issue: the quest for international recognition of Western Sahara as Moroccan territory. The latter also has a vital domestic function in rallying power around the monarchy. China, for its part, has included all three Maghreb countries in its Belt and Road Initiative, has been investing in port infrastructure and is focusing increasingly on Morocco as a platform for production and a gateway to export toward sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, Maghrebi governments' contracts with the Chinese technology company Huawei may provide them with access to surveillance technology from China. The effects of Beijing's engagement are potentially twofold. Firstly, its economic investments require stability, which implies backing the status quo, and, secondly, its technological support can help authoritarian regimes to keep contesting actors in check.

Europeans: Involuntary Counter-Revolutionaries?

Maghrebi elites with counter-revolutionary agendas could also rely on Europe, despite the European Union (EU) and some of its Member States seeking to promote democratic processes and structures. European fears of regional instability, after the "revolutions" in Libya, Syria and Yemen ended in civil wars, and of renewed migration, after the so-called migration crisis in 2015, was useful for Maghrebi incumbents. Rabat has played this card particularly well with its neighbour, Spain. Algerian elites in the course of the Hirak protests banked on the fact that European policy makers want clear roadmaps and support elections, if even both process and outcome question the legitimacy of the ruling elite. Tunisia's post-2011 governments finally knew that they could count on the democratization rent. Kais Saied could not do so, but post-25 July European policymakers initially hoped

that more decisive leadership could pave the way to implementing reforms that a dysfunctional government and parliament had not been able to do.

Counter-revolutionary actors in all three states have an Achilles heel: the economy

Maghrebi elites have also understood that European priorities have moved toward green agendas and that Europe is looking to North Africa for renewable energies, namely green hydropower, and, in the context of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, to diversify its energy producers. Morocco, for more than a decade, has assumed a role as one of the champions of renewables on the African continent, and this too has served to silence external criticism of diminishing domestic freedoms. Algeria has understood that it can play a vital role in the future of European energy security, and that its opaque nature and sovereignty reflex are an asset – Europeans rarely dare to criticize domestic policies. Moroccan and Tunisian elites have learned from Algeria and are reacting increasingly strongly to anyone perceived as meddling in domestic affairs. The cumulated effect of these dynamics is that Europe has unwittingly contributed to the (re-)consolidation of authoritarian regimes. Yet, counter-revolutionary actors in all three states have an Achilles heel: the economy. For one, because none of the economies in the short and mid-term produces enough output to satisfy populations and offset the growing degree of authoritarianism. Second, because it is the domain where European countries have both leverage – funds and trade – as well as a lever – their voting right in the IMF's Executive Board – to induce reforms that may generate spillover effects for political dynamics. Enhancing financial transparency and accountability, rule-based transactions and domestic economic competition in the Maghreb offers the best chances of weakening deep state networks – and, over time, pushing back counter-revolutions.

The Future of Politics

The Two Faces of Digitalization in Politics: The Role of Social Networks in Political Mobilizations and the Threat of “Digital Authoritarianism” in the MENA Region

Marc Owen Jones¹

Assistant Professor of Middle East Studies,
Hamad bin Khalifa University

The past two decades have seen rapid digitalization in much of the Middle East. While smartphone penetration, social media usage and internet adoption have all increased, the region is widely unequal in its access and deployment of digital technology. The wealthier Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states are among some of the world leaders in 5G adoption, while countries like Yemen are reported to have one of the lowest internet speeds in the world. This belies the starkness of the digital divide in the MENA region. Indeed, mobile subscription penetration is around 90% in Qatar, the UAE, and Bahrain, while the number is only around 40% in Yemen. Similarly, countries in the GCC often hover around 100% internet adoption, while in Egypt, it is around 50%. Arab media and ICT infrastructure share similarities in terms of governance and socio-political context, but they are far from homogenous, especially in terms of resources and reach.

The impact digital technologies have had on the region from a socio-political perspective has been profound, even if there is disagreement on their efficacy in generating and sustaining political mobilization. 2010-2011 were watershed years in mobile digital technology use in the Middle East. The early days of the Arab uprisings were infused with hope, partly spurred on by a sense of technological utopianism. This had come on the back of the so-called “Twitter

Revolution” in Iran in 2009. Here, bloggers and activists were active in using digital media to both organize and portray to the rest of the world the protests in Iran. Crucially, the ubiquity of mobile phones and digital technology ushered in moments of virality centred around regime brutality. The death of 26-year-old Iranian protester, Neda Agha-Soltan, filmed on a mobile phone, was potentially one of the most widely witnessed state-led killings in human history. At this point, it became clear that digital technology had ushered in a new form of citizen-led crowd-sourced regime accountability. As a corollary, though, it created an urgent new priority for state intervention and policing.

In terms of mobilization, one of the most profound impacts of digital technology has been the ability to document egregious state actions against its citizens. From Egypt to Bahrain, it was believed that new technologies would be key in the fight against decades of autocratic rule. This optimism was especially profound given the fact that Arab media systems, in particular, were tightly controlled and that mobile phones and social media allowed means of subverting top-down forms of media control. The uproar surrounding previously better-hidden acts of state brutality validated the notion of “liberation technology.” Mobile phones, Facebook, Twitter and more traditional online forums would supplant the pen and eradicate the need for the sword in resisting state oppression.

On a very basic level, the hope and promise of these technologies provided a morale boost for emerging social movements in the Middle East and elsewhere. Images of protesters holding up signs with the Face-

¹ Dr. Marc Owen Jones is also Senior Fellow at Middle East Council Global Affairs, and Non-Resident Fellow Democracy for the Arab World Now.

book or Twitter logo in Cairo and Tunis indicate at least the perception that these tools were important in galvanizing optimism and energy towards social change, infusing people with a sense that change was possible in this new digital era.

In many ways, they were, but digital technology does not operate in a vacuum. In Egypt, for example, in 2010, internet penetration was relatively low, but the number of youth under 15 was about a third of the total population. Declining economic prospects coupled with years of activism from a nucleus of engaged lawyers, human rights activists, and other civil society activists were probably the main drivers of organized protest rather than social media per se. This “youth of the Internet” were also savvy in their use of YouTube and other social media technologies, disseminating images of state brutality both at home and abroad. It is a truism in social media movements that regimes tend to be slow to adapt to innovative mobilization techniques, creating a lag in effective policing of these new political opportunities. This can leave them on the back foot, at least temporarily, thereby creating a honeymoon period in which the use of social media for organizing is relatively open. In this, networks can effectively build and sustain the organizational capacity of movements, which was partly the case in Egypt, Bahrain, Syria and Tunisia in 2010 and 2011.

However, in addition to network building, a key aspect of social media within the Arab world has been the ability to connect and amplify local politics to the outside world, including Western media. This was particularly true of US-based platforms like Twitter and Facebook, which were perhaps more of a bridge between regional activists and foreign audiences than a potent organizing tool. Indeed, in places like Bahrain, long-established traditional online forums were probably more popular and useful for indigenous activists. The international environment at the time also shaped the milieu in which social media and the Arab uprisings occurred. Under Barack Obama’s presidency, the US had foregone overt attempts at democratization as had occurred under Bush and focused more on promoting human rights as a form of foreign policy. This human rights concern made the usual Western pillars of support for the dictatorial regimes of the Gulf more fragile than they had been before. Regime brutality, disseminated virally and globally on Twitter, was bad for the US-Middle East allies, at least for a while.

Sustaining media interest abroad is key to generating the kind of political pressure necessary to threaten authoritarian resilience in the MENA region, where eternal patronage is important in maintaining “robustness.” Of course, the nature of this might vary depending on the patron: the trajectory of what happened in Syria was different from what happened in Egypt. Russian and Iranian support for the Assad regime contributed to a drawn-out and tragic war. Western support for Mubarak diminished rapidly in Egypt, but his successor, the democratically elected Morsi, was soon replaced by Mubarak 3.0, General Abdel Fattah el Sisi. To drive the point home, digital media and social media use have grown under Sisi, yet it is clear that authoritarianism has not diminished. Indeed, it is only one of many complex variables that now help sustain and garner political mobilization.

Digital technology is just a part of a media ecosystem where extant and established power nodes already function

It is also crucial to remember that digital technology is just a part of a media ecosystem where extant and established power nodes already function. An assemblage of existing political networks and legacy media outlets (such as Al Jazeera in Qatar and Al Arabiya in Saudi Arabia) sustain regional and international interest in MENA politics. Similarly, these networks function as both drivers and sustainers in support of revolution and/or counter-revolution. Just as we have seen the UAE and Saudi-connected media entities, including Al Arabiya, rally against the perceived empowerment of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Al Jazeera has been accused of supporting the Arab uprisings. Along with their massive social media reach, these channels pit competing pro and anti-status quo narratives against each other to ambiguous effect. Regardless of their effect, it is incorrect to assume that social media simply has a uniform revolutionary ontology.

Their influence on and offline also reflects a lack of the horizontalization of politics as envisioned by techno-utopians. They are, after all, the most followed

Arab news sources on social media. As such, agenda-setting filtered through the policy lens of certain GCC states is thus more likely to be amplified on digital media in the broader Arabic-speaking context. This itself creates a polarity in the digital public sphere in which specific national interests dominate the discourse.

The Dark Side

The fetishization of technology is somewhat a general product of post-industrial society, spurred on by the ubiquity of technology, as well as aggressive marketing from tech firms who profit from the datafication of subjects and the perception that their products potentially lead to freedom from authoritarian rule. While there are moments where the benefits of technology validate this optimism, contextual factors, such as a political economy, regime type and socioeconomic idiosyncrasies, remind us that technological determinism is an inadequate paradigm to view how the world works. Indeed, social constructivism – how technology interacts with unique contextual factors – is equally important.

The reality is that, even with an increasingly globally-connected world, social constructivism and technological determinism combine to create unique outcomes shaped by social, economic and political systems. Within authoritarian contexts like the Middle East, resources, tools and technologies are often utilized in ways that best preserve the maintenance of the status quo. Just as tanks or armed vehicles, ordinarily used in war or external conflicts, are turned to repress domestic protest movements, technologies marketed as tools of social engagement and friend-making are co-opted as a tool of regime intimidation, propaganda and surveillance. Moreover, it is not just regimes. In many MENA countries, authoritarian regimes often enjoy some support from segments of society, who will also use social media as tools of counter-revolution.

International Re-organizations: The Rise of Gulf Digital Hegemony?

This digital revolution in the MENA has also brought with it digital superpowers. If traditional media power

is the symbolic power concentrated in the institutes of television, radio and newspapers, then digital media power is that same power as manifested through digital resources. Social media power is the ability of entities or regimes to utilize those platforms to extend their hegemony domestically and internationally. To be effective in this use of power through digital resources, ownership of infrastructure, whether directly or through investment, is critical. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are perhaps the most significant social media superpowers in the MENA region and the Arabic-speaking world. Saudi Arabia is one of Twitter's biggest markets and the owner of large media conglomerates such as MBC.

Technologies marketed as tools of social engagement and friend-making are co-opted as a tool of regime intimidation, propaganda and surveillance

The social media power of Gulf states and the ubiquity of the Arabic language across a diverse geographical region comprising multiple states results in the dominance of narratives on important political issues. When the Tunisian President Kais Saied took power in an autocoup in 2021, the dominant information on Twitter reflected the Saudi and UAE narrative, which legitimized Saied's move as necessary in order to combat rising Islamism. Regardless of whether one agrees with the autocoup in Tunisia, the narratives in the digital space raise questions of information sovereignty. Indeed, anyone searching for information about Tunisia in Arabic would have been more exposed to the foreign policy discourse of certain Gulf states simply because of their social media hegemony. When an explosion ripped through Beirut in 2020, the dominant narratives on Twitter emanated from the Gulf, immediately placing blame on Hezbollah. These are but two examples.

Similarly, these powerful states are somehow able to manipulate the social media space when they are confronted with their own political scandals. When Khashoggi was murdered, the false Saudi narrative that emerged at the beginning of October 2018 was

the most dominant on Twitter in terms of volume of tweets, yet in Saudi, Khashoggi trended the least on Twitter than in any other Arabic state. The reasons for such paradoxes still remain unknown but clearly point to some sort of algorithmic manipulation and censorship. Similarly, other countries like Turkey have demonstrated a willingness to shut off social media access during times of political unrest. Depending on the state and ICT infrastructure, states can localize internet shutdowns around “trouble spots,” as happened in Bahrain in 2016, where one village was subject to a year-long internet curfew.

Social media has also been crucial in the proliferation of hate speech and censorial harassment. Journalists deemed critical have found themselves the target of virulent malinformation campaigns, being doxed and attacked by numerous high profile figures in the region. Thousands of bots have spread sectarian hate speech, particularly anti-Shia hate speech. In many cases, these often amplify existing television content that is sectarian in nature. Indeed, these forms of intimidation tie into more traditional forms of coercion. The arrest, imprisonment, or killing of journalists and activists has had a chilling effect on and offline. The high profile and gruesome murder of Jamal Khashoggi also ushered in a new era of fear. After all, if the murder of a US-based journalist could be done in such an audacious fashion, then nothing is off-limits. This chilling effect has a corollary impact on the social media space and creates a dissent vacuum. This vacuum is filled with pro-government influencers lauding the regime and reminding potential dissidents of the consequences of criticism. Traditional offline coercion enables the co-optation of social media space by those wishing to demonstrate their loyalty and allegiance to the regime and its policies. This is underpinned by draconian laws, which severely curtail criticism of governments or government entities.

This crowding out of traditional debate and the rise of robot accounts (or bots) has a dystopian potential for civil society. This phenomenon invokes the spectre of an autonomous digital sphere, where online discussions are more akin to a simulation of a public sphere desired by authoritarian leaders – crowding out legitimate debate and deliberative democracy in favour of propaganda, disinformation and harassment of those who oppose the official narrative.

This is far from theoretical. Over the past five years, hundreds of thousands of bot accounts have been

deployed to lionize Mohamed bin Salman and Mohamed bin Zayed, promote the anti-Iranian tweets of Donald Trump, and whitewash the murder of Khashoggi – to name but a few examples. Accounts have been used to simulate (astroturf) public opinion of Saudis, with thousands of accounts falsely purporting to be Saudis calling for maximum pressure and even war with Iran. Although bots are relatively unsophisticated, their ability to increase the popularity of URLs and other content highlights their utility as tools for amplifying pro-authoritarian propaganda. Even in a global context, certain Middle Eastern states are notable in their prowess for social media manipulation. The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are among the biggest manipulators of Twitter in the world, second only to China. This puts them ahead of Iran and Russia, two actors with well-publicized histories of social media manipulation. We also know that the data provided to reach this conclusion is not complete and thus likely downplays the true scale of manipulation. Given this manifest desire to manipulate digital space, the prospect of more sophisticated technologies in the hands of authoritarian regimes does not bode well.

The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are among the biggest manipulators of Twitter in the world, second only to China

Perhaps more alarmingly, the rapidly evolving sophistication of natural language processing technologies such as GPT3 already shows that the next generation of bot accounts will be far more convincing and plausible. The same is true of deep-fake videos and images, which have already been weaponized and used to trick editors into publishing pro-regime propaganda in the Middle East.

The Politicization of the Digital Public Sphere: Digital Orientalism

In the meantime, the intersection and power relations between the global North and global South

need to be recognized as a critical node in modulating digital authoritarianism and potential totalitarianism. This has been particularly true under recent geopolitical reconfigurations. Under Donald Trump, the reversal of Obama's conciliatory approach towards Iran, which itself mobilized numerous resources to convince publics so often exposed to anti-Iranian propaganda, was vital in ushering in what can be termed a Middle East post-truth moment.

Under Trump, the US State Department has been accused of launching information operations that attacked US citizens who were not critical enough in their reporting on Iran. Similarly, journalists covering Iran find themselves the victims of large anonymous Twitter mobs attacking them for any criticism. Iran has responded in kind, creating its own vast disinformation network that seeks to promote its own agenda. Trump's newfound alliance with the Gulf States, in particular Saudi Arabia, was seen as one of the reasons for Saudi Arabia and the UAE getting the green light for the isolation of Qatar in 2017, an event that spawned an unprecedented digital disinformation operation. The profound geopolitical shifts led to enormous resources for propaganda to mobilize public opinion to support potentially unpopular or radical courses of action.

Taking a state-centric approach is also problematic in the age of despatializing technology and globalization. Big tech companies are increasingly a key node in the expression of authoritarian practices. The existence of a moderating function under the control of private companies outside the MENA region introduces new modalities to the power and function of digital technology. Whistleblowers from inside companies like Facebook and Twitter have highlighted how these companies are less concerned with moderating information in countries that are less likely to cause a PR problem for them. In other words, a form of digital orientalism emerges, in which social media companies are happy to monetize data from inhabitants of the global South but with minimum concern for the collateral damage that the use of those products causes.

Indeed, authoritarian countries allied with the United States are less likely to have their social media activity censured, even when deployed against activists and journalists. This has been evident in the treatment of the Israel and Palestine conflict. Social media companies censor pro-Palestinian content, often

at the behest of Israeli authorities, leading to a reduced visibility of Palestinians in the online sphere. This raises serious ethical questions about how social media companies are siding with an occupying state. Having said this, pro-Palestinian activists have still utilized social media to significant effect to highlight the violence of the Israeli occupation.

Tilting towards Totalitarianism

A key aspect of the potential consequences of digital technology could be their role in altering the very nature of regime type in the region. While the concept of totalitarianism and even post-totalitarianism may have perished somewhat following the collapse of the Soviet Union, there have never been satisfactory replacements. Terms such as authoritarian or hybrid regimes belie the fact that regimes around the world, regardless of whether they are monarchical, autocratic or democratic, engage in practices that can be seen as constituent parts of authoritarianism. Caveats notwithstanding, a central tenet of the definition of totalitarianism, at least in the Arendtian sense, has always been the desire of those in power to dominate the private and internal realm of citizen life. The erosion of the public/private boundary is very much a product of the digital age rather than being the product of a regime type. The Edward Snowden revelations about massive NSA surveillance, along with the activities of Cambridge Analytica, reveal how both private and public data and naivety around privacy demonstrate an increased intervention by authorities in our personal domain. While this in itself may be cause for alarm, a distinction can be made for places in which there is at least some recourse to accountability on behalf of citizens when confronted with massive invasions of privacy. The digital turn in the MENA has also been spurred on by the seeming ambition of the likes of MBZ and MBS, who have demonstrated the importance with which they view social media and digital technology such as spyware. Efforts by Saudi actors close to the Royal Court to infiltrate Twitter headquarters in San Francisco for the purpose of extracting private information of Saudi dissidents again reflect both an intolerance of criticism and an ambitious desire to take great risks on the international stage in order to violate the privacy of potential dissidents. Indeed,

the FBI has launched a court case that highlights the involvement of MISK, a charity owned by the Crown Prince, in infiltrating Twitter.

With technologies further encroaching into people's private lives and intrusive electronic surveillance wielded with little restraint, authoritarian regimes in the region risk becoming totalitarian

It has also come to light that Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are big customers of NSO Group, the Israeli cybersecurity company that sells Pegasus software, which infiltrates phones without the victim even having to click on any download. This spyware, which can access users' personal messages, and monitor voice calls and video calls (among other things), has been used by these regimes to infiltrate the phones of activists, journalists, princesses and heads of state, both living in the region, but also outside. It was even used to monitor close associates of Jamal Khashoggi before and after his murder. Indeed, despatializing technology allows for despatialized repression.

These new digital forms of surveillance are also forming an important basis for new digital authoritarian alliances in the region that accompany relatively radical changes in the old order. Given Israel's cutting-edge cybersecurity industry, a renewed form of overt cooperation in the region has emerged, in which Israel can extend its own influence and power by selling such technologies to states that share its own foreign policy interests. This spyware diplomacy highlights once again how technologies of control are forging alliances in the region while also buttressing a regional order supported by two of the most externally assertive states in the Gulf – the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Implicit within this is not only Israel as a critical node propping up digital authoritarianism in the region, but also the maintenance of US hegemony there.

Naturally, civil society actors and citizens have little ability to contest such intrusions. In the Middle East, the extant political systems, which often rely on one-party rule, low-quality democracy, or monarchical

states, there is a lack of mechanisms protecting citizens from the arbitrary exercise of power from the State. The protection people have against an arbitrary state is a fundamental aspect of a quality democracy. Combined with powerful digital technology and high technological penetration, the capacity for realizing totalitarianism's invasive impulses is theoretically real and real in practice. Meanwhile, privacy protections are scant, with no equivalent of mechanisms like the GDPR available, nor remotely possible given the fragile security cooperation mechanisms, even with entities like the GCC, which, prior to 2017, had appeared to offer some model for integration, although mainly in the realms of security.

Conclusion

Digital media technology has been a significant conduit for bolstering the narratives and power of regimes which generally eschew democracy in favour of creating a top-down vision for their states as well as the region. It is perhaps non-committal to argue that digital technology is neither a panacea for resisting authoritarianism nor a silver bullet for regimes to quell social unrest. Indeed, this ambiguity highlights an emphasis on techno-determinism. Instead of arguing whether the technology itself facilitates social change, the answer lies in the fact that in authoritarian regimes, where state power is arbitrary, digital technology is most likely to be co-opted for purposes of surveillance, control and repression. With this in mind, the digital turn in the MENA region is likely to abet rather than challenge authoritarianism. Furthermore, technology can offer new functionalities that extend modalities of repression to potentially alter the nature of regime type itself. With technologies further encroaching into people's private lives and intrusive electronic surveillance wielded with little restraint, authoritarian regimes in the region risk becoming totalitarian in their pursuit of social control. At the heart of this are those countries that are wealthy and developed in terms of ICT (within the GCC), and have good relations with countries specializing in authoritarian tech (such as Israel). These so-called digital superpowers, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, will be instrumental in the shift from digital authoritarianism to digital authoritarianism with increasingly totalitarian impulses.

Fragmentations in the Regional Mediterranean Integration

Euro-Mediterranean Regional Cooperation and Integration: The Urgent Need for an Enhanced Agenda

Erwan Lannon

Professor
Ghent University

Promoting Regional Integration and Cooperation in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood and Beyond

Promoting regional integration and cooperation in its external action is imprinted in the very DNA of the European Union (EU). The 2021 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) first Progress Report on “Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean”¹ put forward, among its key takeaways, that: “albeit modestly, the integration within the group has accelerated since the start of the Barcelona Process.” The “biggest progress in regional trade in goods” being observed among the “UfM sub-regions of the southern shore and the Western Balkans.” This is certainly good news but, first of all, a “considerable untapped potential” still “exists for trade expansion between non-EU UfM countries, and also among specific sub-groups – notably the Western Balkans with Israel and Levant countries, and Israel with Levant and North African countries.” Second, it is also important to recall that this Report was commissioned by the UfM² and thus

encompassed its members.³ Third, referring to the Southern Neighbourhood countries only, the 2021 Joint Communication on a new Agenda for the Mediterranean stated that: “the region has one of the lowest levels of regional economic integration in the world.”⁴ There are obviously different ways to look at the region and the question of whether, or not, to integrate (potential) Mediterranean candidates and/or all MENA or Arab countries is key in this respect.

What is clear is that Euro-Mediterranean *regional integration* has not yet been achieved at the legal level. The 1995 Barcelona Declaration aimed to create bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) through the implementation of Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements (EMAAAs) and to gradually establish a vast overarching Euromed FTA, having set “2010 as the target date.”⁵ However, in 2022, two EMAAAs have not been negotiated (Libya) or signed (Syria) and a number of FTAs among the EU's partners have not been negotiated or concluded. Moreover, the EMAAAs envisaged only limited economic integration, so-called “shallow integration,” as the liberalization process concentrated on manufactured products but without excluding trade in agricultural products – to be “progressively liberalized through reciprocal preferential access” – and trade in services “including right of establishment” to also be “progressively liberalized.” This was necessary in order to have an FTA

¹ OECD, *Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean: Progress Report*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1787/325884b3-en>

² As mentioned by the Secretary General of the UfM, the Report “fulfils the mandate given to the UfM Secretariat by its Member States and outlined in the 2017 UfM Roadmap for Action, with a view to elaborating a progress report on regional integration in order to assess progress achieved in regional integration, using specific performance indicators which would allow for analysis of major trends and evolutions.”

³ The EU 27 Member States and Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Turkey. Syria “suspended its membership to the UfM on December 1 2011” and Libya as an “observer status,” UfM Secretariat Barcelona, June 2022, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/member-states/>

⁴ The footnote (3) adds: “With mere 5.9% exports to the region, intra-regional trade is a fraction of the countries' total trade – <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/euro-mediterranean-partnership/>.”

⁵ EEAS, https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/euromed/docs/bd_en.pdf

compatible with the multilateral rules. However, it is clear that compared to FTAs concluded more recently, especially the Association Agreements including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (AA-DCFTAs) concluded with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, these old EMAAs are outdated. The one with Tunisia was signed 27 years ago!

At the level of *regional cooperation*, in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument⁶ (ENPI) implemented two regional cooperation tracks (for the South and the East) as of 2007; a new “inter-regional” cooperation to become “European Neighbourhood-wide”⁷; and a Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programme, drawing on funds from both the external and internal headings of the EU budget.⁸

The question is: how and to what extent will the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) adopted in 2021⁹ support regional integration and cooperation?

Is Euro-Mediterranean Regional Cooperation and Integration among the EU’s Priorities?

Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation, especially its South-South dimension, has been quite modest so far, not necessarily in terms of its objectives or structures, but as regards its financial means and achieve-

ments.¹⁰ In the framework of the ENP, the ENPI (2007-13) gave birth to the regional South programme, which was mainly, during its first phase (2007-10), a continuation of the MEDA programme, as revised in 2005. It was then, from 2011 on, absorbed by the ENP. The “Neighbourhood-wide” programme was not easy to implement during its first phase, as it was mainly demand-driven and aimed at providing technical assistance, a novelty for many partners, whereas the CBC procedures had to be revised under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI, 2014-20).¹¹

What is clear is that Euro-Mediterranean regional integration has not yet been achieved at the legal level

Of course, the creation in 2008 of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was a landmark at this level, as it focused mainly on promoting a series of regional cooperation projects and labelling (but not funding) new ones.¹² In 2017, the UfM Roadmap for Action “The Union for the Mediterranean: an action-driven organization with a common ambition”¹³ confirmed

⁶ Regulation (EC) 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 that lays out the general provisions for the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, EU OJ L 310, 9 September 2006, pp. 1-14.

⁷ An “ENPI Interregional Programme (IRP)” was put in place between 2007 and 2013 (see: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=LEGISSUM:r17105>) and renamed “Neighbourhood-wide” with the ENI. The “Neighbourhood-wide” track is maintained in the NDICI (see article 18 d) and a new form of “trans-regional cooperation” has been introduced. See hereinafter. The first IRP covered technical and legal assistance, higher education and student mobility, cooperation between local actors, investment projects as well as thematic cooperation with Russia.

⁸ Note that the CBC includes under the NDICI an “interregional cooperation” as “laid down in the Interreg Regulation” as well as a “transnational cooperation” dimension “over larger transnational territories or around sea basins” (article 2 § 5 of the NDICI).

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, EU OJ L 209, 14 June 2021, pp. 1-78.

¹⁰ Before the Renovated Mediterranean Policy (1992-1996) – and its innovative horizontal financial regulation on the basis of which the first EuroMed multilateral networks were created – multilateral cooperation, with the exception of environmental cooperation, was limited. In 1995, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership created a proper multilateral framework including a political dialogue and some regional institutions. Nevertheless, Euro-Mediterranean cooperation remained predominantly bilateral. For example, between 1997 and 2005 (MEDA I-MEDA II programmes) only between 10-15 % of the total financial envelopes was devoted to the regional dimension. MEDA, however, was a pioneer as it also included a (limited) cross border cooperation track.

¹¹ “Far-reaching changes” were needed “mainly with regard to management methods.” See the explanatory memorandum of the European Commission’s Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument, Brussels, 7 December 2011, COM(2011) 839 final.

¹² LANNON, Erwan and VAN ELSUWEGE, Peter “The EU and Its Neighbourhood: A Patchwork of Regional Strategies and Institutions from the Mediterranean to the Arctic.” in WESSEL, Ramses and ODERMATT, Jed (eds), *Research Handbook on the European Union and International Organisations*, research Handbooks in International Law, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham UK and Northampton, Massachusetts, USA, 2019, pp. 546-567.

¹³ <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/UfM-Roadmap-for-action-2017.pdf>

that the UfM's "regional dialogue platforms" dimension had also progressively developed.¹⁴

In February 2021, the European Commission and the High Representative proposed to achieve a "new, ambitious and innovative Agenda for the Mediterranean," in the framework of the ENP.¹⁵ Five "key policy areas" were identified in this regard: 1) Human development, good governance and the rule of law; 2) Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition; 3) Peace and security; 4) Migration and mobility; 5) Green transition: climate resilience, energy, and environment.¹⁶ So, at first sight, it looks like regional cooperation and integration is not a key priority. In fact, this dimension has not been forgotten in the Joint Communication, which stresses, at the very end, that "efforts will continue to enhance regional, sub-regional and inter-regional cooperation."¹⁷

Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation, especially its South-South dimension, has been quite modest so far

If it is acknowledged that the "role of the Union for the Mediterranean remains indispensable" as a "focal point," in addition, "sub-regional cooperation" is to be "adapted to the specificities of the different sub-regions of the Mediterranean and beyond." What is innovative here is the "beyond the Mediterranean" dimension. The "effective approaches" will "require broader co-operation with neighbouring countries and regions." Therefore, the "inter-regional dimension" is "important." This "inter-regional cooperation"

dimension is in fact addressing the issue of "neighbours of the EU's neighbours" or the "EU's broader neighbourhood."¹⁸ Six main elements are put forward:

- i) "Cooperation between North and sub-Saharan Africa, also as triangular cooperation with the EU"¹⁹;
- ii) "Inter-regional cooperation with the Gulf and Red Sea regions";
- iii) "Sub-regional and inter-regional cooperation, notably with African partners";
- iv) Cooperation with "regional actors and organizations" (League of Arab States, African Union and "relevant sub regional groupings");
- v) "Pragmatic initiatives based on variable geometry" to "support those willing to advance further in the cooperation on common Mediterranean goods";
- vi) "Further regional, sub-regional or trilateral cooperation and joint initiatives between partner countries across the board, including in light of the recent normalization of relations between Israel and a number of Arab countries."²⁰

At operational level, the Mediterranean Agenda is supported by an Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the southern neighbours that includes a series of preliminary flagship investments and projects.²¹ The EIP should help partners in their "recovery efforts, contribute to increase competitiveness and support sustainable and inclusive growth."²² The flagships proposed are to be financed notably by the NDICI. They should absorb an important share of the financial allocation for the "Southern Neighbourhood," for which specific objectives and priorities have been enshrined in article 18 of the NDICI. There are in fact seven specific objectives, which include: "(d) enhance regional and cross-border cooperation, in particular in

¹⁴ <https://ufmsecretariat.org/what-we-do/platforms/>

¹⁵ European Commission and HRVP, Joint Communication on A Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean, 9 February 2021, Brussels, JOIN(2021) 2 final.

¹⁶ JOIN(2021) 2 final., p. 4.

¹⁷ JOIN(2021) 2 final., p. 21.

¹⁸ See LANNON, Erwan Conclusion, lessons and policy proposals in GSTOHL, Sieglinde and LANNON, Erwan (eds), *The European Union's Broader Neighbourhood: Challenges and opportunities for cooperation beyond the European Neighbourhood Policy*, Routledge, Oxon, New York, 2015, pp. 315-326.

¹⁹ One of the aims is to "strengthen coherence between what the EU does with Northern African partners and the rest of the African continent" which is of course easier with one single financial regulation.

²⁰ JOIN(2021) 2 final, p. 4 and pp. 21-22.

²¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Joint Staff Working Document, Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours*, Brussels, 9 February 2021, SWD (2021) 23 final.

²² *Ibid.*

the framework of the Eastern Partnership, the Union for the Mediterranean, European Neighbourhood-wide collaboration as well as Black Sea regional cooperation, Arctic cooperation, the Northern Dimension, including in the areas of energy and security.” Article 21 also refers to “trans-regional” cooperation. The annex of the Commission’s delegated Regulation 2021/1530 of July 2021²³ also contains a specific point for the Southern Neighbourhood: (6) on “Enhancing regional, sub-regional and interregional cooperation.” It includes the following items: “(a) Supporting the Union for the Mediterranean; (b) Increasing cooperation with international, regional and sub-regional actors and organizations; (c) Increasing cooperation between North and sub-Saharan Africa in selected areas.” In other words, the five priority areas of the Mediterranean Agenda have been fine-tuned and developed at operational level,²⁴ and a sixth one added, precisely on our theme.

The first conclusion is that the traditional “regional,” “Neighbourhood-wide” and “cross-border cooperation” tracks have been maintained. Second, there is an emphasis on the “sub-regional” dimension. Third, new forms of “interregional” and “trans-regional” cooperation have been introduced.²⁵ Last but not least, the war in Ukraine will continue to affect the functioning of these forms of cooperation and not only at the level of the Eastern Partnership, the Black Sea or the Northern Dimension, as candidate countries to EU Membership benefit from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II), not the NDICI.

At the level of *regional integration*, a 2020 report from the World Bank concluded that the “low levels of integration among MENA countries are due in part to insufficient reforms of the legal frameworks for investments and lack of convergence of regulations on non-tariff measures (NTMs).”²⁶ This evaluation is shared

by the abovementioned OECD report on the UfM, which stressed that the “three most common types of NTM-related obstacles” are “conformity assessment, export-related measures (e.g. prohibition of exports of certain products due to internal shortages; sanitary inspections” etc.) and rules of origin. It considers that their negative impact can be “minimized by promoting the harmonization of rules and making them more transparent and easier to understand.”²⁷

It is thus no surprise that, in the Mediterranean Agenda, for “connected economies,” there is a proposal to “prioritize the reduction” of NTMs, focusing on:

- the “full implementation and compliance with existing multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements” avoiding the “resurgence of protectionism and trade restrictions”;
- the launching of “dialogues to identify partners’ interest in modernizing their trade and investment relations with the EU, in areas including investment facilitation, sustainable development, services, and, when relevant, agriculture.”²⁸

In terms of political priorities, an element to be underlined is the necessity to address a potential “resurgence of protectionism and trade restrictions” that could put an end to an era that started in 1994, with the conclusion of the Uruguay Round trade negotiations.

At the operational level, the specific objectives for the Neighbourhood in the NDICI include two important elements. The first one is the support of the “implementation of association agreements or other existing and future agreements.” This is of importance for capacity building. The second objective is to continue to promote the “progressive integration” into the EU’s internal market, but also “enhanced sectoral

²³ European Commission delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1530 of 12 July 2021 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/947, *op.cit.*, JOUE L 330, 20 September 2021, p. 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Annex, I. Neighbourhood South (1) Supporting human development, good governance and the rule of law and gender equality. (2) Strengthening resilience, building prosperity and seizing the digital transformation. (3) Supporting a green transition, strengthening climate resilience, energy transition and security, and protecting the environment. (4) Cooperating on peace and security. (5) Enhancing cooperation on all aspects of migration, mobility and forced displacement.

²⁵ See hereinafter.

²⁶ AREZKI, Rabah; MORENO-DODSON, Blanca; YUTING FAN, Rachel; GANSEY, Romeo; NGUYEN, Ha; CONG NGUYEN, Minh; MOTTAGHI, Lili; TSAKAS, Constantine; WOOD, Christina. “Commercer ensemble: Vers une relance de l’intégration de la région Moyen-Orient et Afrique du Nord à l’ère post-COVID.” Middle East and North Africa Economic Update, October 2020, Washington, DC: World Bank, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34516>, p. 2.

²⁷ OECD, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁸ JOIN(2021) 2 final, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

and cross-sectoral cooperation, including through legislative approximation and regulatory convergence towards Union and other relevant international norms and standards, and improved market access, including through deep and comprehensive free trade areas.”²⁹ So the ENP objective of a “stake in the internal market” is maintained, together with the Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (AA-DCFTAs), but a new emphasis is placed on (cross-)sectoral cooperation to achieve these long-term objectives.

The Instruments and Financial Means Available to Support Euro-Mediterranean Regional Cooperation and Integration

The NDICI covers “country” and “multi-country” indicative programmes, as well as “regional” indicative programmes and “trans-regional” indicative programmes. Under the NDICI, “trans-regional” means “a multi-country indicative programme covering more than one third country from different geographic areas.” The four different “geographic areas” are: (a) the “Neighbourhood”; (b) “sub-Saharan Africa”; (c) Asia and the Pacific and (d) “the Americas and the Caribbean.”³⁰ In other words, the implementation of (trans-)regional cooperation should be facilitated, as the NDICI covers all these regions and provides them with dedicated instruments.

As far as the articulation between the NDICI and the UfM and sub-regional frameworks are concerned, it is important to refer to article 21 of the NDICI, which states that multi-country indicative programmes “shall address challenges common to all or a number of partner countries.” For the Mediterranean, the priorities to be taken into consideration are those of the “reviewed” ENP, the “work carried out in the context of” the UfM, and “regional, trans-regional and sub-regional cooperation primarily between two or more partner countries.” So, it is clearly the variable geometry and pragmatic approach, followed by the UfM, that is put forward.

²⁹ Article 18 of the NDICI, points b) and e).

³⁰ See articles 2 and 4 of the NDICI, *op. cit.*

³¹ Article 2 § 5 of the NDICI, *op. cit.*

³² That is designed to reduce “disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions.” article 174 § 2 of the TFEU.

³³ Corresponding to at least 75% of the total budget. Article 6 § 4 of the NDICI.

The NDICI covers “country” and “multi-country” indicative programmes, as well as “regional” indicative programmes and “trans-regional” indicative programmes

Finally, it is important to mention the “cross-border cooperation” component that covers:

- i) Cooperation “between one or more Member States, and one or more third countries and territories along the external adjacent land and maritime borders of the Union”;
- ii) “Transnational cooperation over larger transnational territories or around sea basins and inter-regional cooperation”;
- iii) Cooperation on “specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund” (ERDF) and “external financing instruments (the ‘Interreg Regulation’).”³¹ The reference to the “Interreg Regulation” is of importance as it means a progressive export of elements from the EU’s Cohesion policy.³²

Financial allocations are key indicators to identify priorities. Article 6 of the NDICI indicates that the total budget for 2021-27 is 79.463 billion euros. For geographic programmes,³³ out of a total of 60.388 billion euros, at least 19 billion euros have been earmarked for the Neighbourhood as a whole. This is to be compared to the 11.181 billion euros of the ENPI, and 15.432 billion euros of the ENI. Also, if the usual informal balance is maintained (1/3 for the East, 2/3 for the South), the increase of the financial envelope is limited, especially given the current geopolitical context. The second point is that the proportion of the envelope devoted to multi-country programmes remains to be seen. Some indicators can be identified. For instance, at the level of the CBC: “up to 5% of the financial envelope for the Neighbourhood

area shall be indicatively allocated to support those programmes.”³⁴ Also, beyond the geographic programme, which will absorb 75% of the total envelope,³⁵ the regional dimension also appears under the “thematic programmes” at the level of “Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention”³⁶ in the framework of “(ii) assistance in addressing global and trans-regional threats and emerging threats.” Also to be taken into consideration is the fact that “10% of the financial envelope” should be dedicated to “actions supporting management and governance of migration and forced displacement.”³⁷

Even if pan-Arab economic integration is not easily achieved at the political level, it can still be considered as a business opportunity to be promoted

As far as instruments for promoting *regional integration* are concerned, the EU is looking for new options, thus the proposal to take “advantage of opportunities at the sub-regional, regional and continental levels” to “contribute to economic diversification and deepen integration.” It is also proposed to explore “synergies with sub-Saharan Africa” in the “context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the creation of a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), with a view to facilitating the emergence of targeted continental value chains and sup-

porting sustainable investment.”³⁸ The latter is an illustration of the sectoral approach. If the AA-DCFTA negotiations, “underway with Morocco and Tunisia,” are mentioned, it is clearly another option on the table: the progressive modernization of the existing agreements, *via* sectoral agreements, notably at pan-African level.

It is also remarkable that the Joint Communication does not refer to pan-Arab economic integration.³⁹ Of course, the current fragmentation and growing disputes do not help. This dimension is taken into consideration by experts in terms of the (un-) achievements related to the horizontal FTAs. There is an untapped potential as put forward in the OECD Progress Report, notably for the pan-Arab FTA.⁴⁰ Even if pan-Arab economic integration is not easily achieved at the political level, it can still be considered as a business opportunity to be promoted.

Preliminary Multi-Country and Regional Flagship Projects, New Opportunities and Untapped Potential

It is not possible here to detail all the “multi-country” and “regional” flagships proposed in the Economic and Investment Plan” for the Southern Neighbourhood, but a brief analysis reveals that the flagship projects “address challenges and opportunities” at the national, local, multi-country and (trans/inter-) regional levels.⁴¹ Ten thematic flagships have been identified⁴² to regroup “multi-country” and “regional” initiatives or more concrete projects.⁴³ Six multi-country and six regional initiatives have been pro-

³⁴ Article 22 § 2 of the NDICI. This is due to the fact that financial means are simultaneously earmarked for the ERDF.

³⁵ Article 6 § 4 of the NDICI.

³⁶ See articles 10 and 11 of the NDICI. 908 million euros have been earmarked for “Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention.” Article 6 § 2 (b) of the NDICI.

³⁷ NDICI Preamble point 51.

³⁸ JOIN(2021) 2 final, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³⁹ But twice refers to the “League of Arab States,” and makes two references to “Arab States” related to the normalization “between Israel and a number of Arab countries” and one reference to the “Arab Spring.” JOIN(2021) 2 final, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 4, 13, 22.

⁴⁰ OECD Progress Report, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁴¹ SWD(2021) 23 final, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-9.

⁴² 1 Support to social sectors, education, skills and health; 2 Human rights, the rule of law, and modern, effective administrations, governance and accountability; 3 Resilient economies; 4 Sustainable economies, 5 Connected economies, 6 Inclusive economies, 7 Digital transformation, research and innovation, 8 Migration, 9 Green growth and climate action, 10 Energy transition and energy security. *Ibid.*

⁴³ For example: “The EU will also support regional capacity building on economic governance and continue to strengthen the partners’ statistical capacities to produce reliable, comparable statistics and thus support economic development strategies,” a regional initiative under Flagship 2. Another interesting regional one, under Flagship 5, is: “In order to strengthen interconnectivity, the EU will also support the upgrading of relevant trade and connectivity infrastructure (including border crossings, such as the King Hussein bridge in Jordan in full coordination with all relevant stakeholders).” *Ibid.*

posed.⁴⁴ It is clearly a work in progress, but new topics (like vaccines) and approaches are certainly emerging. For instance, there are a few proper trans/interregional cooperation initiatives proposed under the “regional” heading. Under the “interconnected economies” flagship, for example, it is proposed to develop “logistics hubs in strategic trade and sustainable and safe transport routes that would allow for integration with other regions, including the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa.”⁴⁵

At the level of *regional integration*, according to a study commissioned by the European Commission, the bilateral Euro-Mediterranean FTAs, “played a significant role in fostering Euro-Med trade, and they remain relevant for trade in goods.” However, issues affect the “performance” of these bilateral FTAs and “additional efforts are needed to enhance their relevance for current trade challenges,” notably NTMs. There is also the need to reinforce the “implementation” of the FTAs, to review their “coverage” while “enhancing sustainable development and regulatory cooperation.” These issues are key to “bringing the expected benefits of the Euro-Med FTAs to both sides.”⁴⁶ Of course, in terms of coverage, services are of fundamental importance among these untapped EMEA potentialities. The OECD Progress Report stressed that the region “lacks ambitious regulation on services trade, with the exception of the EU association agreements with the Western Balkan countries.”⁴⁷

In terms of South-South cooperation beyond the Mediterranean, the “end to the rift within the GCC in 2021 has facilitated the resumption and expansion of EU-GCC cooperation.” A joint communication in

May 2022 took stock of this new context, creating “a strategic partnership with the Gulf.”⁴⁸ This is very much linked to the “implementation of the European REPowerEU strategy and the complementing EU External Energy Strategy,”⁴⁹ including an increase of “Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) supplies.”⁵⁰

A number of interesting proposals referring to the Mediterranean are mentioned in the new Strategic Partnership, such as:

- i) “Explore cooperation with Gulf countries, including in relation to the ongoing discussions on a future Trans-Mediterranean Transport Network in the Southern Neighbourhood, aiming to promote stronger connections with adjacent strategic corridors in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia”⁵¹;
- ii) “Explore opportunities for production and trade to enable the undistorted imports of renewable hydrogen in particular, building upon existing projects, notably in the eastern and southern Mediterranean region” and opportunities will be “pursued for triangular cooperation on clean and just energy transition, in particular with Africa, Asia and the broader Middle East. The EU will promote *regional energy integration and cooperation*”⁵²;
 - “Explore further cooperation on reducing emission levels from maritime transport” (...) “given the volume of shipping from the Gulf across the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean”⁵³;
 - “Promote cross-regional cooperation, notably with the Southern Neighbourhood region, and engage with other regional organizations

⁴⁴ For example, “set up an EU vaccine sharing mechanism,” “invest in the renovation of primary, middle and high schools as well as in the upgrading of health facilities and systems” under Flagship 1 or “strengthening partners’ capacities in migration management, including putting in place or strengthening asylum systems, border management, (...) as well as encouraging voluntary returns and reintegration,” under Flagship 8. *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See Flagship 5. *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Staff Working Document-Executive Summary of the evaluation of the impact of trade chapters of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements with six partners: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia*, Brussels, 10 November 2021, SWD(2021) 322 final, p. 2..

⁴⁷ OECD, *Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean: Progress Report*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND HIGH REPRESENTATIVE, *Joint Communication on A strategic partnership with the Gulf*, Brussels, 18 May 2022, JOIN(2022) 13 final.

⁴⁹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Communication on REPowerEU: Joint European Action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy*, COM (2022)108, Strasbourg, 8 March 2022 and EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Joint Communication on EU external energy engagement in a changing world*, JOIN (2022) 23, Brussels, 18 May 2022.

⁵⁰ JOIN(2022) 13 final., *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁵² In fact, the EU is “already working on a Mediterranean Green Hydrogen Partnership, and will explore with Gulf countries opportunities for concluding Green Hydrogen Partnerships,” emphasis added, *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

such as the League of Arab States, the Union for the Mediterranean and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.”⁵⁴

As illustrated above, the thematic dimension of the ENP, i.e. mainly sectoral cooperation related to inter-regional infrastructures, should be developed in the EU’s broader neighbourhood. This also implies supporting “regulatory convergence” in fields like telecommunications and in “all transport areas, in coherence with the 2021-2027 regional transport action plan through Euro-Mediterranean transport projects.”⁵⁵ Also, one of the objectives is to support the “region’s integration into the AfCFTA in order to stimulate the creation of targeted continental value chains.” The dragon in the room is of course China and its maritime silk road.

Conclusion

The analysis of the Mediterranean Agenda revealed that regional cooperation and integration is not referred to along its five key policy areas, but still mentioned at the very end of the document. At the operational level, the NDICI added a sixth priority to tackle the issue, but focuses on the “Southern Neighbourhood” with a new emphasis on the “neighbours of the neighbours,” especially Africa. A number of interesting novelties and opportunities are put forward for regional integration and cooperation. Also of importance is the new EU-GCC strategic partnership and the fact that “the EU will seek to encourage and build upon the recent establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and a number of Arab countries,” could well be perceived as being revolutionary.⁵⁶ What will emerge from the implementa-

tion of this approach remains to be seen. In its opinion on the new Agenda for the Mediterranean, the European Economic and Social Committee put forward the importance of “improving regional, sub-regional and inter-regional cooperation” and “promoting pragmatic multi-level governance through initiatives based on variable geometry and triangulation, which also help promote cooperation with the entire African continent and the Gulf and Red Sea regions.”⁵⁷ Today, the end of the GCC rift offers new opportunities.

What is missing in the Mediterranean Agenda is a specific flagship devoted to “regional cooperation and integration”

What is missing in the Mediterranean Agenda is a specific flagship devoted to “regional cooperation and integration” that could support an inclusive and structured dialogue to identify opportunities and reinforce capacity building in the Mediterranean. The need for an enhanced regional cooperation and integration agenda was obvious before the war in Ukraine, due to the increasing fragmentation among the EU’s partners. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could spark food riots and increase the current polarization. Regional cooperation and integration are therefore of fundamental importance. The NDICI can provide the tools, but this is mainly a matter of political will, thus the importance of reinforcing “multi-level governance” and “regional ownership” of the Mediterranean Agenda.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁵⁵ And “adopt the indicative maps of the future trans-Mediterranean transport network (TMN-T), which will constitute the external dimension of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T), while already prioritizing projects on this network, and contributing to linking up sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and Europe.” *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

⁵⁶ JOIN (2021)2 Final, *op. cit.*, p. 13:

⁵⁷ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the “Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean.” Brussels, 16 September 2021, OJ EU C 374, p. 13.

Fragmentations in the Regional Mediterranean Integration

MENA's Debt: An Opportunity or a Trap?

Bassem Snaije

Research Associate – Board member
Institut de Recherche et d'Études Méditerranée
Moyen Orient (IREMMO)

Global Debt at Unprecedented Levels

In December 2020, global debt stood at \$226 Trillion, a seemingly staggering number amounting to 256% of global GDP. In December 2021, global debt increased to \$303 Trillion. It is the highest jump in debt level the world has experienced since WWII according to IMF calculations.¹ By all financial standards, the ratio poses a significant risk to global stability.

The global economic system has gone through a once-a-generation crisis with the Covid-19 lockdowns of 2020 and the beginning of 2021.

The financial response to Covid-19 was led by governments all over the world, with the US showing one of the most rapid and aggressive actions.

Global debt levels jumped by 28% overall. Governments' share was about 50% of this increase. This puts global levels of public debt at 40% of the total outstanding, a level not seen for 60 years.²

At the end of 2020, the global ratio of debt to GDP reached 97% with advanced economies (as defined by the World Bank and the IMF) at 120% and developing economies' ratio at 63%.³ With the additional increases in 2021, government debt to GDP ratio is now most probably beyond 100%.

Within this context the Middle East and North Africa region – MENA – has traditionally had lower debt levels. Since the beginning of the 2000s, debt-to-GDP ratios in MENA were in the low 40 to low 50 percent levels on average. MENA oil exporters had very low debt ratios, below 20%, while MENA oil dependent countries had relatively higher ratios, around 60 to 70%.⁴ Debt levels started increasing after the Arab Spring for some countries and after 2014 for the whole MENA region. The region's debt levels jumped significantly during the pandemic. From a level of 47.6% in 2019, they reached 56.4% by the end of 2020.⁵ Compared to the global situation, MENA debt levels seem very low and the region's governments appear able to continue increasing borrowing to fund their responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and their budget spending plans.

External debt could be an opportunity the region can leverage, putting it at an advantage compared to other countries or regions in the world.

However, the overall ratio of debt in the region hides very different situations there.

This paper will discuss MENA's position in this global financial context and show how for many of its members, debt levels are becoming traps from which they are struggling to escape. We will attempt to show that even energy exporters face debt sustainability issues not yet reflected in the levels of the measurable ratios.

MENA's debt levels could put the region at risk of significant turmoil of the magnitude of the 2011 Arab Spring, unless the policies of debt management and

¹ IMF, MENA Regional Outlook, April 2021.

² IMF Blog, April 2022

³ CSIS – Centre for Strategic International Studies, April 2022.

⁴ WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM "4 ways the Middle East can become resilient in 2022." 18 January 2022 www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/01/4-ways-the-middle-east-mena-region-can-work-together-and-restore-trust/

⁵ IMF MENA Regional Outlook, April 2021.

fiscal balances change quickly towards investment rather than consumption, to improve the credit worthiness of existing and future funding needs.

Global Inflation Returns: The Rise of Interest Rates

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Europe is faced with war on the continent for the first time since WWII. The war's impact was initially thought to be mostly on the European Union's economy and security. However, its effects are turning into a global crisis that is being transmitted through global dependencies on food, energy and financial flows.

If there is one economic factor that reflects the impact of this dramatic event, it is inflation. In the years before Covid-19 and into the two years of lockdowns, the main concern was deflation. Moderate levels of inflation were often hoped for, especially by major central banks.

The combination of aggressive stimulus programmes to fight recession risks during lockdowns and the war breakout, resulted in a significant rise of inflationary tensions driven by energy and food prices. Consumer Price Indexes (CPI) in advanced economies have been above 6% since February 2022 and are rising. Even core CPI (excluding the energy and food prices) reached 4% because of rising labour market tensions. The trends are similar with even more intensity in developing and emerging markets, with the CPI reaching almost 12%.⁶

The buildup in inflationary pressures was closely watched by the two main central banks, the Federal Reserve (Fed), and the European Central Bank (ECB), throughout the Covid-19 period. The strong economic recovery following the end of confinements and the rollout of vaccines in the advanced economies, lead to the start of a cycle of interest hikes initiated by the US central bank, and soon followed by the ECB, albeit less aggressively. Along with the interest rate increases, came the "normalization" policies, where the Fed and the ECB both declared what is called the "tapering off" of their liquidity injections

through the aggressive purchase of debt securities, to avoid deflation when interest rates were already at zero or below, and many segments of bond markets in Europe were trading at negative yields.

The combined effect is a global decrease in liquidity and rise in bond yields and a significant rise in the US\$ exchange rate.⁷

These trends had an extremely negative impact on all emerging markets and developing countries. All bond yields increased, with debts labelled in US\$ adding an additional cost to an already heavy debt burden. Credit spreads increased in most countries reflecting their increased financial risks.

A particularly worrying sign is the increased number of distressed sovereign issuers and the share of the debt in distressed or even default territory – as defined by the IMF – with spreads above 1,000 bps. They reached 20% of the total in the spring of 2022, a level not seen since the 2008 global financial crisis.⁸

The combination of aggressive stimulus programmes to fight recession risks during lockdowns and the war breakout, resulted in a significant rise of inflationary tensions

Within a list of 46 "least developed countries" (LDCs), which are closely followed by the United Nations' Trade and Development branch (UNCTAD), the debt burdens have been rising at a worrying pace for more than 10 years. They usually rely on exports to access financing. Their debt service tripled in 10 years as they entered the Covid-19 pandemic, reaching 13% of exports. The trend continued to rise in 2020 and 2021, reaching more than \$50B at the end of 2021, putting the weight of the burden at above 15% of exports.

From a debt sustainability level, which the UN estimates to be at a threshold of 10% for LDCs, at least 15 of them are in distressed debt conditions and an

⁶ IMF World Economic Outlook, April 2022.

⁷ Global Financial Stability Report, April 2022.

⁸ Global Financial Stability report, April 2022.

additional 15 to 16 of them are expected to enter distressed debt conditions in 2022.⁹

This is not limited to LDCs. In middle – and low-income countries, a category in which many MENA countries find themselves, the external debt servicing has reached 16% of total government spending.¹⁰ Furthermore, the “advanced economies” (AEs) category harbours significant risks. Within the EU for example, a country like Italy, with a 134% debt-to-GDP ratio before the pandemic, ended 2021 at a ratio of 155%. The debt tension is reflected in the 10-year government bond yield that has risen from 1% in 2019 to 4.25% recently.¹¹ The risk to Italy’s debt sustainability within the Eurozone is very serious. A global debt crisis might have already started.

Can MENA Debt Levels Allow It to Sail through the Stormy Weather ahead?

The year 2019 saw relatively weak growth in the region, at around 1.2%. The impact of the pandemic in 2020 was severe, with a negative growth of 3.1% to 3.6%, depending on various calculations.¹² The recovery in 2021 was strong with real GDP growth at 3.3%, continuing into 2022 with forecasts of even faster economic activity of 5.5%.

External debt growth slowed in 2019 for the MENA region to a rate of less than 5%. It increased again in 2020 towards 8.5 to 9%.¹³

Compared to all other regions, net debt increases for the MENA region in 2020 were the smallest in the world at approximately \$20 billion.¹⁴ Increases were very significant at almost all other regions with the most significant rises in debt inventory in Latin America with almost \$80 billion, followed by East Asia, Europe and Africa.

Given the relatively lower levels of overall government debt in MENA discussed above, it seems that the impact of the pandemic has been relatively lim-

ited. The region seems to have been able to sail through a threatening global crisis.

The recovery of economic activity pushed inflation up from a low average of 1.5 to 2% towards levels of 4.5% in the first months of 2022.¹⁵ Although only slightly better than price indexes in the EU or the US, this, nevertheless, reflects a very strong recovery of demand.

While the regional aggregate numbers can paint a relatively favourable picture, the different countries in the region face divergent needs of more funding, deterioration of debt value, mounting costs for servicing existing inventory and a rapidly decreasing access to new debt

Oil and gas prices play a significant, but not exclusive, role in overall recovery. They have a positive impact in MENA when their prices rise. High oil and gas prices translate as a good thing for MENA debt. The initial impact of the pandemic drove energy prices down well into the summer of 2020. From a stabilized level of \$70 a barrel, oil reached a low of about \$18.5 in the middle of the confinements in April 2020. Gas prices were stable at around \$1.7 to \$1.8 MMBtu.¹⁶ By the last quarter of 2021, the vaccine rollouts triggered the economic recovery. Oil and gas prices immediately recovered, oil reaching \$60 per barrel by the end of 2021, and gas reaching \$3.60, following a peak in the autumn at \$6.56.

These were not the only factors pushing inflation, but they were important ones. Other important indica-

⁹ Soaring debt burden jeopardizes recovery of least developed countries. UNCTAD 2022. <https://unctad.org/topic/least-developed-countries/chart-march-2022>

¹⁰ Centre for Strategic and International Studies, April 2022.

¹¹ Trading Economics. <https://tradingeconomics.com/italy/government-bond-yield>

¹² World Bank database <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2020&locations=ZQ&start=2000>

¹³ World Bank debt report, 2021 second edition.

¹⁴ World Bank debt report, 2022 first edition.

¹⁵ IMF MENA Regional Economic Outlook. April 2022.

¹⁶ One of the standard units in the global market: MMBtu: Million Metric British Thermal units.

tions of the disruption and the paradigm impact of the pandemic are reflected by the extreme changes in shipping prices globally, the cost of which multiplied by four to eight times.¹⁷

As tensions with Russia started to take a serious turn with the shadow of war rising tall in the first weeks of 2022, oil quickly reached \$81 as early as mid-January, and towered above \$120 in March. Gas reached almost \$5 up from \$3.56, and the market disruptions are severe as prices touched almost \$9.50 a few days ago and are now back at \$6.50 today.

All these price changes should translate into a positive impact on MENA finance and debt. After a very negative impact on fiscal balances, reaching -9.5% of GDP and an estimated -3.3% of GDP in 2021, the expectations are very positive for 2022 with a positive balance of 3% and a forecast for 2023 of about +1.4 to +1.5%.

The negative impact of current accounts was much less severe in 2020 reaching a low of -1.5% of GDP net balance. Current accounts have swung even more rapidly into positive ground with an estimate of +3.3% and very strong expectation of +8.3% of GDP and a forecast of +6.5% of GDP, respectively in 2022 and 2023.

Strong economic recovery, along with an apparently less severe inflation level, combined with rapid improvements of fiscal deficits following the Covid-19 support programmes throughout the region, and strong and strengthened current account balances due to rising energy prices globally caused by the combined effects of global recovery in 2021 and the war in Europe since February 2022, all point towards a positive impact on existing debt levels and future borrowing capabilities in the region. The MENA region could become attractive relative to other regions, which are struggling with their existing level of liabilities in a globally stressed debt environment.

An apparently positive MENA picture hides extremely different situations. While the regional aggregate numbers can paint a relatively favourable picture, the different countries in the region face divergent needs of more funding, deterioration of debt value, mounting costs for servicing existing inventory and a rapidly decreasing access to new debt.

Diverging Realities

The recovery of economic activity is very uneven across the region. While the overall recovery in 2021 was around 3.5% and expectation over 5% in 2022, many countries are struggling to recover pre-pandemic levels of activity, and the GDP forecasts in 2022 are lower.

Countries like Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia or Turkey are seeing their growth rate decrease after having seen much deeper recessions in 2010 than the average for MENA of -3.5%. Tunisia, for example, saw its GDP plunge by more than 8%. Its activity is faltering in 2022. Algeria's GDP fell by 5% in 2020 and it did not recover fully in 2021, when it registered 3.9% real GDP growth. And activity this year is slower, despite favourable energy prices, and its economy is expected to falter going into 2023. Turkey has seen its growth prospects for 2022 downgraded by the IMF in April to 2.7%. Morocco's real GDP growth is not expected to grow faster than 1.1% in 2022, much lower than the MENA average. Even exceptions like Iran, which has been less impacted according to its own reports, with growth remaining positive in 2020 contrary to other countries, will not outperform the region's real GDP average in 2021 and 2022.¹⁸

Similarly, the region's inflation rate hides very divergent levels, with gulf countries' CPI, while rising rapidly from deflation levels mid-2020, remaining at about 2% at the beginning of the Ukraine war, and the rest of the region experiencing much steeper levels, rising from 4% during 2020 to 10% in early 2022. This is putting pressure on all countries of the region with a flexible exchange rate to either accept national currencies' fall in value or tighten their monetary policies and raise interest rates. This is what is happening with the hike in interest rates in many countries like Tunisia and Egypt. Turkey, which has persisted with low interest rates, has paid the price with punishing inflation rates. However, with economic conditions already tense, central banks in MENA have much more limited options, and cannot increase rates too aggressively. In countries that have pegged their currencies to the \$US, their options

¹⁷ See shipping price indexes like the Harpex price index, a container ship price benchmark, and the Baltic Dry index, a price benchmark for commodities and food transport.

¹⁸ World Bank report: "Reality Check: Forecasting growth in MENA." April 2022.

are a bit better, but with the Fed continuing to hike interest rates, they will also come under pressure to follow the trend.¹⁹

In the context of the ongoing global monetary tightening initiated by the Federal Reserve Bank, for many emerging markets and specific countries in the region this translates into a rise in their debt service payments and an increase in the cost of existing external debt.²⁰ In both cases, the effect on economic activity will be negative, resulting in slower growth. This will feed back into further financial instability and bodes negatively for present and future debt prospects.²¹

MENA Debt Sustainability in Question?

Deteriorating Debt Prices

The tightening of liquidity is reflected by increased credit spreads in the region. While the global context has led to deteriorating credit spreads, impacting all emerging and developing countries, MENA spreads deteriorated faster than the overall average. This is an important signal of the region's particular external debt fragility.

Here again, there are very wide differences within the region. Credit spreads of GCC countries remained mostly stable since the war in Ukraine started, and, in many cases, decreased slightly against a very negative global background, while other MENA countries, including other oil exporters experienced a sharp widening of their spreads. The deterioration of MENA spreads was four to five times greater than those of emerging markets.²²

The deterioration of credit spreads started before the Ukraine war, as inflation tensions started rising following the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Between mid-2021 and January 2022, all spreads on MENA credit increased at higher rates than the median global increase,²³ with the exception of Ku-

wait and Saudi Arabia. Some changes are very significant, with Egypt's spread rising by 47%, and Turkey and Tunisia by more than 35%. Even the spread of Abu Dhabi increased, albeit by 5%.²⁴

The tightening of liquidity is reflected by increased credit spreads in the region. MENA spreads deteriorated faster than the overall average. This is an important signal of the region's particular external debt fragility

The overall average of the relative value of MENA debt is high, making the region one of the worst default risks globally, second only to the Latin America region.

To make things worse, many countries of the region are at or beyond their default risk threshold, which means they are in default probability territory, with Turkey and Tunisia both beyond their threshold levels, Egypt having crossed into high risk levels at the beginning of 2022.

The Weight of Subsidies on Debt

Most MENA countries have high levels of food dependency ratios. Their import dependency varies between an already significant 40% for countries like Iran or Egypt, a full 100% for countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Kuwait, and with large countries like Algeria, Yemen and Saudi Arabia at very high ratios of between 65 and 80%.²⁵

The added effects of shipping costs, Covid-19 disruption and the war between Ukraine and Russia, the world's main cereal suppliers, have resulted in a sharp spike in food prices. Wheat prices rose from a

¹⁹ IMF MENA Regional Economic Outlook, April 2022.

²⁰ IMF MENA Regional Economic Outlook, Annex, 2 April 2022.

²¹ IMF MENA Regional Economic Outlook; "Changing Tides." April 2022.

²² IMF MENA Regional Economic Outlook, April 2022.

²³ DAMODARAN, Aswath. "Country Risk: Determinants, Measures and Implications – the 2021 Edition." SSRN, 6 July 2021, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3879109.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "New UN Food Outlook Report: World's Most Vulnerable Are Paying More for Less Food." *Food and Agriculture Organization*, www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/new-un-food-outlook-report-world-s-most-vulnerable-are-paying-more-for-less-food/en.

level of \$4.50 to \$5.0/Bu,²⁶ to more than \$12.0/Bu by February 2022, and have remained at these levels, currently trading at between \$10.0 and \$11.0. Soybeans, another important food commodity, experienced the same price changes, more than doubling in value from mid-2020, when they were trading at roughly \$9.0/Bu, rising to almost \$17.0/Bu and remaining very high, currently trading at \$17.5%. Moreover, the import dependency of MENA countries is almost exclusively linked to both Ukraine and Russia, compounding the effect of the crisis. These price tensions carry a dominant weight in inflation at consumer level. They influence about 30% of the CPI in GCC countries and 50% in all other MENA countries.

The rise in energy prices described above have similar effects on the region's economies. MENA has the highest level of energy subsidies in the world. On its own it represents half the global energy subsidy cost. This has an impact not only on oil importing countries in the region, but also on oil exporting countries, through the negative financial balances they generate in their current accounts. Their impact is more damaging, as prices in the energy markets rise. Additionally, they tend to increase domestic consumption, with many of the GCC countries being the top global consumers of oil and gas per capita.²⁷

To make things worse, many countries of the region are at or beyond their default risk threshold, which means they are in default probability territory

The effects of energy and food prices have significant indirect effects on debt ratios through subsidies. They compensate for the effects of price fluctuations and protect the purchasing power of consumers in the region. The higher the prices, the more negative the impact of subsidies on fiscal balances.

The subsidies impact could amount to a cost that accounts for 1% of the region's overall GDP. Energy

subsidies alone are estimated to represent \$22 billion of additional fiscal spending.²⁸

The indirect but significant effect of current account balances creates additional difficulties to servicing existing debt and hinders the ability to raise new external debt.

Subsidies are one significant reason for the deterioration of credit spreads for the region and the rise in debt costs.

Conclusion: MENA Debt Brought into Question, When It Might Need More of It

MENA's debt level seems to be lower than other regions in the world. It represents very different situations within the region. In the context of a global return of inflation, which has triggered a strong response from the major central banks and a rise in interest rates, the MENA region has apparently been in a better position relative to other regions in the world.

The Russia-Ukraine war has caused dramatic increases in energy prices. This has strengthened the financial and economic prospects of oil exporters. The overall impact on the external debt of the region should be beneficial.

However, some of the expected positive effects are mitigated by the global rise in inflation, and the accompanying restrictive monetary policies and interest rate hikes, which are having a negative impact on the servicing of the debt and the value of the inventory of external liabilities.

This inflation is down to the aggressive stance taken by the US Federal Reserve, which is pushing the US currency higher and increasing the weight of currency denominated debts.

The conflict in Europe has created a global food supply shortage, as the two countries involved in the conflict are dominant exporters, causing a devastating impact on international prices. While this affects all countries, the impact on MENA is particularly severe, given the food dependency ratios of most of the countries in the region.

The combination of those elements has had very negative consequences on MENA's external debt,

²⁶ Unit of 1 wheat or soybean Bu= 0.27 metric ton.

²⁷ Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/per-capita-energy-use>

²⁸ IMF blog: MENA Commodity importers hit by higher prices. 24 May 2022.

as shown by financial flows. The region received the smallest amounts of new international flows in 2020, and that was almost exclusively through international institutions like the IMF. It saw outflows from the private sector and negligible amounts from bond investors compared to all other regions in the world.²⁹ While 2021 saw a strong recovery of foreign direct investments (FDIs),³⁰ the MENA region, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, did not even benefit from apparent favourable financial and economic developments. The UAE was another exception here, but there the expectations for 2023 are for flat inflows.³¹ Credit spreads show that the sustainability of external debt for the region is in question. Debt default in Lebanon is driving the country towards a failed state status, through one of the most spectacular and deepest financial crises in history, made worse by the combination of a currency devaluation, a foreign debt default and a full banking crisis. Tunisia is heading in the same direction. Egypt might become the “Argentina” of the Middle East for the IMF. All these trends contribute to weakening the debt suitability of the region in general.

The current levels of debt for the region, which seem low, become actually very high. The potentially improved economic conditions in the current context, which some countries could benefit from, will not translate into a significant increase in the capacity for new debt. These benefits appear to be fragile and are based on short-term, exceptional circumstances.

Current events are revealing longer and more structural weaknesses, which have not been addressed since the Arab Spring in 2011.

High and increasing unemployment, especially among youth, the impact of rapidly expanding populations, has been addressed with increased subsi-

dies. But the structural reforms needed to change the economic fundamentals that will foster more sustainable economic activity and potentially more stable social contracts are being avoided.

The region is the most water stressed in the world.³² Additionally, it is already experiencing the effects of rising temperatures, with many countries, especially Algeria and Iraq, feeling the impact of two additional degrees.³³

MENA is in urgent need of more funding, not less. As its financial sustainability deteriorates, it needs more debt, not less, so that it can invest in the crucially needed energy transition and economic diversification, through aggressive reforms of existing subsidy and taxation systems.

The current levels of debt for the region, which seem low, become actually very high. The potentially improved economic conditions in the current context, which some countries could benefit from, will not translate into a significant increase in the capacity for new debt

Within a highly stressed global debt environment, it is no longer possible to avoid the difficult choices required to confront these challenges. All MENA countries are being forced to switch from consumption-driven economies to production-oriented ones. Time has run out.

²⁹ WB debt report 2022 Edition 1.

³⁰ UNCTAD Investment trends report. Jan. 2022

³¹ Nasser, SAIDI & Associates. Weekly Economic Insights. <https://nassersaidi.com/2022/06/17/weekly-insights-17-jun-2022-will-central-bank-aggressive-monetary-tightening-disrupt-the-global-tourism-recovery/>

³² United Nations Water Global Water map. www.unwater.org/water-facts/scarcity/

³³ WEHREY, Frederic; and FAWAL, Ninar. “Cascading Climate Effects in the Middle East and North Africa: Adapting through Inclusive Governance.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 24 Feb. 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/02/24/cascading-climate-effects-in-middle-east-and-north-africa-adapting-through-inclusive-governance-pub-86510>.

What Do the Tensions in the Maghreb Mean for Europe?

Luis Martinez

Research Director
Sciences Po, Paris

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brutally plunged Europe into the spectre of war returning to the continent. The destruction of cities and the migration of millions of civilians have brought back the dramatic past of the Second World War. In the face of such tragedies, the war against terrorism in the Sahel or the tensions in the Maghreb appear, wrongly, to be relegated to regional problems. Until 24 February 2022, however, the intractable war in Libya, the tensions between Algeria and Morocco and the institutional crisis in Tunisia caused concern in Europe. Indeed, ten years after the euphoria of the Arab revolts and the dashed hopes of a democratic transition, the Maghreb countries are confronted with internal and regional political problems that are paralyzing a region with 130 million inhabitants (the Arab Maghreb Union – AMU) but whose regional GDP (320 billion) does not exceed that of Egypt (360 billion). The overthrow of the Ben Ali regime was not accompanied by an improvement in the living conditions of the population. This economic failure largely explains the success of President Kais Saïed in his desire to restore a “strong” centralized state, capable of meeting the population's expectations. In sum, the weakness of economic development in North Africa has undermined democratic projects. Like many authoritarian regimes, the nationalist and military elites believe they are well equipped to meet the new challenges that are emerging. However, while the economic and financial effects of the Covid pandemic are still being felt, there is also the soaring food prices inherent to the war in Ukraine and the risk of social unrest due to food insecurity. In fact,

the agricultural sector in North Africa is facing the effects of climate change (water scarcity, drought). The drought raging in the region threatens agricultural production and accentuates dependence on imports in a context where the international agricultural market is characterized by a general rise in prices. Algeria is the world's third largest importer of cereals and Tunisia imports 64% of its cereals, including 85% of common wheat. It is clear that, a decade after the Arab revolutions, climate and food issues are of greater concern than the issue of democratic transition. While for the EU, the major concern is Ukraine, for south European countries, the Maghreb remains a priority because of migration, energy, trade and security issues. In any case, the Ukrainian drama is a reminder of the urgent need to better understand the potential conflicts at the EU's borders and to invest in the search for diplomatic solutions while there is still time. In this perspective, Europe can no longer continue to bury its head in the sand in the face of the threat of a conflict between Algeria and Morocco, and should also invest more in the search for a political solution in Libya.

The Algeria-Morocco Crisis, a Challenge for Europe

Historically fraught with suspicion, relations between Algeria and Morocco have gradually shifted towards mistrust, as illustrated by the rupture of diplomatic relations with Morocco announced on 24 August 2021 by Algeria. The reasons for this mistrust go back to the Western Sahara conflict. In fact, in 1976, it was Morocco that decided to break off diplomatic relations with an Algeria then confident in its economic development. Algeria was determined to weaken the monarchy of Hassan II (1961-1999), which was con-

fronted with attempted military coups (1971 and 1972) and violent repression against its political opponents. Spain's hasty departure from Western Sahara (1884-1976) offered the Kingdom the opportunity to annex this territory and to make its defence a sacred cause for the Monarchy. From the beginning of the conflict, Boumediene's Algeria (1965-1979) took a position in favour of the Sahrawis, so as not to see its neighbour increase its territory in the Sahara, whose economic and energy potential was untapped. As for Hassan II's monarchy, it considered that a large part of Algeria's territory was a gift that colonial France (1830-1962) offered to Algiers to the detriment of Rabat. It did not understand Algeria's aversion to seeing Morocco also have a Saharan depth, which for it was a recovery of its territory after the interlude of the Spanish protectorate (1884-1976). It considered itself betrayed by the non-respect of the 1961 commitments, which stipulate that: "The provisional government of the Algerian Republic recognizes for its part the territorial problem posed by the demarcation arbitrarily imposed by France between the two countries, which will find its solution in negotiations between the government of the Kingdom of Morocco and the government of independent Algeria."¹

The Western Sahara conflict appears to be the main political factor blocking the construction of regional integration. It illustrates Algeria and Morocco's inability to overcome a relationship of mistrust, or even hostility, since the Sand War of 1963

The Western Sahara conflict appears to be the main political factor blocking the construction of regional integration. It illustrates Algeria and Morocco's inability to overcome a relationship of mistrust, or even hostility, since the Sand War of 1963. The conflict in Western Sahara was above all a tremendous political

opportunity for each of them to establish their authority. The Moroccan monarchy was able to appropriate the nationalist sentiment embodied by the *Istiqlal* movement, which made the cause of a greater Morocco one of its political battles. Western Sahara allowed the Algerian regime to justify the power of the army and to fuel nationalist sentiment. The advantage of the Saharan conflict was obvious: the establishment of authoritarian political regimes under the guise of nationalist sentiment. In the 1970s and 1980s, the conflict was a pretext for the establishment of hostile relations between the two countries. Faced with internal criticism of human rights violations, corruption, concentration of wealth and lack of freedom, Algeria and Morocco found in the Western Sahara conflict an opportunity to spread prejudices and clichés about each other through a complacent press, in the hope of rallying a population frustrated by the deterioration of living conditions to their cause. It is clear that in 2022, sixty years after Algeria's independence, Morocco is no longer just a rival; it has become a potential enemy for the Algerian military leaders. While the question of an open conflict between the two countries has been raised, with cataclysmic consequences for the interests and security of Europe, it is clear that there have been few initiatives to overcome the mistrust between these two North African countries. On the contrary, both France and Spain maintain tense relations with Algeria, which are likely to accentuate Algeria's mistrust.

Tensions between Algeria and France

On 2 October 2021, the newspaper *Le Monde* reported on remarks made by President E. Macron during an exchange with young people from families linked to the history of Algeria. The president criticised a "political-military" system that maintained a "memorial annuity" and "hatred of France." And he asked: "the construction of Algeria as a nation is a phenomenon to consider. Was there an Algerian nation before French colonization?" Against all expectations and incomprehensibly, Macron took up the ideas held by the supporters of "French Algeria"! In this historical misguidance, President Macron, exac-

¹ Convention on reciprocal commitments between Morocco and Algeria signed in Rabat on 6 July 1961.

erbated by Erdogan's aggressive policy in the Mediterranean, dared to make an erroneous historical comparison between French colonization and Ottoman domination, he was "fascinated to see Turkey's capacity to make people completely forget the role it played in Algeria and the domination it exercised."

Turkey and Russia no longer hide their desire to replace France in Africa and Algeria is a remarkable relay for these two countries on the continent

In Algiers, these implausible remarks provoked a wave of indignation, including among opponents of the regime. Qualified as "irresponsible" by the presidency of the Algerian Republic, Algeria recalled its ambassador to Paris, Mohamed-Antar Daoud, for consultations and then banned French military aircraft from flying over its airspace. The Algerian authorities skilfully exploited this crisis with France in the hope of restoring a semblance of legitimacy after the protests by the Hirak, a peaceful movement that aspires to a democratic transition. In the media and on the Internet, incendiary remarks were made against France and its persistence in denying the existence of a pre-colonial Algeria. In an interview granted on 6 November 2021 to the German weekly *Der Spiegel*, President Tebboune stressed that "Macron has reopened an old conflict in a totally useless manner" and specified: "I will not be the one to take the first step... No Algerian would accept that I contact those who have insulted us." On 9 November, President Macron stated he "regrets the controversies and misunderstandings generated by the reported remarks" and expressed his "greatest respect for the Algerian nation, for its history and for the sovereignty of Algeria." This desire for appeasement on the part of France has in fact come up against a relationship that has lacked common interests and a shared vision of regional issues for a decade.

The disagreements between Algeria and France were first illustrated upon the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime in October 2011. With 900 km of borders with Libya, Algeria could not but be concerned about the

destabilizing effects on its security. The attack by terrorist groups from Libya on the In Amenas gas site in 2013 dramatically illustrated the fear of seeing post-Gaddafi Libya turn into a refuge for jihadist groups. From the overthrow of the regime in 2011 to the Paris Conference in November 2021 on ending the crisis by organizing a presidential election on 24 December 2021, France and Algeria have not managed to develop a common vision for the future of the country. On the contrary, Algeria joined Turkey in its opposition to General Haftar's failed offensive on Tripoli in spring 2019. Similarly, Algeria did not accompany France in its intervention in Mali within the framework of Operation Barkhane in 2013. On several occasions, Algeria has publicly expressed its satisfaction at not having accompanied France in this intervention and has often criticized the creation of the G5, perceived by Algiers as an instrument "created to counter the CEMOC," a joint military staff of African countries around Algeria. Today, Algeria measures the failure of France in Mali and appreciates its replacement by Russia, a partner country of Algeria. The economic and commercial effects of these tensions have not been long in coming. The Algerian-French trade fell by - 24% in 2020 and by - 18% in the first half of 2021. Only the war in Ukraine saved French cereal producers from losing the Algerian market.

In the midst of this falling out with France, the state visit of Italian President Sergio Mattarella on 6 November 2021 reinforced Italy's central position in Algeria. On the occasion of the national holiday on 1 November, a message from the Italian President stressed that: "Algeria and Italy are linked by a historical friendship, which has allowed us to develop an intense and fruitful cooperation in many sectors of common interest over time." Moreover, in its desire to diversify its gas supply, Italy signed an agreement with Algeria on 9 April 2022 to increase gas exports to Italy by an additional 9 billion cubic metres per year via the Transmed pipeline. After Italy, Algeria's rapprochement with Erdogan's Turkey has resulted in an increase in Turkish investments in Algeria (by 5 billion dollars) and an increase in trade, with Turkey becoming Algeria's third largest customer in 2020. Relations with the Erdogan regime are described as "excellent" by President Tebboune, but this rapprochement raises many concerns, particularly in the Sahel. Turkey and Russia no longer hide their desire to replace France in Africa and Algeria is a remarkable relay for these two countries on the continent.

Spectacular Rapprochement between Spain and Morocco

Since the rupture of Algeria's diplomatic relations with Morocco, announced on 24 August 2021, the risk of a conflict between the two North African powers has caused a wave of concern in Europe and Africa. Both countries are engaged in a military build-up and each is trying to persuade its population of the superiority of its military power. In 2021, Algeria's army ranked 27th out of 140 armies by Global Fire Power and is theoretically more powerful than Morocco's, ranked 53rd. The land border between these two countries extends over more than 1,778 km (1,941 km if Western Sahara is included). This means that a conflict today would take on proportions far beyond those of the 1963 "sand war." With a population of 45 million inhabitants in Algeria and 37 million in Morocco, a possible conflict would force the populations to fall into a herd nationalism with devastating effects for the whole region. The war in Ukraine has undoubtedly put the military tensions between these two major North African countries on hold. It is in this context that Spain has dramatically changed its foreign policy in the region. In March 2022, the Spanish authorities publicly supported Morocco's autonomy plan for the Sahara. Until then, Spain had maintained good relations with Algeria because of its policy on the Western Sahara issue, which Algiers considered balanced. But the "turnaround" of the Spanish government's position on Morocco's solution to the Western Sahara conflict has provoked incomprehension and anger in Algiers. Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune described the Spanish about-face as "morally and historically unacceptable." This diplomatic success for Rabat was also accompanied by an agreement with Spain (reversing the flow of the pipeline) to compensate for the shutdown in October 2021 of gas imports from Algeria via the Maghreb-Europe pipeline. Inaugurated in 1996, it has transported annually 10 billion m³ of gas to Spain and Portugal via Morocco. But Algiers has threatened to cut off its gas supply to Spain if the gas delivered by Algeria "to Spanish customers" is redirected to Morocco. After France, Spain has become the second major European country to have strained relations with Algeria.

The war in Ukraine should not distract Europe from the tensions in North Africa. Moroccan diplomatic victories over Western Sahara accentuate Algerian frustrations, which should not be taken lightly. Europe must work to find acceptable political solutions before it is too late. North Africa is already facing a conflict – post-Gaddafi Libya – , in which Europe seems invisible compared to Turkey, Russia, Egypt, Qatar, etc. If war has returned to the European continent, it never really left the African one. It is imperative that Europe and in particular the south European countries reconsider their relations with North Africa. The failure of democratic transitions must not lead to regional conflicts like the one threatening to break out between Algeria and Morocco. Russia has important levers in North Africa and the Sahel to destabilize Europe; let's hope that the EU will not repeat in North Africa its strategic mistakes in Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine should not distract Europe from the tensions in North Africa. Moroccan diplomatic victories over Western Sahara accentuate Algerian frustrations, which should not be taken lightly

Bibliography

- BOUKHARS, Anouar and ROUSSELLIER, Jacques (eds). *Perspectives on Western Sahara*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.
- HERNANDO DE LARRAMENDI, Miguel and DESRUES, Thierry, *Mohamed VI, Política y cambio social en Marruecos*. Almuzara, 2011.
- MARTINEZ, Luis, *L'Afrique du Nord après les révoltes arabes*. Presses de Sciences po, 2019.
- MUNDY, Jacob. *Libya*. Polity Press, 2018.
- VAIREL, Frédéric. *Politique et mouvement sociaux au Maroc*. Presses de Sciences Po. 2014.
- ZOUBIR, Yahya (ed). *The Politics of Algeria: Domestic Issues and International Relations*. Routledge, 2019.

The EU-Southern Neighbourhood Relationship in Transition: From “Closed” to Semi-Open Borders in the Mediterranean?

Angeliki Dimitriadi

Research Fellow

Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), Berlin

The war in Ukraine has brought to the forefront the question of borders, both as a priority but also in terms of displacement in the EU’s neighbourhood. Rather than moving closer to a “borderless” world as heralded by the advent of globalization, states are increasingly seeking to reinforce their control over specific territorial entities delineated by borders and boundaries.

This is also reflected in the European project. The vision of a borderless EU, through the Schengen area of free movement, was grounded from the beginning on the assumption that internal mobility relies heavily on the external strengthening of its borders. Free mobility only applies to the citizens of the Member States and third country nationals legally residing within European borders. Inevitably, this has created a distinction between internal boundaries, which have diminished in importance, and external borders, which are at the forefront of the policy debate on migration.

There is little doubt that migration remains a critical challenge for both the EU and the broader neighbourhood, particularly in the absence of effective ways of reducing and preventing the factors that produce humanitarian crises and displacement. Following the 2015 European “refugee crisis,”¹ irregular migration is increasingly dominating the EU’s re-

lationship with its Mediterranean partners, often affecting other policy fields. The arrival of a million asylum seekers in 2015 triggered a discussion around responsibility sharing within the EU,² but also *vis à vis* its partner countries. More importantly, migration and asylum governance since 2015 has thrown into question the normative and value-based framework the EU is promoting and seeking to export to other countries. The informalization of aspects of migration management (e.g., the EU-Turkey Statement) is compounded by the strengthening of the securitization approach; the latter has always been a core facet of the management of migration but perhaps never so explicit as in recent years.

EU migration policy has also radically changed our understanding of where the border begins and ends. No longer situated at the limits of territory, EU borders are digitalized and externalized,³ transcending the European space. Through practices of externalization, borders expand to third countries, which are asked to pick up the mantle of guardians of the EU, especially concerning irregular migration. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the relationship between the EU and its southern neighbours, where the border is no longer delineated by the Mediterranean Sea.

On Borders

Borders have played a critical role in the construction of the European Union since its early days. How bor-

¹ CRAWLEY, Heaven. “Managing the Unmanageable? Understanding Europe’s Response to the Migration ‘Crisis.’” *Human Geography*, vol. 9, no. 2, July 2016, pp. 13-23, doi:10.1177/194277861600900202. <https://doi.org/10.1177/194277861600900202>.

² UNHCR, “Over one million sea arrivals reach Europe in 2015.” December 2015, www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/12/5683d0b56/million-sea-arrivals-reach-europe-2015.html

³ WALTERS, William, “Europe’s Borders.” in RUMFORD, Chris (ed.) *Sage Handbook of European Studies*, 485-505. Washington, DC: Sage, 2009. TRAUTMANSDORFF, Paul and FELT, Ulrike, “Between Infrastructural Experimentation and Collective Imagination: The Digital Transformation of the EU Border Regime.” *Science, Technology, & Human Values*. November, 2021. doi:10.1177/01622439211057523.

ders are understood depends on the function they serve. The European Union has long sought to eliminate internal borders and barriers, through the project of European integration. Though state sovereignty continues to be defined on the basis of delimited spaces, the European integration project has created a dual system where internal borders do not serve the same purpose as the EU's external borders. While the former are partly eroded in support of a supranational entity, the latter are continuously strengthened in "defence" of the European community.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum which forms the core approach on migration governance focuses on the Mediterranean, as the immediate frontier which migrants cross on their way to Europe

The Mediterranean border, perhaps more so than the EU's eastern external borders, has, for a long time, been "fortified" as a response to migratory movements from Africa and the Middle East. The southern neighbours have received the attention of EU policymakers since 2011, following the aftermath of the Arab Spring. From political transitions (e.g., Tunisia), to violent conflicts (e.g., Syria) the southern neighbours, particularly the countries in North Africa, are perceived as countries of origin as well as transit for mixed migration. For the EU, the main concern remains sub-Saharan migration, which utilizes the central and western Mediterranean routes to Europe,⁴ as well as the overall reduction of irregular migration from countries like Tunisia, Morocco and Libya. Beyond the natural sea barrier, the border is also technological, economic, political, legal and begins from the countries of origin, extending all the way through the Mediterranean crossing, before it is reinforced once more on arrival to the EU.

The Mediterranean border is first and foremost a deadly one. The Missing Migrants project indicates that since 2014, 24,023 migrants have disappeared at sea, 17,000 of which were attempting the crossing along the central Mediterranean route. It is also an increasingly fortified border with prevention externalized from the north to the southern neighbourhood where – in a similar vein as in the EU – barriers gradually materialize, seeking to govern migrants' daily lives and drawing "lines of separation between political, social and economic spaces."⁵

Categorizations and distinctions are crucial in EU migration governance, which attempts to determine who will be allowed entry, and under what conditions, to the European Union. The New Pact on Migration and Asylum (henceforth the Pact), which forms the core approach on migration governance, seeks to create clear-cut distinctions between those who are invited to enter and those who are pre-deemed undesirable and should be prevented and/or returned. It focuses on the Mediterranean, as the immediate frontier which migrants cross on their way to Europe. The EU-southern neighbourhood relationship is cemented in the Pact through the notion of partnerships.

The Quest for Partnerships

In September 2020, a few days after the catastrophic fire in the Moria camp in Lesbos, the European Commission released the Pact. The long-awaited reform was framed as a new start, seeking to bridge differences between Member States and enable them to reach consensus on critical issues such as responsibility sharing. The crux of the Pact is the external dimension. From the ground floor of the house all the way to the internal solidarity mechanism, which includes return sponsorships, the Pact is geared towards preventing and reducing irregular migrants at the external borders and in the territory of Member States. Like all policy documents on migration, it draws a subtle distinction between asylum seekers and irregular migrants, even though research

⁴ PASTORE, Ferruccio and ROMAN, Emanuela, "Migration Policies and Threat-based Extraversion. Analysing the Impact of European Externalisation Policies on African Polities." *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, vol. 36, n°1, 2020, 133-152, <https://journals.openedition.org/remi/14591>

⁵ NEWMAN, David. "The Lines That Continue to Separate Us: Borders in Our 'borderless' World." *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2006, pp. 143-161, doi:10.1191/0309132506ph599xx.; NEWMAN, David. "On borders and power: A theoretical framework." *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1. 2003, pp. 13-25, doi: 10.1080/08865655.2003.9695598.

has shown that mixed migratory flows are the norm rather than the exception. In other words, prevention measures and policies influence anyone who seeks to move outside legal channels and those may very well be asylum seekers. In the Pact, countries of origin and/or transit acquire renewed priority.

One of the key proposals are tailor-made partnerships, presented as a “restart” in the relationship with priority countries. Partnerships pre-exist the Pact, already a key element in the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (for example the preferential Mobility Partnership framework). This was also the framework of the multi-billion Emergency Trust Fund for Africa that sought to address irregular migration with particular emphasis on the Sahel and Lake Chad Region, North Africa and the Horn of Africa. Within the Migration Partnership Framework introduced in 2016, the EU negotiated bilateral compacts with Niger, Senegal, Ethiopia and Nigeria to name a few.

The European Commission’s website indicates that the priority – as evident from the examples of these partnerships – is the deterrence of irregular migration whether through border controls, capacity building for law enforcement and/or countering smuggling.⁶ It is worth noting that the experience of partner countries has not necessarily been positive. Success is limited at best and often at a high cost for the countries and migrants. Partnerships have also not been entirely fruitful for the EU, which often pushes, unsuccessfully, for readmission and return agreements.

Partnerships with third countries rely heavily not only on incentives, but also on domestic interests. This is highlighted in the recent Court of Auditors assessment of readmission agreements, which found that “Overall, during the 2015-2020 period, the EU did not achieve tangible progress in the EURA negotiations with Algeria and Morocco. The EURA negotiations with Tunisia and Nigeria progressed on technical issues, but the most contentious points were set aside.”⁷ A recent survey⁸ highlights the different priorities both between the Maghreb and Mashreq area *vis à vis* EU priorities and investment on migration. Though border management, capacity building and legislative

progress are key areas of cooperation, the survey suggests that migration experts surveyed in the respective countries wish for more cooperative, inclusive partnerships that also bring in non-state actors, as well as investments to facilitate the integration of the migrant population. Their perspective is reflective of domestic priorities. As regards the assistance offered, the survey found that the EU Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF) for Africa and EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (Madad Fund) instruments were perceived to be ineffective. In contrast, the European Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection’s assistance was overall positively evaluated, which indicates that the predominant focus of the EUTF on border management and small-scale pilot projects does not adequately address needs on the ground.

Partnerships have also not been entirely fruitful for the EU, which often pushes, unsuccessfully, for readmission and return agreements

Acknowledging the need for a more balanced approach, the Pact expands the areas where cooperation can be offered as a counterbalance to migration management, by incorporating more issue areas i.e., development, visa policy, trade agreements, agriculture, job creation, energy, climate and even research. Following the Pact’s announcement, the High-Level Working Group on Migration and Asylum identified the priority regions, which included North Africa, the Sahel region and sub-Saharan Africa, among others. Priority countries for establishing tailor-made partnerships are Tunisia and Morocco, with full utilization of the Neighbourhood and International Cooperation Financial Instrument (NICI), with irregular migration as a priority area. Thus, the immediate focus is on the southern Mediterranean, supported by the “*New Agenda for the Mediterranean*” presented in February 2021.

⁶ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Acting together to deepen international partnerships*, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum/acting-together-deepen-international-partnerships_en

⁷ EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS, *EU readmission cooperation with third countries: relevant actions yielded limited results*, 2021, www.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=59347

⁸ IEMED & ICMPD SURVEY, *Towards sustainable and mutually beneficial migration partnerships in the Southern Mediterranean*, 2021, www.euromesco.net/news/euromed-survey-2021-descriptive-results/

The southern neighbours,⁹ according to the New Agenda for the Mediterranean, share some commonalities, including low economic integration, socioeconomic inequalities, limited capacity to meet the needs of their population, particularly youth, and a direct threat from climate change to access to food and water.¹⁰ All of those and more are also considered drivers for displacement and migration, which has now acquired a prominent, horizontal role, in the EU's relationship with the southern Mediterranean. The Agenda proposes "jointly" addressing forced displacement and irregular migration and "seizing the benefits of legal migration" through "tailormade" beneficial partnerships. The Economic and Investment Plan is seen as the way forward in reducing drivers for irregular movement to Europe. The problem with the rationale is it assumes the key driver for movement to be the pursuit of economic betterment. This simplifies the complexity of human mobility, which often includes multiple motives for migration. Reducing drivers for irregular mobility is also far from simple, since it requires long-term structural changes. The border, thus, transforms into the final frontier for reducing irregular migration.

Migration from the Southern Neighbourhood

The Covid-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on mobility across the two shores. As the EU Member States closed their borders, legal migration channels dwindled, followed by "a noticeable increase in irregular flows along certain routes, particularly from Africa."¹¹ In 2020, Frontex recorded around 17,000 border crossings on the western Mediterranean migratory route, whereas the West African route through the Canary Islands registered around 22,000

detections. The biggest increase was in the central Mediterranean, from Libya to Italy. In 2020, 35,628 detections were recorded. In 2021 that number increased to 65,632, accounting for a third of all reported border crossings. Tunisian migrants make up a significant share of those trying to reach Italy, alongside Egyptian migrants. Similarly for the western Mediterranean, Moroccans, Algerians and West Africans make up the main nationalities arriving in Spain.

Despite continuous efforts, the border between the north and south of the Mediterranean has never been fully "closed"

The increase is indicative not only of the closed avenues of entry due to the pandemic but also of the broader socioeconomic situation in many of these countries. For example, Tunisia is facing a double-pronged challenge, which is, on the one hand political and, on the other hand, financial. As the country slides into political turmoil and faces significant unemployment, particularly amongst the youth, the socioeconomic drivers that may encourage migration are being exacerbated. Libya continues to be the most controversial of all the countries in the region. The EU has funded and continues to fund the Libyan coast guard in undertaking "search and rescue,"¹² despite the fact that returnees are often detained in conditions that have been widely criticized by human rights actors and the UN.¹³

Since 2011 and the Arab Spring, more and more barriers are being erected at the external borders of

⁹ The southern neighbourhood is clearly defined in the Agenda, and includes Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.

¹⁰ HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY, Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood*, February 2021, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood.pdf

¹¹ VILLA, Mateo. "Irregular Migration Across the Mediterranean: The Long Road Ahead to Revamp Partnerships." in IEMed & ICMPD, *Survey of migration experts in the European Union's Southern Neighbourhood: Towards sustainable and mutually-beneficial migration partnerships in the South Mediterranean*, 2021, www.euromesco.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2.-EuroMeSCo-survey_Matteo-Villa.pdf

¹² ECRE, *Med: More Deaths and Returns to Libya, EU Funding and Cooperation with Notorious Coast Guard as Situation in Libya Deteriorates*, October 2021, <https://ecre.org/med-more-deaths-and-returns-to-libya-eu-funding-and-cooperation-with-notorious-coast-guard-as-situation-in-libya-deteriorates/>

¹³ ECRE, *Med: Eight Years on from Deadly Tragedy Lives Continue to Be Lost, EU Complicit in Libyan Abuse, Fact-Finding Mission Finds Possible Crimes Against Humanity in Libya*, October 2021, <https://ecre.org/med-eight-years-on-from-deadly-tragedy-lives-continue-to-be-lost-eu-licit-in-libyan-abuse-fact-finding-mission-finds-possible-crimes-against-humanity-in-libya/>

the EU. Naval operations to counter smuggling (EU-NAVFOR MED), the criminalization of search and rescue by non-state actors, refusals for disembarkation and fast-tracked processing at the border and returns, are some of the ways Member States have sought to reinforce the EU border. Despite continuous efforts, the border between the north and south of the Mediterranean has never been fully “closed.” It has always entailed, as all borders do, a level of porousness that can function as a positive driver for better cooperation between the EU and its neighbours.

A Semi-Open Border through Legal Pathways

At the forefront of policy discussion for years, legal avenues are pushed forth as a viable alternative in establishing global responsibility sharing mechanisms as well as to create opportunities for migrants who wish to move in pursuit of economic betterment. In the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, legal pathways have a significant place in the original proposal penned by the Commission, for asylum seekers but also for skilled migrants. The aim is to utilize legal pathways in improving cooperation with countries that are already on the receiving end of the EU’s externalization policies.¹⁴

Resettlement, a critical legal pathway for refugees, reduced significantly in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic¹⁵ and border closures. Yet even the year before, in 2019, Europe resettled 29,066 people, according to UNHCR, and 76% of all resettlement submissions were received by five countries (Germany, Sweden, Norway, the UK and France). Overall participation is limited and voluntary. There are Member States that simply do not wish to resettle refugees, from Greece to the Visegrad group. The lesson of the 2015 “refugee crisis,” as well as the Ukrainian displacement, is that there are preferences on behalf of Member States regarding who to welcome and under what conditions.

The European Commission affirmed its willingness to support national sponsorship schemes and particularly community sponsorship, as a way of involving the private sector and civil society, which contribute to the burden sharing. It would facilitate the establishment of a more comprehensive system, yet experience from community sponsorship schemes in countries like Italy and Belgium shows that the process is bureaucratic and applies to very few, as selection is grounded predominantly on characteristics such as religion, ethnicity or vulnerability (an already problematic framework). Despite the difficulties, sponsorship schemes could function as a pathway through the EU-Med border and a way to indicate to the southern neighbours that responsibility sharing lies at the heart of the relationship. This would be of particular importance to countries already hosting significant numbers of refugees such as Lebanon and Jordan, as well as transit countries like Libya and Morocco.

The second proposal in the Pact is in the form of Talent Partnerships targeting skilled migrants. Their aim is to facilitate mobility schemes between EU Member States and specific countries by matching skills with labour demand in the EU. There is little evidence that legal pathways can reduce irregular movement,¹⁶ partly because such schemes apply to those who already possess skills that are transferable to the labour markets of Member States. The language factor is also crucial. While training schemes can be developed in the long run to address potential shortages, the fact remains that this would also rest squarely on the needs and priorities of Member States. Additionally, the demand for particular skills may not be available *vis à vis* the potential supply. The incorporation of a scheme for skilled migrants is nonetheless crucial, mostly in paving the way to engaging with the notion of legal migration as a potential way forward.

The Pact offers some opportunities to improve migration partnerships across the Mediterranean. The introduction of skills for asylum seekers is beneficial, as is the incorporation of legal pathways. However, these

¹⁴ LEBOEUF, Luc, *Legal Pathways to Protection: Towards a Common and Comprehensive Approach?*, December 2020, <https://eumigrationlawblog.eu/legal-pathways-to-protection-towards-a-common-and-comprehensive-approach/>

¹⁵ EASO ASYLUM REPORT, *COVID-19 exposes strengths and weaknesses of EU asylum systems*, 2021, <https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/easo-asylum-report-2021-covid-19-exposes-strengths-and-weaknesses-eu-asylum-systems>

¹⁶ SCHNEIDER, Jan, “Beyond Talent Partnerships: Boosting Legal Mobility under the New EU Migration Pac.” IEMED & ICMPD, *Survey of migration experts in the European Union’s Southern Neighbourhood: Towards sustainable and mutually-beneficial migration partnerships in the South Mediterranean*, 2021, www.iemed.org/publication/beyond-talent-partnerships-boosting-legal-mobility-under-the-new-eu-migration-pact/

are positive aspects that are heavily reliant on the political preferences of Member States that remain fundamentally cautious on what to offer third countries. This is particularly evident when looking at schemes for labour migration, visa schemes for training, for students, and academics etc. Similarly, responsibility sharing continues to be absent for asylum seekers between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

The Future of the EU-South Mediterranean Relationship

Any discussion on the relationship between the EU and the southern Mediterranean on migration, cannot ignore the volatile domestic situation in a lot of the countries in question and the more immediate needs of their citizens, in addition to those of the migrants and asylum seekers hosted in their territory. The war on Ukraine is already perceived as a potential driver for future migration “crises,” due to the increase in energy prices and disruption of the global supply chain, which is already having a disproportionate impact on the poor and is raising concerns over social and political unrest.

There is a fundamental gap in priorities that can be addressed by offering positive incentives to the partner countries in the southern Mediterranean

While European policymakers focus on preventing irregular departures and creating partnerships that facilitate returns, the southern partners prioritize structural support for their economies, the facilitation of legal migration for their nationals and opportunities for responsibility sharing on asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants with the north shore. The difficulty

lies not so much in understanding the different priorities, but rather in whether they can, in fact, be met.

The agency of the southern neighbours must also be taken into account. Countries such as Morocco or Tunisia have been engaging with the EU for a long time on migration and have seen little progress as regards their priorities. They have significant experience in negotiating as well as opposing EU priorities without explicitly rejecting them. Morocco has been negotiating an EU readmission agreement for more than a decade. Tunisia has drafted a law on asylum but has not passed the bill through parliament, thereby delaying the possibility of transforming into a safe third country for the EU. These practices of agency and resistance suggest that the southern shore of the Mediterranean is not singularly dependent on the EU. The relationship may be valued, but it is not the only criterion for partnerships in the field of migration. Additionally, the EU is not the only partner that is relevant in the foreign policy of migration. Relationships with West African countries for Morocco and sub-Saharan Africans for Tunisia are a key determinant in how their partnership with the EU will be structured.¹⁷ This is easily forgotten in a Eurocentric approach to the Mediterranean that is seeking to find a middle ground with the southern priorities by offering limited legal avenues of mobility.

There is a fundamental gap in priorities that can be addressed by offering positive incentives to the partner countries in the southern Mediterranean. It could create a constructive “dependency” between the EU and the southern neighbourhood and a cooperation that would also benefit migrants and asylum seekers. The alternative is to continue replicating the current relations; the EU engages in formal and informal arrangements focused on border controls, while the countries in the region instrumentalize migration (e.g. Morocco), reduce their expectations and willingness to concede to the EU’s priorities (e.g. Tunisia) or collaborate with the EU but in a manner that violates migrants’ human rights (e.g. Libya). It is a vicious cycle that produces little reward for either side.

¹⁷ EL QADIM, Nora, “De-EUropeanising European Borders: EU-Morocco Negotiations on Migrations and the Decentering Agenda in EU Studies.” in Woons, Marc & Weier, Sebastian (eds), *Critical Epistemologies of Global Politics*, www.e-ir.info/2017/06/24/eu-morocco-negotiations-on-migrations-and-the-decentering-agenda-in-eu-studies/

Dossier:
Social Policies
and the
Challenges
to Improve
Well-being
in the
Mediterranean
Area



Well-Being, Social Policies and Development in the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA) – State of Play and Challenges for Improvement

Rana Jawad

Reader in Social Policy

Convener of the MENA Social Policy Network

University of Bath

This essay provides a critical overview of social policies in MENA and what is known about the conceptualization of well-being there. Given the recent impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it also explores MENA country responses and the challenges that remain for social policy. In spite of the difficulties discussed, it is important to recognize that governments and civil society organizations in the region have actively provided modern forms of social welfare activities since the 1940s (the time of state independence). Due to the nature of the research on which it draws, the paper refers mainly to data on the Arab countries.

For clarity, the geography of MENA extends from Morocco to Turkey along the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, as far east as Iran and south to Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The region has a population of half a billion, which is mainly Muslim but equally defined by Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism, amongst a range of other religious and ethnic groups.

In mainstream scholarship and policy debates, the predominant representation of MENA as a place of conservative or traditional social and economic practices and extremist religious ideologies makes it harder to discuss the existence and role of progressive social policy there. But, as this essay shows, the context is much more complex with myriad government, civil society and international actors actively shaping the experience of well-being in MENA. As such, the essay shows how social policy can greatly contribute to academic knowledge and public un-

derstandings of the MENA polities, especially in light of the recent Covid-19 pandemic which has heightened the awareness of policymakers about social and economic inequalities and the need to strengthen social protection systems in the recovery period.

Natural Rent and Distributive Welfare Systems

The post-war independence era was marked by nation-building attempts and vibrant citizen political activism, claiming work, gender and secular rights. Example social policies included the nationalization of foreign assets and large domestic enterprises such as the Suez Canal in Egypt; land reform; mass education and, in some cases, the secularization of the education system; support of low-income groups through direct financial transfers by the State, with Turkey leading the way (Jawad, 2019). The region experienced immense social transformation, due almost entirely to the sudden oil windfall. This was used to establish and fund state social services, such as guaranteed government employment for graduates; new labour legislation (favouring workers in large public enterprises) such as health insurance, retirement pay and maternity pay; free education; free hospital care; and basic consumer subsidies, the most important of which were food and housing. Urbanization and economic development were accompanied by significant attainments in education and enhanced female labour participation. However, this was short-lived. The overnight access to a major new source of capital that resulted from oil revenues concentrated wealth amongst the urban elite and left the majority of the populations poorly skilled and ruled primarily via patrimonial and tribal structures. This reliance on natural resource rents for social spending

has earned MENA the label of “rentier” or “distributive,” since this is the primary source of economic activity and national wealth, which is generated by a minority and controlled by the government (Beblawi, 1990).

Observers of the region have also long alluded to a rentier mentality in the region, whereby the State becomes a provider of favours and benefits as opposed to the upholder of citizenship rights and obligations. Rentier behaviour can be found in the form of dependence on military or political aid, workers’ remittances and tourist expenditure, all of which are forms of external rent. However, both empirically and analytically, the rentier concept is inadequate. It neglects the way in which the social order is itself negotiated and how the State also exercises an influence on the formation of national identity and its symbols. Indeed, a more culturally sensitive analysis of social policy would suggest that non-state actors, especially in the form of religious movements, have a large stake in the social welfare settlement in MENA (Jawad, 2009).

There is also a general lack of harmonized social welfare expenditure data, and social issues tend to be seen as secondary to economic development and job creation

Today, the Middle East is arguably the most unequal region in the world, with the share of income accruing to the top 10% and 1% exceeding 60% and 25%, respectively, of total regional income in 2016 (Alvarez et al, 2018). Particularly bad performers are the population-rich, oil-poor Arab countries, where income inequality levels are almost on a par with South Africa and Brazil. It is also noted that the Arab region suffers from a lack of data on taxation, wealth redistribution and public spending, due to weak state accountability. The dependence on oil revenues in Arab countries has further exacerbated the volatility of economic systems and effectiveness of social protection by fostering a rentier model of distribution, whereby po-

litical elites maintain their political dominance by avoiding taxation and controlling the distribution of rents in ways that only serve to entrench the political system and undermine the productive capacities of the economy (UN-ESCWA, 2022).

Universal principles of social policy are evident mainly in relation to commodity or fuel subsidies. The emphasis after the Arab Spring events remains on categorical, means-tested or earnings-related social protection, which exemplifies targeted systems of social policy. In the case of social insurance schemes, for instance, health insurance, formal sector employees are the primary beneficiaries. These are more likely to be working-age males, based in urban areas. A key challenge here is that Arab governments have traditionally spent large amounts on short-term poverty-alleviation policies, including subsidies, rather than on long-term economic and social investment that addresses the structural causes of poverty (UN-ESCWA, 2022).

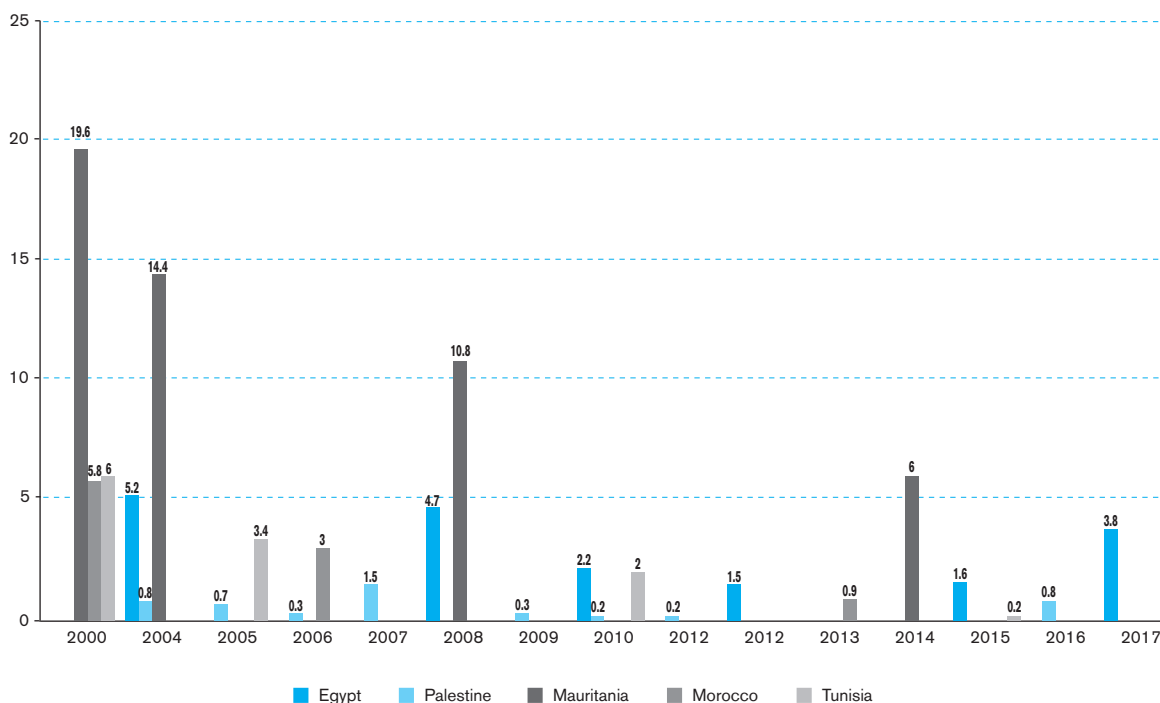
Social expenditure trends have varied widely in the last two decades but remained below the world average with social assistance programmes showing a preference for unconditional cash transfers and food and in-kind transfers (UN-ESCWA, 2022). Although much criticism is directed at state agencies for reasons ranging from corruption to public mismanagement, the social policy context in MENA is made up of a mix of social policy actors including the State, private sector, community and family. It also relies heavily on informal and private sector providers of social protection (Jawad, 2009).

Key Socioeconomic Indicators

The 2009 Arab Human Development Report famously described the Arab countries as being richer than they were developed. Chart 4 below shows the poverty headcount based on USD1.9 per person per day among the countries for which data is available. The poverty headcount ratio reached the highest value in low-income countries: Yemen (18.3%), Sudan (12.2%) and Mauritania (6%), followed by Egypt (3.8%) (UN-ESCWA, 2022).

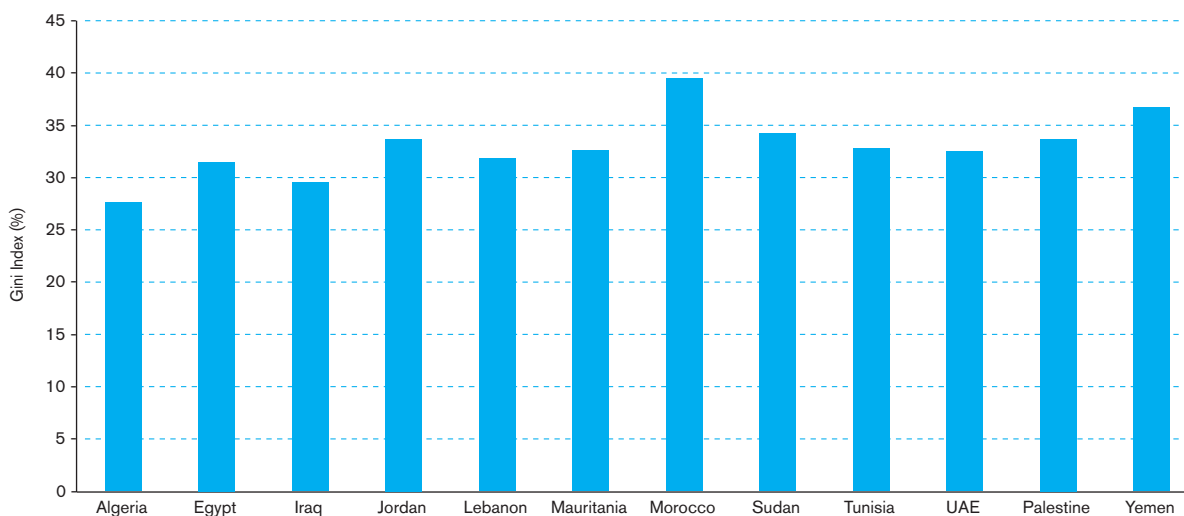
Chart 5 shows moderate levels of inequality with Gini coefficients varying from a low of 27.6 in Algeria and Libya to a high of 39.5 in Morocco. Most countries in the region have comparatively low to moder-

CHART 4 Poverty Headcount Ratio at \$1.90 a Day (% of population) 2000-2017



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators (cited in UN-ESCWA, 2022).

CHART 5 Inequality (various years 2011-2014)

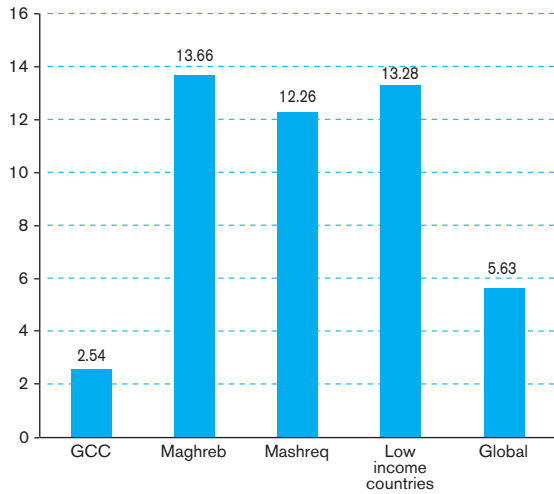


Source: World Bank, 2020 (cited in UN-ESCWA, 2022).

ate levels of income inequality. Inequality data among MENA countries is a matter of contemporary debate, with a focus on the accuracy of the World Bank measures in reflecting the reality on the ground. Alvaredo et al. (2019) estimate that the Middle East and North Africa region as a whole is the most une-

qual region in the world, with the share of income accruing to the top 10% and 1% exceeding 60% and 25%, respectively, of total regional income in 2016. In terms of unemployment, the regional rate in 2020 ranged from a low of 0.08% in Qatar to a high of 26.1% in Palestine, with an overall average of 9.83%.

CHART 6 Sub-Regional Unemployment Averages Compared with Global Average (%) 2010-2020



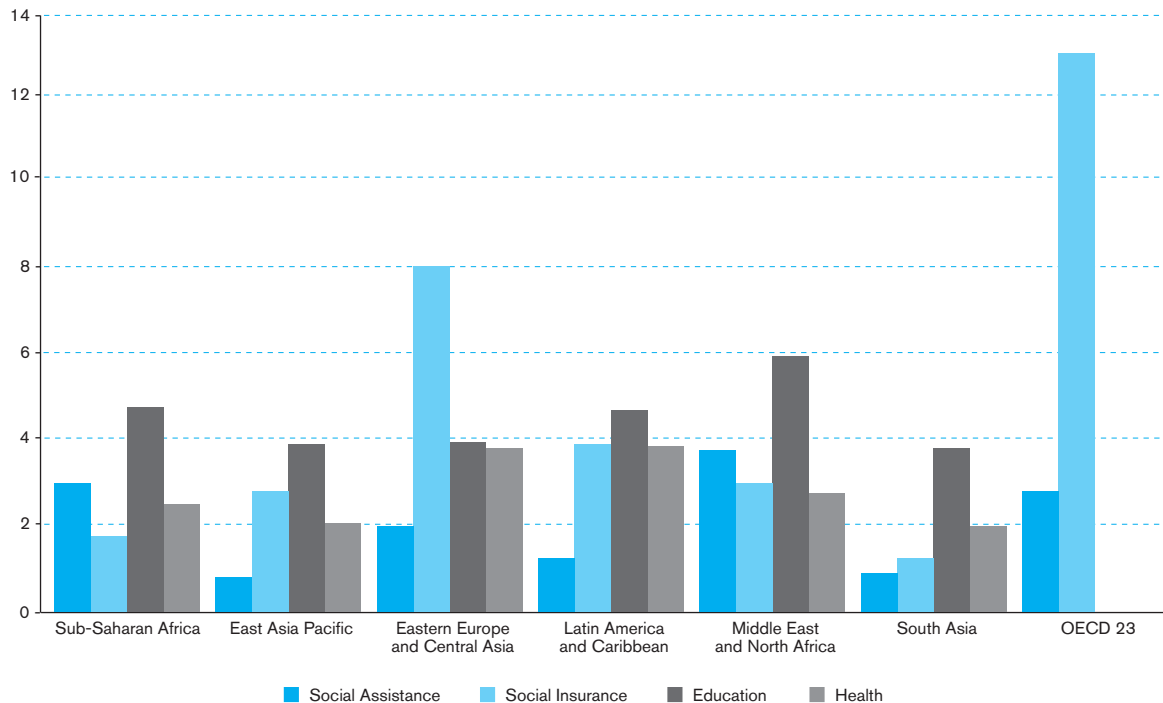
Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators (cited in UN-ESCWA, 2022).

This was relatively high compared to the global average of 5.42% for the same year. Overall, unemployment trends during the period 2015 to 2020 were relatively stable (9.7%-9.8%). A notable im-

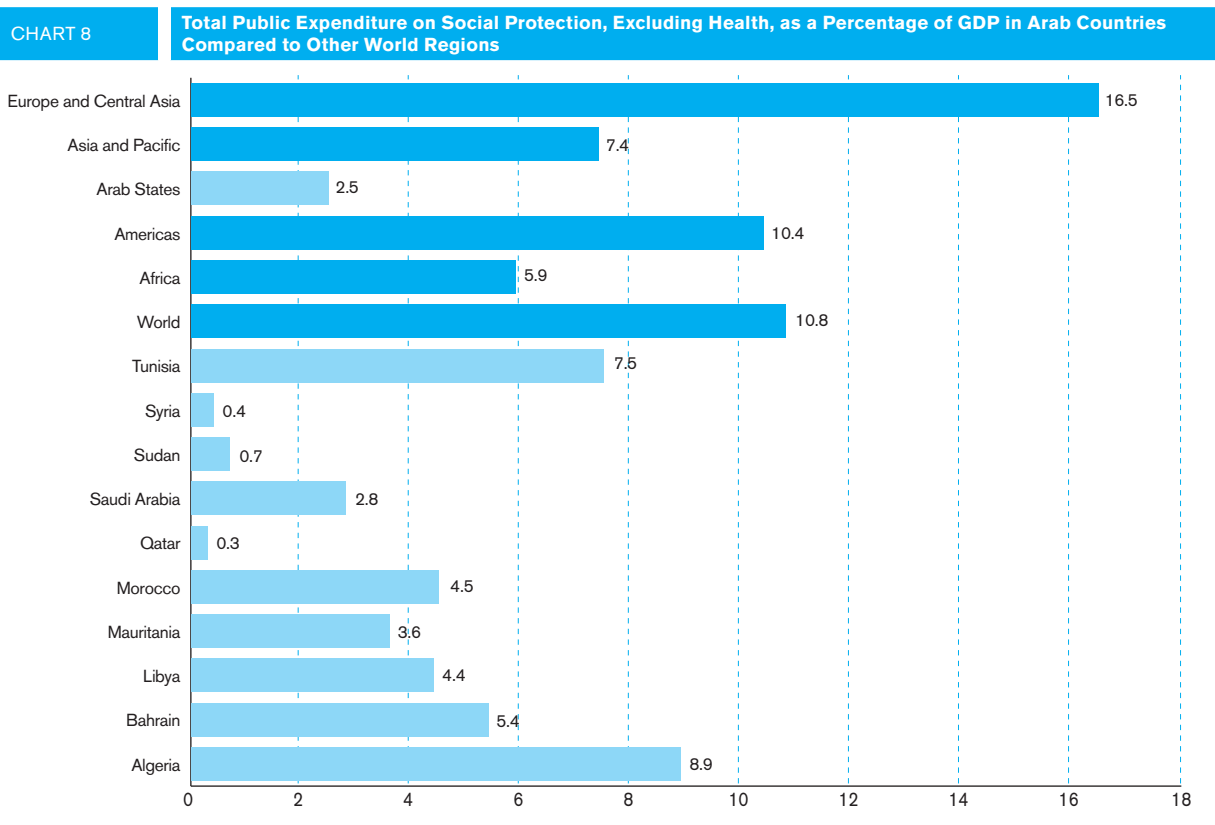
provement is in Egypt, where unemployment fell from 13.0% in 2015 to 10.1% in 2020. The percentage of unemployment in the Arab Gulf was much lower than that of the other regions. However, in Palestine and Iraq, the unemployment rate increased between 2015 and 2020 from 23% to 26.1% and from 10.7% to 12.8%, respectively. In comparison to the global unemployment average of 5.63% (Chart 6), the GCC countries perform better, in contrast to the middle-income and low-income countries in the region. The highest difference from the global average is 8.03% for the Maghreb countries and the lowest difference is 3.09% for the GCC countries.

In terms of female employment, MENA has the lowest levels of female labour market participation (around 17%) compared to global averages. Youth unemployment rates in the Arab region for the year 2020 ranged from a low of 0.3% in Qatar to a high of around 51% in Libya, with an average of 21.9%. This is relatively high compared to the global average of 13.6% for the same year. Overall, youth unemployment in the region during the past five years (2015-2020) has been relatively steady (21.8%-21.9%).

CHART 7 Social Spending as a % of GDP – All Regions



Source: World Bank, 2008.



Source: World Bank, ASPIRE Atlas (2022).

Key Social Policy Profile

The MENA region is characterized by very similar types of social protection programmes to other world regions, and faces many similar challenges to those found in India, China, Brazil and South Africa. These range from cash transfers and targeted social assistance to vulnerable groups to earnings-related social insurance schemes. The policy capacity for universal social protection schemes is small, with the exception of fuel subsidies, which are currently being phased out across a range of countries, like Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and the GCC. GCC states have made the biggest strides in extending health insurance, while various other countries such as Yemen, Jordan and Gaza and the West Bank have focused more on improving social assistance programme targeting.

Chart 7 above shows historical data on social expenditure as a % of GDP for the MENA region in comparison to other world regions. It shows that education expenditure occupies the largest share of the Arab region countries' GDP and that social insurance remains among the lowest. Chart 7 also shows that,

after education, spending on social assistance occupies the second largest share of GDP. In fact, the MENA region is considered to be the world's highest spender as a region on social assistance. This situation reinforces the dominant understanding of social protection in terms of targeted social assistance to the deserving poor (Jawad, 2022).

Chart 8 above shows individual MENA societies' distribution of social expenditure on social protection, as a part of gross domestic product, which ranges from very small proportions in Yemen to more substantial proportions in Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan and Egypt. Yet, western Europe, North America and central and eastern Europe spend a substantially higher proportion of their GDP on social protection than any of the MENA societies.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) along with the emphasis on social protection by international development are increasingly framing policy debates in MENA countries. Local crises like the Syrian war and more recently the pandemic have also spurred this on and are now compounded by economic and inflation concerns in countries like Leba-

TABLE 8 Formal Contribution-Based Social Security Schemes for Selected Countries (public and private sector employees only)

Country	Scheme	Old Age	Disability and Survivors	Work Injury	Unemployment	Sickness	Maternity	Family
Bahrain		X	X	X	X	-	-	-
Iraq*		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jordan		X	X	X	-	-	-	-
Kuwait		X	X	X	-	-	-	-
Lebanon		X	X	X	-	-	X	X
Oman		X	X	X	-	-	-	-
Saudi Arabia		X	X	X	-	X	X	-
Syria		X	X	X	-	-	-	-
Yemen		X	X	X	-	X**	X**	-
Egypt		X	X	X	X***	X	X	-
Morocco		X	X	X	-	X	X	X
Libya		X	X	X	X***	X	X	-
Tunisia		X	X	X	X***	X	X	X
Algeria		X	X	X	X***	X	X	X

Source: International Social Security Association (www.issa.int/)
 *Information on Iraq is more than 10 years old. **Public sector employees only. *** Very strict rules apply.

non and Tunisia. New policies have appeared, which include the extension of employment-based health insurance, unemployment benefits for university graduates, reform of food and fuel subsidy programmes and unconditional cash transfer programmes. While not constituting a dramatic transformation of social policy, they are a step in the right direction, although they are policies which complement a neo-liberal perspective on social welfare duties and responsibilities. The emphasis on private sector investment and employment-based social insurance is also evident when we consider the types of social security legislation available in the region (Table 8). These are all employment-based schemes and are primarily restricted to old age, disability and work injury.

In terms of welfare regime analysis, MENA countries demonstrate elements of residualism and corporatism (Jawad, 2009). Most are now adopting a neo-liberal stance whereby the private sector is the main engine of social and economic prosperity, the State provides social safety nets for poor and vulnerable groups, and the family (mainly the nuclear family) and charitable/religious organizations are expected to play a role in offering social support services. This relates to the classic definitions of residual or “productivist” social policy, in which economic growth is given priority over more equitable mechanisms of redistribution and universal non-contributory coverage. The Gulf states have traditionally occupied the category of rentier economies, although there is evidence of positive intentions in some Gulf states to diversify their econo-

mies in view of the eventual disappearance of oil and hydrocarbon resources.

But there is also a difficulty in the region in relation to the basic intellectual groundwork and policy evaluation process. With the exceptions of Egypt, Turkey, some of the Arab Gulf states like Saudi Arabia or Dubai and Israel perhaps, most governments in MENA do not have adequate statistical data to analyse the problem of poverty in their countries. There is also a general lack of harmonized social welfare expenditure data, and social issues tend to be seen as secondary to economic development and job creation. The reliance is on donor data, such as from the World Bank and International Labour Organization (ILO). Moreover, the definition of social welfare is based primarily on consumption smoothing and the fulfilment of human needs, as demonstrated by the emphasis on social safety nets in social policy. MENA countries are a long way from the discourse of social rights and citizenship that is more familiar in the West. Yet, the focus on needs and social safety nets contradicts government policy rhetoric in some MENA countries that seek to “help citizens achieve their full potential.” Thus, MENA countries remain socially conservative societies, where it is envisaged that the family will play the central role in issues of moral and social identity (Jawad, Messkoub and Jones, 2019).

In sum, MENA governments display two main orientations in social policy: employment-based social security, which means that formally employed private and public sector workers are the most likely to re-

ceive social benefits and protection, primarily in terms of end-of-service indemnity pay, pensions, sickness pay, health and education. Some countries such as Lebanon do not even have old age pension schemes and we should consider that almost two thirds of labour is in the informal sector in the MENA region (Jawad, 2009). On the other hand, there is an over-reliance on social safety nets such as food and fuel subsidies and social care services to vulnerable groups. These are now increasingly being cut as part of World Bank – and IMF-led reforms plunging new populations into hardship. This situation exemplifies the other dominant tendency in MENA: the residual approach, which emphasizes the role of the family and community groups in social welfare and a male breadwinner model of social protection.

Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Countries in the Arab region mobilized a wide range of social protection interventions to protect citizens and residents against the social and economic consequences of Covid-19. According to a major UN-ESCWA report (2022), cash transfers and food distribution to affected households were most common, followed by unemployment benefits or wage subsidies to workers affected by lockdown restrictions, as well as waivers or delayed payments for utilities such as electricity. Existing social protection programmes and payment platforms were also used where possible, but in many countries governments appealed to social solidarity funds for private donations, and religious practices such as Zakat and Ramadan were also used to mobilize resources. In low-income and conflict-affected countries, international donors and agencies played significant roles as sources of humanitarian financial assistance and food aid (UN-ESCWA, 2022). Given the dominant contributions made by religion, charity, NGOs, “social solidarity” and international assistance in providing temporary relief in response to the Covid-19 situation, longer-term benefits in terms of expanding and strengthening social protection systems may be limited.

The literature on the Covid-19 pandemic shows that the stronger the institutional and fiscal starting points of the country at the time of the outbreak (for example the maturity of the social protection system and the relative stability of the economy), the better the coun-

try will weather the pandemic crisis (ESCWA, 2022). Arab countries responded rapidly to deal with the economic effects of the crisis on firms and households, as well as to keep their financial markets in operation. The OECD (2020a) estimates that on average, 2.7% of GDP was allocated to fiscal measures and 3.4% of GDP in liquidity injections was delivered by central banks across the MENA region as a whole, during the first weeks of the pandemic.

Long-standing social and economic inequalities such as in relation to informal workers and women’s well-being are now being made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic

The Arab region’s fiscal deficit was projected to increase from 3.3% of GDP in 2019 to 10.8% of GDP in 2020, raising concerns regarding the sustainability of the countries’ economic responses given the continued social and economic needs in the recovery period. The GCC sub-region showed the largest fiscal stimulus package, which amounts to \$6.9 billion, whereas the lower income countries accounted for the lowest fiscal stimulus of about \$0.27 billion. Most Arab countries have provided temporary consumption smoothing programmes such as cash assistance or tax relief to vulnerable groups like the unemployed, women and children rather than extending social insurance and lifecycle programmes (UN-ESCWA, 2022). This is because of a lack of an adequate tax base and reduced fiscal space resulting from high levels of debt, poor economic performance and reduced oil revenues. These factors account for the gap in social protection coverage during the pandemic and recovery period. Financial and programme sustainability can be achieved by strengthening governance structures and institutions such as transparency and anti-corruption measures, effective public procurement, the strength and capacity of digitalization and open government approaches, as well as a greater role for civil society. Arab countries should also factor in environmental sustainability, such as low-carbon economic recovery measures and access to essential resources like clean water (UN-ESCA, 2022).

Based on regional and global success stories such as Morocco and Pakistan, the use and extension of digital data systems to identify and reach households in need is a significant means of achieving innovative and sustainable changes to social protection following the Covid-19 response. Morocco is also taking positive steps by gradually replacing its subsidies with a family allowance programme. It is too early to assess the impact of the pandemic interventions, so, to better understand what mix of social protection financing works sustainably, Arab countries need to strengthen their data-recording, monitoring and evaluation capacities.

Conclusion

Coherent and well-integrated social policies have been an elusive goal for MENA governments for the last few decades. The Covid-19 pandemic has further reinforced their importance as a field of study and also as a legitimate arm of state action. The social policy agenda in MENA countries is forged by the priorities of the international donor agenda and humanitarian crises that arise as a result of conflict. Long-standing social and economic inequalities such as in relation to informal workers and women's well-being are now being made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic. MENA governments are facing up to the significant socioeconomic challenges and problems their societies now face, which were highlighted a decade ago by the "Arab Spring" and are now even more pronounced. Political will and an articulate plan for social policy have yet to be formulated by most Arab countries in the region. How countries move beyond oil revenue to finance social services and economic investment is a key issue for the future. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the other Arab Gulf countries are keen to find alternative ways of diversifying their economic bases further. Political instability and increasing conflict in the region may act as barriers to coherent and sustainable social policy: countries such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya and Lebanon are partially if not fully consumed by civil conflict, and emergency relief often impedes social policy development. The Syrian refugee crisis is now the worst humanitarian crisis in the region and the displacement of Syrian populations to neighbouring countries has placed added pressure on social and public services.

References

- ALMENFI, M.; BRETON, M.; DALE, P.; GENTILINI, U.; PICK, A. and RICHARDSON, D. "Where is the money coming from? Ten stylized facts on the financing social protection responses to COVID-19." *Social Protection & Jobs, Policy & Technical Note*, No. 23. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020. <<https://bit.ly/3rc2dKe>>. Accessed on 22 April 2021.
- ALCOCK, Pete with May, Margaret *Social Policy in Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, 2008.
- DE NEUBOURG, C., CASTONGUAY, J. and ROELEN, K. "Social safety nets and targeted social assistance: lessons from the European Experience." *SP Discussion Paper*, no. 0718, The World Bank, Washington D.C, 2007.
- GERARD, F.; IMBERT, C. and ORKIN, K. "Social protection response to the COVID – 19 crisis: options for developing countries." in *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, Volume 36, Number S1, 2020, pp. S281-S296
- JAWAD, R.; JONES, N., and MESSKOUB, M. *Social policy in the Middle East and North Africa Region: Universal coverage and the new social protection paradigm*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2019.
- OECD *COVID-19 crisis in the MENA region: impact on gender equality and policy responses*. OECD, Paris, 2020. Accessed on 25 April 2021 at https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134_134470-w95kmv8khl&title=COVID-19-crisis-in-the-MENA-region-impact-on-gender-equality-and-policy-responses.
- POLICY CENTRE FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH (IPC-IG) "What's next for social protection in light of COVID-19: country responses." *Policy in Focus*, Volume No. 19, Issue No. 1, March 2021
- POOLE, L.; CLARKE, D. and SWITHERN, S. *The Future of Crisis Financing: A Call to Action*. London: Centre for Disaster Protection, 2020. <<https://bit.ly/3be9fZv>>. Accessed 22 April 2021.
- UNDP *Leaving No One Behind: A social protection primer for practitioners*, 2016, accessed on 28 January 2021 at www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/leaving-no-one-behind--a-social-protection-primer-for-practitio.html.
- WORLD BANK "Inequality, Uprisings and Conflict." *MENA Economic Monitor*, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2015.

Achieving Healthy Lives in the MENA Region: Towards Strong and Equitable Health Systems

Randa Alami

Economics Department
School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)
University of London

Achieving healthy lives is a challenge at the best of times, but doing so during three ongoing unprecedented global shocks (the Covid-19 pandemic, Ukraine war and global climate crisis) is a formidable challenge indeed. Before Covid-19 rattled the world, the developmental agenda was, to a great extent, built around the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs. SDGs focus on equitable human development that attenuates inequities, and address climate change concerns through links to environmental sustainability. They are concerned with health by monitoring: the availability and coverage of health services (SDG 3.8.1, 3.8.2); and the financial burden created by ill health, particularly for the poor (SDG 1.1.1).¹ These goals underline the importance of health for achieving healthy lives and ending poverty. They are also embedded in the global policy direction of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). UHC is an aspirational definition that seeks to: deliver Available, Affordable, Accessible, Quality (AAAQ) healthcare for all, cater for those who are excluded and mitigate financial burdens due to health needs. In 2010, it was endorsed almost universally, including by countries around the Mediterranean.

Thus, achieving healthy lives before Covid-19 was largely framed and benchmarked against UHC. Its underlying concepts and implied policy directions were being absorbed by the policy discourses of the

region, not least because of the events of the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring exposed major developmental problems and widespread resentment, including about the status of health services, health coverage and the financial burdens they placed on citizens. Notwithstanding wars and political instability, MENA renewed its commitment to UHC in the 2018 “Health for All” Salah Declaration, with an explicit mandate to tackle existing health inequities. Covid-19 hit the world, rattling strong and weaker systems in both similar and different ways, but the unfolding experiences are also converging towards common lessons. Foremost amongst these is the importance of public health capacity and strong, comprehensive structures, both for recovery and as bulwarks for future crises. Furthermore, this “systemic pandemic” has quickly become a “great unequalizer,” at a time when the world was frowning upon all aspects of inequalities. Indeed, Covid-19 has been a blunt reminder of the centrality of human beings for the functioning of societies, and of the futility of looking at health in isolation of its socio-economic determinants. Indeed, the barrage of public responses around the world highlighted the direct links between these determinants and the preservation of life.

This background is in line with Shami and Jardali’s contributions to the 2021 yearbook. This article complements their findings, but argues that inequalities and the neglect of health sectors are both generated by a political economy process which tolerated social injustices. It proceeds as follows. Firstly, it takes a step back to revisit the links between health and equity, and the ways in which inequities shaped health sectors and social policies. It then shows that

¹ The former is a composite index that captures population coverage of essential health services. The latter two measure the impact of health spending on income and on the proportion of people pushed below the poverty line.

this context shaped and worsened Covid-19's impact, as evidenced by the convergence between its impact and socioeconomic inequities, with labour market statuses and informality proving to be key vulnerabilities. The concluding remarks argue that equity, health and social policy are moving in the same policy direction, namely accelerating reforms but spearheading equity. Covid may be a pivotal moment to deliver on rebuilding the sectors on more equitable grounds, because it has pushed the equity and public health agenda pragmatically and politically. While the multiplicity of severe global shocks may complicate or even derail policy implementation, there is no need for reimagining the sector or re-drawing the agenda.

The Vital Importance of Health Equity

As previously noted, the Covid pandemic has been a blunt reminder of the centrality of health for human activity and prosperity (or lack of). Historically, societies have dedicated great efforts to improving health outcomes, though progress has been shackled by poverty and discrimination. Likewise, gains in health statuses in developing countries largely resulted from massive public investments in public health capacity, preventative care and immunization campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s. Conversely, ill health can also push people into "medical poverty traps," undermining abilities to earn income and participate in society. Thus, health issues have an inherent call for policy actions, particularly in terms of ensuring fairness and reducing poverty.

Yet, historically, improvements in health and related sectors (sanitation, etc.) were initiated in the interest of ruling classes. Thus, ill health and suffering can be viewed as a political choice: societies choose to treat or ignore ill health. Consequently, health outcomes are shaped by health policies, which also underpin differences in morbidities amongst certain groups, classes or regions. Ultimately, as Sir Michael Marmot says, social injustice can kill. In the same vein, health is intimately related to labour market sta-

tuses, work, or indeed "worklessness." Certain occupations are associated with certain patterns of ill health, and unemployment underpins many adverse health outcomes.

Thus, health can no longer be framed in terms of biological outcomes or as a list of diseases. Rather, it is largely driven by socioeconomic determinants, which in turn are shaped by policies. Successful health policies recognize health as being a pillar of socioeconomic equality, and a vital investment in human capital and well-being. In that sense, the launching of UHC in 2010 indicated a definitive and irreversible shift to adopting these determinants as a prime concern for health policies. Rather than focus on national averages for health indicators, societies are invited to place themselves in the famous UHC cube² and ask: who is excluded, from what, how and why? In turn, that informs the journey towards AAAQ for all, with a simultaneous emphasis on: the need for strong health systems and structures and tackling affordability and exclusion.

Covid may be a pivotal moment to deliver on rebuilding the sectors on more equitable grounds, because it has pushed the equity and public health agenda pragmatically and politically

The UHC commitment reinforced the *Alma Ata* case for strong stewardship by public health sectors, for ethical, practical and cost effectiveness considerations. It also entailed a number of institutional prerequisites, such as: ending fragmentation, the pooling of resources and the completion of the health financing transition.³ Ultimately, health financing structures should allow for the socialization of health costs, be it via risk pooling or tax-based public provisioning. The political feasibility of UHC and its benefits in terms of social cohesion are also demonstrat-

² See www.who.int/medicines/areas/policy/5-DavidEvansmedicines.pdf

³ The health-financing transition refers to the transformation of health financing mixes and includes both a rise in total health spending and a change in its composition towards a greater share for public health spending and other risk-pooling mechanisms. A key objective is to reduce out-of-pocket expenditure (OOP) (Fan and Savedoff, 2014).

ed by the fact that most countries adopting it were going through major shocks, such as wars and earthquakes. UHC was also recently shown to be an important pillar of resilience and disaster mitigation.

Covid's Impact

The devastations caused by Covid-19 have been a brutal reminder of this importance. The spread of the pandemic quickly came to take the shape of socio-economic determinants across the globe. Infections and deaths were clearly higher among people at the bottom of the income and racial ladders. They were also more severe in labour markets, particularly amongst marginal and informal workers. Migrant living spaces became hotbeds of transmission and deaths, except in countries like Taiwan, which provides health protection to all its workers.

As such, the pandemic has reinforced the case for health equity and public health. Countries that managed well benefited from strong public health systems, complete health coverage, unified information nets, all supported by strong political leadership and public health measures. Conversely, the fragmentation and privatization of services and under-investments in public health structures, compromised many systems, with some countries having to nationalize the sector in order to cope. In the later waves, some mature systems redeployed and reorganized services, reversing cuts in resources and increasing recruitment quickly. On the other hand, current Chinese zero-tolerance policies reflect weaknesses in health system capacity, particularly rural areas and ICU beds, indicating a poor ability to deal with new waves.

Many countries around the world are expanding public healthcare in response to this Covid experience and in anticipation of future challenges. Covid continues to place additional burdens, be it due to mutations or to its long-Covid forms. Moreover, the world is acknowledging that it is a new zoonotic disease that is likely to be followed by others. The pandemic has also shown that everybody's health has to be protected for all to be protected, integrating national and global health systems like never before, with UHC becoming an important ingredient of national and global health security. The link between those levels is particularly relevant for refugees and

migrants. Yet, instead of international solidarity and cooperation, inequity now characterizes testing, vaccines and anti-viral drugs.

This is also true of MENA countries, which are at a disadvantage in this evolving global system. Most countries (except in the GCC) lag behind in terms of vaccination rates, most of which are below the 54% average for lower income countries. As argued in the next sections, MENA entered the pandemic war with weak and inequitable health systems, hobbling its responses.

A Defective "Old Normal" in Health Policies

As argued by sectoral analysts, Covid did not happen in a vacuum. Most MENA countries incorporated the right to health in their social contracts of constitutions, and had official commitments to health equity as of the 2018 Salalah Summit. However, large gaps existed between *de facto* and *de jure* entitlements, and between the burgeoning reforms and the UHC destination. Moreover, pervasive disparities in health outcomes at subnational levels and across income groups persisted (The Marmot Report 2021). In a nutshell, what was done before the pandemic was a case of "too little too late," with fault lines in health systems translating into accelerators of Covid, this being the case for public health capacities, as well as financing structures and social protection systems.

Existing MENA health systems could thus be easily labelled as deficient, lopsided and unfair. Deficient because of the number of areas of unmet needs, particularly in terms of NCDs, diagnostics and services (e.g mental health). Rural and poorer areas were underserved particularly in terms of the healthcare workforce, reflecting systemic shortages, maldistribution and/or concentration in richer urban areas, but also the exodus of staff to private or foreign facilities. They were lopsided because their curative-based systems focused on large urban hospitals at the expense of regional needs and preventative care. They were unfair because for poorer and marginal populations, healthcare was typically unavailable or unaffordable. Explicit and implicit privatization made things worse.

Likewise, hardly any country had shifted to a national patient-based system or digitized national records,

with information management systems typically weak and disjointed. This implied operational and financial inefficiencies and a poor ability to coordinate services between various levels and functions of the systems. Many institutional setups were deemed by EMRO (2019) as “*not fit for purpose*.” Covid also occurred in a context of weak medical and digital literacy, outdated national health accounts and other similar deficiencies. These problems shackled the responsiveness of MENA health systems, prevented a better allocation of resources and undermined their ability to monitor and respond to the new pandemic. The region still lacks reliable data on key indicators of Covid’s impact on the workforce and on the allocation of public resources to deal with the pandemic (Jardali 2021, Gatti *et al* 2021).

Health coverage in MENA is highly fragmented and segmented among schemes and providers, with siloed provisions undermining efficiency, preventing pooling and aggravating inequities. It largely excludes informal sectors and those without formal labour market attachment. This is highly problematic in a region where informality averages 68%, and where female labour force participation is amongst the lowest in the world. Many countries were expanding social health insurance and special schemes for the poorer segments of society. However, progress has been slow, with exclusion still affecting 20%-50% of the population (Algeria vs Egypt and Lebanon). Egypt rolled out two pilot universal schemes in 2020, but these only served one out of 100 million, in the middle of a pandemic.

Existing MENA health systems could thus be easily labelled as deficient, lopsided and unfair

Similarly, countries were yet to complete their health financing transition and yet to establish single providers, key purchasing agencies, or separating provision and financing. Consequently, out-of-pocket payments (OOPs) continue to dominate in their financing mixes. The average regional OOP was still at 41%, higher than in other developing regions. It was even higher in some countries, and among poorer income groups at sub-national levels. Clearly, it is ur-

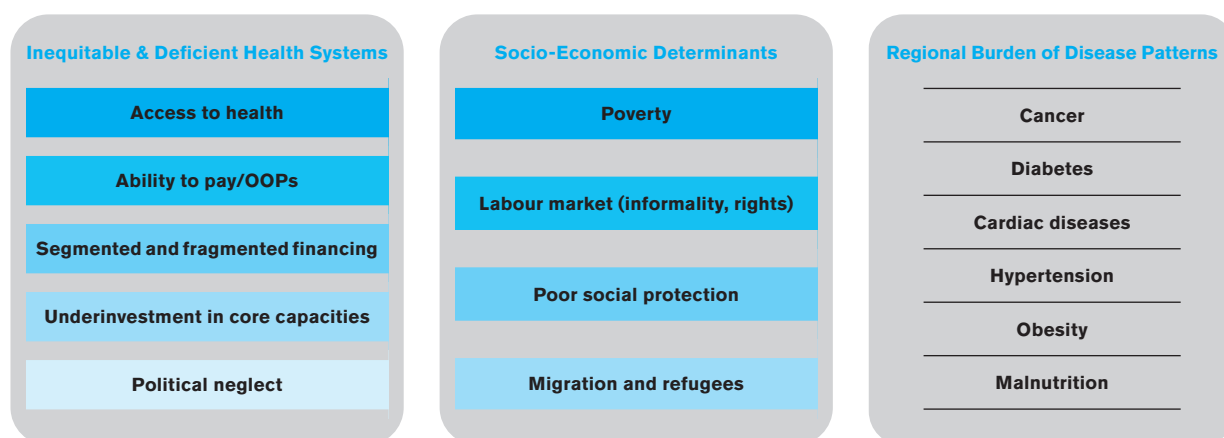
gent to improve coverage particularly among the bottom income quintiles, be it through more generous packages or more affordable universal access.

Health System Fault Lines: Amplifiers of Covid

As Chart 9 below shows, MENA did have vulnerabilities in its burden of disease that contributed to Covid. However, the structural weaknesses in its health systems and their inequitable treatment of large parts of MENA populations have been major fault lines that amplified its impact. The problems were pervasive, from poor preparedness at hospital level, to systemic shortages of staff and provisions, and weaknesses in communication and management at sectoral levels. The sectors’ deficient nature, especially in the eyes of the victims, underpinned horror scenes in the best urban centres as well as neglected rural facilities. Inevitably too, there were significant displacements and postponements of essential health services (renal treatments, dental services, etc.) due to lack of resources, overwhelmed curative facilities, and weaknesses in health systems outside major hospitals (Mattaria, 2021, Gatti 2021). Consequently, MENA health systems buckled under the strains of the pandemic, especially in the second and third waves, notwithstanding heroic sectoral responses or instances of remarkable solidarity and social cohesion.

In terms of morbidities, the pandemic continued to ravage the region after borders closed and despite strict lockdowns. Covid did not only strike poor and neglected areas. It also had an urban aspect due to its relation to crowded living and transport conditions, and due to its links to informal labour markets. With little scope for tele-workability, millions were forced to work in precarious conditions to protect their livelihoods (Marouani, 2021). Whilst before the pandemic, they shouldered large financial burdens, during the pandemic, they had little compensation for protection, testing or treatment. Thus, large swathes of the population have been trapped by income collapses as well as Covid-related, medical poverty traps.

There is a remarkable convergence amongst economists and sectoral specialists about sectoral lessons and policy interventions needed in the current after-



Source: World Bank, ASPIRE Atlas (2022).

math. The consensus view is that these fault lines should be dealt with by activating current advocacy to achieve health for all. The key policy reforms commonly proposed include:

- Strengthening public health sectors and reversing years of underinvestment.
- Improving provisions and workforce in poor and neglected areas.
- Integrating all providers so as to pool capacities and reduce fragmentation.
- Leveraging existing needs, such as emergency care and mental health services.
- Addressing the huge shortfall and/or maldistribution in workforce or workers' remuneration (particularly in Morocco and Egypt).
- Accelerating the development of reliable information systems, national digital health records and the use of telemedicine.

Lastly, the region needs to rethink provisions and financing for migrants' health, with Mashreq countries also needing to address the health needs of refugees. Both groups cross boundaries and use national health systems. Yet there is little agreement about responsibilities and financing of their health needs.

During the pandemic, MENA countries did deploy policy actions, showing that existing challenges can be addressed quickly if there is the political will. Morocco may not be able to quickly recruit the tens of

thousands of doctors it said it needs, but it did establish a solidarity fund quite earlier on. Egypt decreed a pay rise for doctors, especially in remote regions, and mobilized millions of volunteers. Lebanon's Health Ministry organized successful vaccine marathons, which included migrant workers too. But perhaps Lebanon is also an acute example of the costs of the historical neglect of the public health sector, which left the population totally exposed to the Beirut port blast, Covid and other shocks. Thus, the key issue at stake is not about tackling a list of shortages (e.g. ICU beds or medical oxygen). What is required is nothing less than rethinking the role of health and realigning existing systems to serve all the population equitably. Only stronger and fairer systems can tackle the current state of affairs, meet future challenges and provide long-term resilience.

Towards More Inclusive Social Protection

Like with its health policies, MENA's social policies showed a weak commitment to mitigating vulnerabilities and reducing poverty. Social protection schemes, typically cash transfer programmes, were scaled up and expanded, and some emergency measures were introduced. Yet, they had very low coverage levels particularly for the lower income quintiles, and were typically hampered by organizational issues, the low level of grants, confusion about eligibility etc. Moreover, they did not provide

effective relief from the dramatic income shocks delivered by Covid, nor did they compensate for the financial burden due to ill health, which remained unchanged during Covid. Since access to testing and treatment were neither universal nor free, Covid can only have aggravated the financial impact of ill health, leading to a rise in OOPs.

Therefore, MENA is arguably suffering from both a social protection and health crisis, which have amplified each other. They are rooted in a political economy that has yet to put social justice at its heart. As argued by Messkoub (2021), the region needs to reverse that, and move firmly towards more inclusive, entitlement-based social systems. Covid clearly showed that the poor, the working poor and informal workers were trapped by their living, transport and working conditions. The social gradient of ill health, which worsened during Covid, requires more equitable and inclusive health systems. Such systems would allow people to move in and out of employment statuses and between jobs without fears for their health or livelihoods. In terms of health sectors, this requires a two-pronged approach. Firstly, revamping and strengthening systems through public investments that tackle issues of availability and quality. Secondly, improving equitable access and affordability by reducing financial burdens, through the immediate expansion of health insurance, especially through the faster route of tax-financed provision.

The key issue at stake is not about tackling a list of shortages. What is required is nothing less than rethinking the role of health and realigning existing systems to serve all the population equitably

In other words, cash transfers and emergency hand-outs are not a substitute for good health services. Though current crises may require a continuation of income support schemes, higher public investments and better health sector policies remain urgent and necessary. They are a cost-effective way of providing a vital service and tackling a major source of pov-

erty and social injustice. This is why so many countries have already committed to upscaling their health budgets and provisions.

Lastly, current shocks may require a panoply of interventions, including longer term structural measures such as minimum wage legislation. Moreover, food price inflation will impact health outcomes by compromising dietary intakes, and will probably lead to worsening malnutrition and stunting. These looming challenges will require public health interventions, and may even revive the case for price controls and subsidies of staple foods. Health sectors thus need to be revamped to meet both old challenges and new pathogens, neither of which can be dealt with through quick, high-tech fixes.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the global shocks that are currently pounding the world will continue to derail lives and societies for some time. However, none of these shocks nor Covid are a detour in terms of the key strategic focus the region needs to achieve healthy lives, namely to reinforce public health sectors and tackle health inequities. The advocacy in terms of specific sectoral policies is already there, with UHC continuing to provide relevant benchmarks for policy formulation and progress. The challenge is to rebuild the sectors, whilst spearheading health equity. There is a strong consensus among experts, such as Marmot, Mataria, Mewafi, Jardali and others, that these reforms are necessary, doable and cost effective. The regional Covid experience also showed the possibility of leapfrogging with social solidarity and political will.

Achieving healthy lives in MENA has never been merely a medical issue. Rather, it has been hampered by the socioeconomic determinants of health, namely poverty, inequality and precariousness, particularly outside the formal sectors and urban centres. Misery belts and overwhelmed, hobbled health systems were important transmitters of Covid, as they were with previous morbidities. Therefore, it is urgent to recognize the vital importance of health and to place socioeconomic dimensions at the heart of all sectoral plans. This requires, *inter-alia*, an expansion and improvement of coverage through more inclusive, entitlement-based social protection sys-

tems. Without addressing this hole, the functioning of MENA economies will continue to be impaired, and recovery will be compromised.

There is little doubt that the multiple crises of wars, food insecurity and climate change shocks will complicate the journey, be it in terms of implementing, operationalizing or financing the necessary actions. However, continuing with the status quo is no longer possible. Conversely, failure to act may deliver further blows to health and to social justice. Developmental gains could go into reverse, and indeed setbacks in health outcomes are all too visible in war-stricken countries such as Palestine. Achieving healthier lives cannot be taken for granted.

References

- COMMISSION ON SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION (The Marmot Report) *Build back fairer: achieving health equity in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region – executive summary*. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2021, <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/9789290224976-eng.pdf?ua=1>.
- GATTI, R.; LEDERMAN, D.; FAN, R. Y.; HATEFI, A.; NGUYEN, H. M.; SAUTMANN, A. & ROJAS, C. J. *Overconfident: How Economic and Health Fault Lines Left the Middle East and North Africa Ill-Prepared to Face COVID*. World Bank Publications, 2021.
- EL-JARDALI, F. "Impact of COVID-19 on Health Systems in the Mediterranean." *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2021*. IEMed 2021. www.iemed.org/publication/impact-of-covid-19-on-health-systems-in-the-mediterranean/
- MAROUANI, A. "The first victims of Covid-19 in developing countries? The most vulnerable workers to the lockdown of the Tunisian economy." *GLO Discussion Paper*, No. 581, 2021 www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/221745/1/GLO-DP-0581.pdf.
- MATARIA A.; BRENNAN R.; RASHIDIAN, A.; HUTIN, Y.; HAMMERICH, A.; EL-ADAWY, M. and HAJJEH, R. "Health for All by All" during a pandemic: "Protect Everyone" and "Keep the Promise" of Universal Health Coverage in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. *East Mediterranean Health Journal*. 2020 Dec 9;26(12):1436-1439. doi: [10.26719/2020.26.12.1436](https://doi.org/10.26719/2020.26.12.1436). PMID: [33355380](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33355380/).
- MESSKOUB, M. "How exclusionary social protection systems in the MENA are making the COVID-19 pandemic effects worse." March 2021 <https://issblog.nl/2021/03/03/covid-19-how-exclusionary-social-protection-systems-in-the-mena-are-making-the-covid-19-pandemics-effects-worse>.
- REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (EMRO) *Health and well-being profile of the Eastern Mediterranean Region: an overview of the health situation in the Region and its countries in 2019*, World Health Organization, 2019. <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/9789290223399-eng.pdf?ua=1>.
- AL SHAMI, F. "The Mediterranean Region: A Hotspot of Inequalities in the Aftermath of COVID-19." *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2021*. IEMed 2021. www.iemed.org/publication/the-mediterranean-region-a-hotspot-of-inequalities-in-the-aftermath-of-covid-19/.

Dossier: Social Policies and the Challenges to Improve Well-being in the Mediterranean Area

Co-creating Mediterranean Narratives of Human and Ecosystem Health in the Era of Global Climate Change

Michael Karner

Project Manager, Plan Bleu

Lina Tode

Deputy Director, Plan Bleu

Dr. Katarzyna Marini

Lead Science Officer, Plan Bleu/MedECC)
Plan Bleu/ Regional Activity Centre (UNEP/
Mediterranean Action Plan), Marseilles

Now more than ever, it is clear that the health of ecosystems and human societies are inextricably linked. It is also becoming increasingly obvious that when this fragile link is disrupted, both humans, non-human living beings and ecosystems suffer. Indeed, the past two years have illustrated that despite the tremendous productive, organizational, financial and technological capacities of our “global” societies and economies, the latter are still extremely vulnerable to global shocks such as those created by the Covid-19 Pandemic and human conflicts. Anthropogenic impacts, caused by the ongoing wars in Ukraine and Ethiopia for instance, have been worsening this dire global situation ever since most of the world seemed to be emerging from the pandemic. Food and water insecurity, fluctuations in energy supply, rocketing food, cost of living and raw material prices, extreme heat waves (such as in the Indian subcontinent and the Mediterranean) and other extreme weather events are here to stay for the foreseeable future, further compounded by ongoing land degradation, resource depletion, biodiversity loss and water, air and land pollution. All in all, it seems that we are acting not only beyond the carrying capacity of our planet, but also well beyond that of our societies as well, with grave consequences for the well-being of humans and non-humans alike.

The Mediterranean: Fragmentation, Not Integration

Instead of “thinking globally and acting locally,” the ongoing success of populist regimes fuelled by fear of “the other” and powered by segregation and discrimination suggests that our civilization is perhaps not ready to face the planetary challenges that it has unleashed, despite the fact that the technologies and governance approaches to address the majority of them are known to us, both in the short – and long term.

This worrying state of affairs is especially stark in the Mediterranean. Our region is ripe with conflict and violence taking place to a backdrop of threatened livelihoods, forced displacement and economic migration, especially that of refugees and disenfranchised youth respectively. The Mediterranean is one of the world’s regions most threatened by the manifold impacts of climate and environmental change. These include strong warming (up to 6°C by 2100) and drying. During the hottest summer on record for Europe, “the month of June 2021 saw particularly low surface soil moisture values across central and eastern parts of the Mediterranean Basin, within the 10-20% lowest values, when compared to the summer months of the 1991-2020 reference period” (Copernicus Climate Change Service, 2022). In terms of precipitation, “the projected mean rate of land precipitation in the Mediterranean is 4% per degree of global warming, which would determine a reduction in the range of 4 to 22%, depending on the scenario, by the end of the 21st century.” (Lionello and Scarascia, 2018).

The Mediterranean is also experiencing accelerating sea-level rise (presently 4 mm per year, 80 cm by 2100, possibly more), rapid and rampant urbanization, and pressures from tourism. Ecosystems are

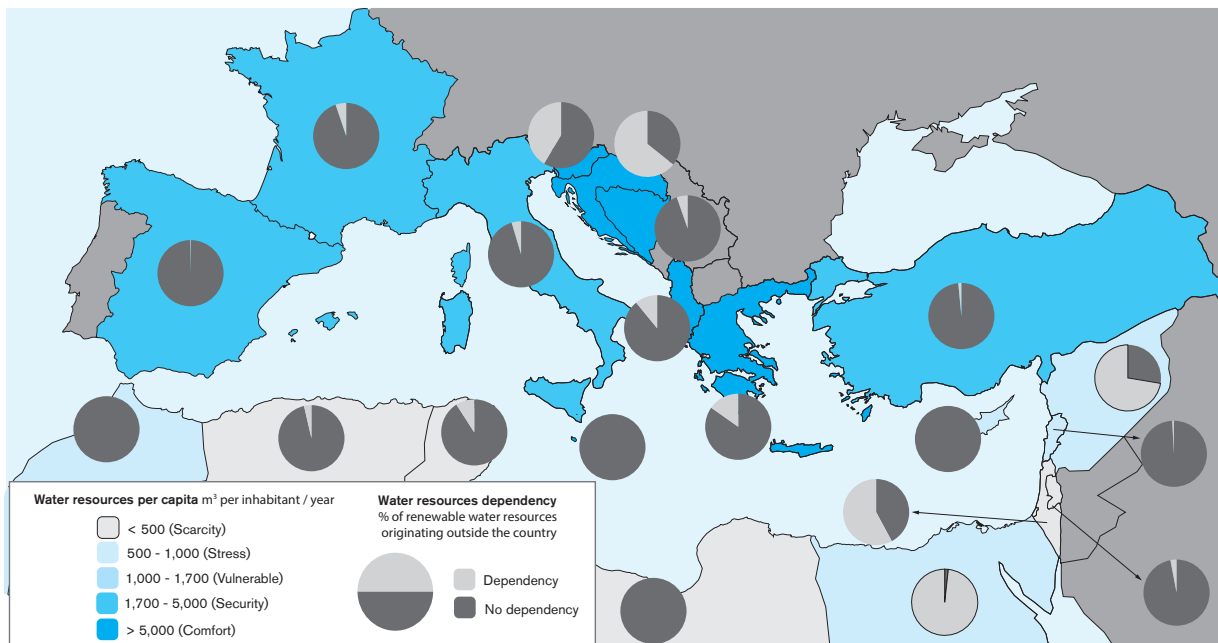
suffering from land degradation and over-exploitation, including the loss of half of the region's wetlands, overfishing (20% of fish species at risk of extinction by 2050), unsustainable agriculture, wildfires (burnt areas may double by 2100) and the invasion of non-indigenous species (tropicalization) (MedECC, 2020). Extreme weather events (floods, heatwaves, droughts, forest fires) and desertification are affecting all rims of the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean Sea itself is the most polluted sea in the world: an estimated 730 tonnes of plastic waste are dumped into it every day, with plastics accounting for 95-100% of total floating litter and over 50% of seabed litter (UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu, 2020). Air pollution is ubiquitous on the Mediterranean's coasts due to maritime and terrestrial traffic as well as industry, while noise pollution in its busy waters represents a threat to marine life, especially cetaceans. Microplastics and antibiotics in the region's water are increasing microbial resistance and are now present at every level of the food chain, including within humans. The systematic (ab)use of antibiotics in humans and livestock is increasing microbial resistance and is a catalyst for future pandemics to come. Finally, water scarcity and food insecurity are on the rise, leading to poverty, malnutrition, rural exodus,

The Mediterranean is one of the world's regions most threatened by the manifold impacts of climate and environmental change

resource conflicts and forced or voluntary displacement. Industrial food production systems produce more processed and less nutritious food (Davis, 2009), with severe health impacts on humans, such as increasing global overweight and obesity rates, including in the Mediterranean. The fact that our degraded soils now produce less nutritious fruits and vegetables is a testimony to the destructive agricultural practices that have eroded the web of life – soil – since the inception of agriculture in the Mediterranean, and especially since the mechanization of agriculture and widespread use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Indeed, the Mediterranean region is the most susceptible region in Europe to soil degradation and desertification (Ferreira et al., 2022). Moreover, natural crop varieties are less resistant to external shocks (drought and heat waves, pests, invasive species), because the genetic diversity of seeds is collapsing worldwide, due to biodi-

MAP 1

Water Resources



versity loss and ongoing efforts by a handful of agribusiness multinationals to encourage the industrial use of specific seeds, including hybrid seeds and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

How can ecosystems and human systems work hand in hand for the greater good of both humans and non-humans alike?

However, we should also bear in mind that the Mediterranean is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots: it represents 0.3% of the planet's total ocean volume, hosts 7% of identified global marine species, and presents the highest rate of marine species endemism in the world, estimated at 20-30% (UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu, 2020). It is also a hotspot of human diversity in terms of languages, cultures and religions, and a major global platform in terms of tourism (the number one destination in the world) and trade.

Weaving New Mediterranean Narratives

So how can fragmentation yield to integration in the Mediterranean? And how can ecosystems and human systems work hand in hand for the greater good of both humans and non-humans alike? A part of the answer could be related to storytelling. Could it be that what is missing is a regional narrative for human and environmental health, or rather numerous complementary and mutually reinforcing narratives for the Mediterranean? Narratives that are based on a sober appraisal of the situation that the region is facing, but nonetheless laced with resilience and dreams, and driven by a clear ambition to create a sustainable future together? Perhaps the Mediterranean is a place on Earth in which such a regional narrative(s) could take root more and more meaningfully, due to the common environmental, cultural, economic and historical ties that connect

its shores. Of course, this is not a binary process, a mere switch that one can flip. The emergence of shared horizons requires a far-reaching gaze, a will to explore divergent points of views while integrating and adapting to shifting circumstances. Moreover, developing a shared narrative in a space that is abuzz with histories, languages, overlapping identities, beliefs and geopolitical conflict and grievances is all the more challenging.

And thus, our shared narratives are still, more often than not, stories of failed hopes. Those of the political aspirations of the Arab Spring, those of the dreams of refugees and migrants crossing the sea, those of disenfranchised and marginalized Mediterranean youth, compounded by numerous stories of war, separation and mistrust. And finally, the meta-narrative of climate change and environmental degradation, which is bound to shape the future development (or regression) of our region. Together, these stories paint a rather bleak picture. Nevertheless, we must look at how different narratives can emerge, based on what the Commonland Foundation¹ calls the "return of inspiration," when describing how large-scale landscape restoration can "give people hope and a sense of purpose." Such narratives could, for instance, focus on the crucial link between a healthy environment and a healthy society, and how humans cannot be considered separate from the planet and ecosystems that sustain them. An environment in which water is over extracted, in which soils are degraded, impoverished and polluted, in which amphibian, bird, insect and pollinator populations are collapsing in line with the ongoing (anthropogenic) sixth mass extinction of species, is indicative of an unhealthy human society. A society in which the boundless potential of technology and limitless growth, which are currently fuelling interest in the utterly destructive practice of deep-sea mining, have become a new orthodoxy. A society in which obesity and malnutrition are on the rise, in which processed industrial foods are consumed on a gargantuan scale while global food waste continues unabated. But the stark reality is that our planet and its resources are finite, that a tipping point is being reached, after which there will be no return.

¹ www.commonland.com/.

The stark reality is that our planet and its resources are finite, that a tipping point is being reached, after which there will be no return

Harking back to the stories of our elders and ancestors and to the wisdom offered by indigenous knowledge around the world, one comes to the realization that a society is healthy and abundant precisely because it encourages abundance and diversity in its environment. Healthy nutrition is based on a diversity of intakes (as the Mediterranean diet illustrates), while medicine provided by nature's pharmacopoeia is still a mainstay of healthcare in numerous regions of the world. Healthy cities can better control air and noise pollution, urban heat islands and extreme weather events by welcoming nature into their midst, using trees and permeable, vegetation ground cover to retain precipitation and create cooler, more humid microclimates in the urban fabric. Healthy agriculture works with the mind-boggling diversity of fungi and micro – to macroscopic beings that inhabit and nourish the living soil. Water feeds life when it is allowed to flow freely through a myriad of channels and waterways and to infiltrate into the soil, without which it can become a destructive force during floods. As agroforestry and regenerative agriculture illustrate, high and diverse yields of healthy food can be obtained by farming in the midst of nature, based on the careful observation of how a given ecosystem works through natural succession, symbiotic processes and cooperation. These concepts are also enjoying renewed interest from policymakers and private enterprise, although it is important to ensure that “regenerative” does not become another catchphrase for entities to seem more environmentally conscious while engaging in business as usual. Thankfully, such practices are still very much alive in smallholder farms all over the world, which continue to provide a large proportion of the world's food. Rather than simplifying and uniformizing ecosystems to make them more controllable, predictable and monetizable, we would do well to remem-

ber that the prodigious genetic diversity of native seeds is one of our best allies in ensuring food security in the midst of climate change.

Land stewardship – caring for the land – is not a lofty ideal. It is part and parcel of the evolution of our species, and it is highly questionable whether our global civilization would have made it up to the year 2022 without it. Land stewardship is of course a matter of technique and observation, but it is also

We would do well to remember that the prodigious genetic diversity of native seeds is one of our best allies in ensuring food security in the midst of climate change

a matter of perception and worldview, and thus ample material for storytelling. By “treading lightly” and caring for the land, we enter a space in which humans minimize their impact on fauna and flora, strive to coexist rather than eradicate, and can even come to have a regenerative effect on their natural surroundings. Of course, the more our population grows and the more we degrade the land, the more remote this scenario seems. But it is not beyond reach: the ongoing United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration² and the recent European Union Nature Restoration Law³ are ultimately trying to reestablish this lost connection – between economic activities and environmental protection, between the necessity of human development and that of ecological integrity. This complex task is monumental in proportion, and it is highly likely that we will spend a good deal of the 21st century trying to figure it out, and perhaps the century after that, and the next one too. Only time will tell. All the more reason to get started now, through the stories we tell each other. And far away from our global metropolises, our highways and our monocultures, numerous women and men are safekeeping some of these stories of care, of co-dependent environmental and human health, for the next generations of humans and non-humans to come. These stories must not be forgotten.

² www.decadeonrestoration.org/.

³ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/nature-restoration-law_en.

Envisioning the Future to Guide the Present

Zooming out, creating and sharing regional narratives requires multiscale and multi-sectoral dialogue between different groups of stakeholders, which can help to establish feedback loops and checks and balances between different scales and levels of governance. Inclusiveness is also key to involving different types of stakeholders, with a view to working toward environmental justice, which is "...the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, colour, national origin or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies." (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2022). Indeed, the concept of environmental justice is more necessary than ever when it comes to addressing the various impacts of climate change in the Mediterranean, which are most severely affecting marginalized and increasingly impoverished groups and communities and will continue to do so in the future. The issue of language is also crucial to inclusiveness. Shared narratives usually struggle to take root in expert language riddled with acronyms, technical jargon and "insider knowledge." Striving to present complex systems and processes in simple and inclusive language is a daunting but essential endeavour. In turn, this can foster more participation and involvement by individuals and civil society, which can form a sound basis for stimulating citizen science and generating increased engagement with environmental issues.

Weaving shared regional narratives is a core focus of Plan Bleu,⁴ a Regional Activity Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme's Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP).⁵ Plan Bleu studies the long-term effects of socioeconomic development on the environment and natural resources to inform authorities and the general public and to encourage decision-making based on scientific knowledge. Plan Bleu also hosts the MedECC⁶ Secretariat (Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environ-

mental Change), an independent network of scientists assessing the available scientific knowledge on climate and environmental change and the associated risks in the Mediterranean Basin. Both Plan Bleu and MedECC are thus striving to inform Mediterranean decision-makers and the general public by creating a science-policy-society interface. On the one hand, Plan Bleu's Mediterranean Observatory on Environment and Sustainable Development⁷ provides the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention with data, statistics and indicators to feed into assessments, illustrating trends in relations between the environment and development in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, MedECC published its First Mediterranean Assessment Report⁸ in 2020. Written by almost 190 scientists from 25 countries, it assesses the best available scientific knowledge on climate and environmental change and associated risks in the Mediterranean Basin in order to render it accessible to policymakers, stakeholders and citizens. These efforts are but a drop in the sea given the magnitude of the challenges that face us, but are motivated by the will to contribute to the emergence of a shared vision for a healthy and resilient Mediterranean.

Striving to present complex systems and processes in simple and inclusive language is a daunting but essential endeavour

Developing a shared vision is a long-term process. It involves in-depth discussions between different parties and stakeholders, gathering and understanding information and research to make informed decisions, and creating spaces for stakeholders to share divergent points of view. For these reasons, Plan Bleu is currently deploying several tools to feed the emergence of regional narratives and visions, based on strategic foresight analysis

⁴ <https://planbleu.org/en/>.

⁵ www.unep.org/unepmap/.

⁶ www.medecc.org/.

⁷ www.obs.planbleu.org/en.

⁸ www.medecc.org/medecc-reports/climate-and-environmental-change-in-the-mediterranean-basin-current-situation-and-risks-for-the-future-1st-mediterranean-assessment-report/.

methods.⁹ Such methods start with the idea that the future is not knowable but that it is “imaginable,” that it can be explored, and that, based on present and past changes, we can conceive several possible futures to enlighten our present thinking, decisions and actions. Foresight analysis can thus be considered a helpful tool in decision-making and a powerful means to anticipate possible developments. For instance, mandated by the 21 countries on the Mediterranean Rim and the European Union through the Barcelona Convention, Plan Bleu’s Med2050 project¹⁰ is an ambitious exercise applying the foresight approach to the Mediterranean region in an effort to better understand the key variables and challenges affecting the region until 2050. Med2050 is also an extensive science-policy interface, that aims to mobilize decision-makers and stakeholders from the North and South of the Mediterranean beyond geographical and institutional borders. Its goal is to confront several possible visions of the Mediterranean future by 2050 (with an intermediate step in 2030) and co-construct scenarios as well as solid and grounded transition pathways towards common goals.

A further example of this approach is Plan Bleu’s Climagine¹¹ foresight methodology, which seeks to address the specific challenges of climate variability and change in coastal areas. Developed over the 2000s, it was initially applied in two key Mediterranean coastal hotspots: the Kerkennah archipelago (Tunisia) and Šibenik-Knin County (Croatia) in the context of the Global Environmental Facility’s (GEF) MedPartnership. At present, Climagine is under implementation in Kotor Bay (Montenegro) and the Tanger-Tetouan-Al-Hoceima region (Morocco) in the context of the GEF MedProgramme.¹² In all of these cases, Climagine creates inclusive platforms for periodical gatherings of key stakeholders to reflect on what their shared visions of these hotspots are in order to inform the development of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Coastal Plans (which are legal instruments), led by the Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre (Split,

Croatia), and based on the ICZM Protocol¹³ of the Barcelona Convention, a pioneering tool for decision-makers to preserve and sustainably develop the overburdened coasts of the Mediterranean. The basic postulate of Climagine is that all participants

Foresight analysis can thus be considered a helpful tool in decision-making and a powerful means to anticipate possible developments

are “experts at their own level,” with valuable knowledge, ideas and viewpoints to share. In France, Plan Bleu is also mobilizing participatory foresight approaches to inform the work of the Communauté d’agglomération de Sophia-Antipolis (CASA), located next to Nice in southeastern France. The CASadapt Project¹⁴ aims to support the CASA’s climate change adaptation efforts by engaging in a foresight exercise at the local and intercommunal scales. The project bridges scientific research and local policies in order to compare the various action plans and strategies in place regarding climate change adaptation in place at the CASA, the sub-national (Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region) and Mediterranean scales.

Together, these examples highlight the importance of participatory processes that aim at providing inclusive and transparent platforms for communication and reflection between multiple scales and stakeholders. The underlying logic is that valorizing the diversity of viewpoints, knowledge and identities can lead to the emergence of powerful, future-oriented narratives in terms of sustainability and development. In turn, gathering relevant stakeholders from institutions, research, civil society and the private sector around the same table conveys a depth to conversations and exchanges that desktop research or expert-driven studies often struggle to achieve.

⁹ www.oecd.org/strategic-foresight/whatisforesight/.

¹⁰ <https://planbleu.org/en/projects/med-2050-towards-a-shared-vision-on-a-sustainable-mediterranean-in-2050-and-transition-issues/>.

¹¹ <https://planbleu.org/projets/climagine/>.

¹² www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/projects/MedProgramme.

¹³ www.paprac.org/iczm-protocol.

¹⁴ <https://planbleu.org/page-actualite/publication-casadapt/>.

Valorizing the diversity of viewpoints, knowledge and identities can lead to the emergence of powerful, future-oriented narratives in terms of sustainability and development

Most importantly, such all-encompassing narratives can form the cornerstones for participatory governance and community engagement approaches, in which the diversity of stakeholders and the complexity of the discussions, when engaged in soberly, reflect the complexity of the ecosystems and natural processes that form the backbone of life on Earth. Hopefully, the Mediterranean region is a place where fragmentation will yield to integration, the more we humans begin to speak to each other, listen to each others' possibly divergent views and perspectives, and address disagreements constructively rather than destructively.

References

DAVIS, Donald R. "Declining Fruit and Vegetable Nutrient Composition." *HortScience*, 2009; 44:15 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21273/HORTSCI.44.1.15>.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Copernicus Climate Change Service, <https://climate.copernicus.eu/esotc/2021/mediterranean-summer-extremes>, visited on 22 June 2022.

FERREIRA, C.S.S.; SEIFOLLAHI-AGHMIUNI, S.; DESTOUNI, G. et al., "Soil degradation in the European Mediterranean region: Processes, status and consequences." *Science of the Total Environment* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.150106>.

LIONELLO, P. and SCARASCIA, L. "The relation between climate change in the Mediterranean region and global warming." *Regional Environmental Change*, 18, 2018. 1481-1493. doi: [10.1007/s10113-018-1290-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-018-1290-1).

MED-ECC (2020) *Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report* [CRAMER, W., GUIOT, J., MARINI, K., (eds.)] Union for the Mediterranean, Plan Bleu, UNEP/MAP, Marseille, 2020, 632pp.

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME/MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN AND PLAN BLEU, *State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean*, Nairobi, 2020.

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice, visited on 19 June 2022

Well-Being Societies in the Arab Region. Fighting All Kinds of Inequalities

Samir Aita

President

Cerle des Economistes Arabes

Recent analytical research by the team of the famous economist Thomas Piketty has shown that the MENA region is the “*most unequal region in the world*” (Chancel & al.). The top 10% income share monopolizes 58% of the total; the bottom 50% have less than 8%. The findings are even worse in terms of wealth concentration. The 1% at the very top owns 44% of the total wealth. The research also shows that the Gulf countries are “*the most unequal in the region*” and that “*Inequality levels have remained unchanged over the last three decades, driven by the extreme levels of within-country inequality.*”

These findings bring a new perspective to a long debate among World Bank-related economists (2015), who argue that inequalities were diminishing in the Arab countries during the decade prior to the “*Arab Spring*” events, and that the levels of inequalities as observed from household expenditure surveys cannot explain the triggering of these events. This so-called “*Arab inequality puzzle*” was assumed to have been solved by analysing subjective measures of well-being, which were assessed as “*low and plummeting*” at the end of the 2000s, especially among the 40% middle income group. Unhappiness was associated with the “*quality of government services, corruption and cronyism.*”

In fact, it is not easy to “measure” both inequalities and well-being in Arab countries. Both are extremely sensitive issues from a political economy perspective. Survey sampling and collection are difficult, and taxation data are extremely problematic to access, besides their deficiencies, especially for the higher

income and wealth groups, as well as for the large share of urban informal workers.

In line with Piketty’s methodologies, efforts have been made to assess Arab countries’ inequalities in greater depth, leading a UN agency to state recently that the Arab region is the “*only region worldwide with increasing poverty rates in the 2010s*” (ESCWA, 2022). Inequalities and poverty were exacerbated following the “Arab Spring” and after the Covid pandemic.

Inequalities, Society and State

Public awareness of inequalities is not new in the Arab countries. It emerged clearly in the writings of the Nahda, or Arab Awakening, in the late 19th century, which led to the creation of today’s Arab states. Several dimensions of inequality were then pointed out, from gender and sectarian to education and access to public services. Thus, an implicit social contract emerged between societies and their independent states, with the state understood as a public good, with a redistributive role, which fights inequalities and provides laws, education, health, electricity, etc., for all.

However, this social contract gradually came undone after the “oil boom” of the 1970s, with the ensuing “structural adjustment” policies and the progress of neoliberal globalization. These transformations depleted the illusion of what political economists call the “tunnel effect,” whereby societies tolerate inequalities for the sake of higher growth. However, levels of growth were mild, which lead in some cases to “inequality traps” and “development disasters.”

Most of the Arab countries are presently caught in such traps or disasters. The disasters are clearly observed particularly in the densely populated coun-

tries, such as Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Libya and Iraq; the traps are barely hidden by the fancy images of Dubai, Cairo or Marrakesh.

Today, a shift can increasingly be observed in research, as well as in writings and political discourse, whether this means simply pointing out inequalities or actually addressing ways to deal with them, protecting societies from current troubles, or even looking to ensure their well-being and “happiness.” However, this shift is occurring in a period of history where social movements are weak globally and Arab countries’ societies extremely “polarized,” with the state captured by “elites,” who are extremely sensitive about carrying out basic reforms, playing precisely on society’s polarization to preserve their power.

Who Is Society?

The income and wealth inequalities in the Arab region are in fact rooted in the geography of the inherited borders and oil ownership, between the Gulf countries and the much more populous non-oil producing countries. They are exacerbated within the Gulf countries themselves between the privileged nationals and the foreign workers, who have few or no rights, while in many cases forming the large majority of the population, and thus the “society.”

The gap between oil producing and non-oil producing, populous countries is even deepened by the differentiation in international partnerships and free trade agreements with the two groups; for example, those set up by the European Union. The EU, like the US, is not very keen on addressing the social rights of non-nationals, especially in the Gulf countries.

Even the adepts of the “*Arab inequality puzzle*” recognize that the within-country inequalities between different regions and the rural-urban disparities have increased significantly in the non-oil producing populous countries since the 1970s, compared with the early years of independence. Their societies became polarized, not only between the metropolises and the countryside, but also within the urban environment, with the acceleration of rural-urban migration (Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, ...), as a result of a “youth bulge.” Large and crowded informal suburbs developed, ill-serviced and ill-integrated in the historical urban social environment. This came in

addition to sectarian demographic changes (as in Iraq and Lebanon). Inter-group (ethnic and/or sectarian) inequality and its relationship with spatial inequality may have played a role in the increased incidence of conflicts and radicalization.

The polarization of the non-oil producing countries’ societies has even been aggravated between nationals and non-nationals, with the massive flows of refugees (historically Palestinians, and more recently Syrians, Sudanese,...) and migrant workers, which in some countries constitute a sizeable share of the population (Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt...).

The weakening of state institutions had dire consequences, with the double effect of the “liberalization” of public services and the elite capturing of “private” rent-seeking activities

In this context, social movements have found it extremely difficult to foster rights for “society” and populations as a whole, while the dominant discourses, including in the media, which supposedly defend “democratic change,” only serve to generate more polarization and civil conflict.

Where Is the State?

In addition, the Gulf countries’ political economy “*model*” of state and resource capture by particular “elites” spread widely. State institutions were deliberately weakened to allow such “elites” to grab “rents” and make their own redistribution on a clientelist basis.

Access to public employment, including in the military institution, was also made on a clientelist basis. The same applied for obtaining basic rights. Regional development was conditioned by the allegiance of local populations to the power system. This was not only operated using sectarian or ethnic polarization, but also sub-regional identities. The image of extreme division and polarization of society presented by the Lebanese example also

applies to varying degrees in the other countries. The basic notion of “equality in citizenship,” therefore, is endangered.

This elite “*power over the state*” system showed strong efficiency and resilience. Presidents in republican regimes were continuously “reelected” over several decades. Successions in monarchies led to strong conflicts within the ruling families.

The weakening of state institutions had dire consequences, with the double effect of the “liberalization” of public services and the elite capturing of “private” rent-seeking activities. A typical example concerns the deployment of mobile phones and information technologies. It was a long time before they had become democratized and cheap in most Arab countries.

The “Arab Spring” and other “revolutions” did not significantly change this scenario. The regime change in Tunisia was swift, and a new, more democratic constitution was enacted. However, the polarization of society continued around a multiple “elites” system, represented by political parties, the strongest being supported and financed by competing foreign powers. The blockage and weakening of state institutions continued. And it is worth noting that, 10 years after the “revolution,” nothing has changed in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, where the events first erupted, from a development perspective. The “inequality trap” is still there.

In the present context, all Arab countries are experiencing serious difficulties. The question is what can the state do to ensure it at least preserves society and reduces inequalities? Health, education, social protection and gender are clearly the highest priorities.

Healthcare

In the early independence years, the Arab countries developed a public health system based on major metropolitan hospitals, local health units and a regulatory authority for medicines and vaccinations. Public hospitals and health units offered a free service to the whole population.

Governments gradually reduced their health investments and expenditures, until the World Health Organization (WHO) determined that Arab government expenditures on health were among the lowest

worldwide. Private medicine was encouraged, including for long-term hospitalization, and public hospitals were required to be profitable or were limited to service certain categories of society.

The healthcare system became segmented, with large inequalities introduced in healthcare access, exacerbated by society’s polarization

Unlike in “welfare states,” these changes were not accompanied by the generalization of a healthcare protection system: a “social security.” Public health insurance institutions were inherited from the colonial and early independence period. But they were reserved for civil servants and formal workers in the formal private sector. Acknowledging the loss of healthcare protection for the poor, health assistance institutions developed, particularly in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), funded by local and international donors. In between, the cohorts of the informally employed, which constitute more than 60% of all employed, and their families have no coverage, either by insurance contributions or assistance.

The healthcare system became segmented, with large inequalities introduced in healthcare access, exacerbated by society’s polarization. Nationals have free access to public healthcare in the Gulf countries, while non-nationals have to rely on private insurance companies, if they can afford it. The poor and the informally employed in Lebanon have to rely on clientelist and sectarian networks to obtain health coverage, while the Palestinian and Syrian refugees depend on UN agencies.

Only in Tunisia, was there an attempt to establish and implement a universal health coverage scheme. However, it suffers major difficulties in its management of both revenues and expenses. And many of the doctors are migrating abroad. In all Arab countries, the healthcare protection systems have become extremely complex and inefficient (ESCWA, 2019), and the health indicators have severely deteriorated, after spectacular progress in the early years of independence.

Education

In these early years, the states also made their case for developing free basic education for all, even in the most remote rural areas. Public universities were established to offer opportunities for social ascent. The national curricula followed international standards and inspired feelings of belonging and citizenship.

This system also deteriorated following the transformations that started in the 1970s. Private schools and universities developed, providing “excellency” in education for the happy few, often subsidized by the state or foreign governments, by NGOs or sectarian or religious endowments. The education system became segmented, not only in the quality of education, but also in the language of teaching.

Household expenditure on education increased substantially, driven by the awareness that this was essential for social ascent in difficult times

The sons and daughters of the “elite” attended these private schools and universities providing basic teaching in a foreign language (mostly English or French), resulting in some cases in their ignorance of their own language. Thus, it is not uncommon to find such young “elites” in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco or the United Arab Emirates who have difficulties expressing themselves in public. The private universities of excellence prepare them mainly for the international business environment and for migration abroad.

In education also, government investment and spending declined as a share of GDP, with strong backing from the international financial institutions of the so-called “*Washington consensus*.” This was without taking into account the “youth bulge” and massive rural-urban migration that many of the Arab countries were experiencing in this period. The main argument for the reduction was that unemployment rates were much higher than average for the educated, and especially for those graduating from universities(!). A member of the old “elite,” Habib Bour-

guiba, the leader of Tunisian independence, used to state simply that he “*prefers educated unemployed to uneducated unemployed*”.

Facing this, social household expenditure on education increased substantially, driven by the awareness that this was essential for social ascent in difficult times. Such expenditures did not only concern private schools and universities for the wealthiest, but also additional private teaching to supplement the weaknesses of public education. This culminated with the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which have become essential in education in recent decades. The shift to online education amplified educational inequalities and deepened existing gaps, further aggravated by the Covid-19 lockdowns and online teaching. Moreover, the development of private schools with their own curricula exacerbated the polarization of society. Religious and ethnic “endowments” perpetuated and increased pre-state divides. UN agencies and other international NGOs took care of the non-national refugees and foreign workers. However, this was not sufficient in extreme situations, such as for the case of the Arab countries now in conflict or for those who host a large number of refugees. Schooling of the internally displaced (IDPs) and refugee children dropped considerably, and have remained that way for over a decade. This constitutes a time bomb regardless of what solutions are found to the conflicts.

As for the case of healthcare, social protection through universal education also falls into the “inequality trap.”

Gender Inequality

Research by Piketty’s team showed that the Arab countries exhibit the lowest female labour income share of all of the world’s regions, amounting to around 15% of the total. In five countries (Yemen, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman) the female share of income is even below 10%. Progress of this female share has been limited in the last decades, while most other regions have made advances towards gender parity.

In fact, the populous Arab countries have the lowest female participation ratios in the workforce worldwide, and female unemployment rates are high. Con-

trary to this, the Gulf countries see higher female participation and low unemployment rates, due to the large numbers of foreign female workers in domestic activities.

This low participation has often been linked to religious, cultural and social norms. However, female participation is much higher in other Islamic countries, as well as in Arab countries where the share of agriculture in the workforce is still significant (Mauritania, Sudan, ...). In fact, the massive rural-urban migration has taken a significant share of the female population out of the workforce. Formal jobs are rare in the recently constituted, crowded, informal suburbs, for men and for women.

Thus, unlike for men, 60% of whom work informally, women in the Arab countries prefer to work in formal employment in the public sector, especially in education and health. This is precisely because such jobs, which are rare in the formal private sector, are socially protected, with health insurance and paid leaves and retirement packages. Also, average female earnings are higher in Arab countries than elsewhere, suggesting that a relatively high payment is a criterion for women to participate in the labour market. Nevertheless, Arab women spend more than five hours per day on average doing unpaid care work, while men spend less than one hour.

Little research has focused on assessing women's share in total wealth. Except in Tunisia, Sunni Muslim women are segregated in terms of inheritance, in accordance with the usual interpretations of *Sharia*, by which women receive half the share of men. However, depending on the circumstance, this is not always applied. In the *Amiri* lands, for example, (state-owned properties, with private usage rights), equal shares of usufruct are applied. Also, gender equal inheritance is not applied in practice when other religious civil statuses are applied.

One would expect higher within-country inequalities in wealth for women than in income. Meanwhile, practices in the Gulf countries have led to a female share of total assets under management of up to 24%; an estimated US\$ 770 billion(!). This suggests that inequalities between women in Gulf countries and non-Gulf, populous countries are higher than for men.

The issue of gender inequalities takes on particular importance in the Arab countries now experiencing conflicts or economic crises. In these countries, the

share of women in society has become higher than usual, due to the death toll from conflicts and the outgoing migration, both of which affect men more than women.

Inequalities, Social Protection and SDGs

Health, education and gender do not constitute the only major issues regarding inequalities and lack of social protection in the Arab countries. Other issues concern children, where only 15.4% receive social protection benefits, compared with 26.4% globally (ILO). And this in a region where children aged 0-14 constitute around one third of the population. 12.2% of mothers with newborns receive social protection, compared with 44.9% globally. 7.2% of people with severe disabilities have access to social protection, compared to 33.5% globally. 8.7% of the unemployed receive compensations, compared to 18.6% globally. 24.0% of elderly people have retirement income, compared to 77.5% globally. And only 15% of the working-age population 15+ is covered by a contributory pension scheme.

Prior to Covid-19, worldwide, countries spent on average 12.9 percent of their GDP on social protection (excluding health). The share in Arab countries was only 4.6% of GDP. The annual financing gap to be closed in order to achieve SDG targets 1.3 (*implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable*) and 3.8 (*achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all*) was 7.5% of GDP in Arab countries. This is a gap that is difficult to bridge in their present conflictual and financial situations.

The Way Forward

The social unrest and conflicts that followed the Arab Spring and the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted deep, longstanding inequalities across the Arab region. The UN acknowledges that the factors driving inequalities there combine demographic dynamics, poor education, digital divides, weak institu-

tions, corruption and lack of transparency, data deficits and unaffordable housing.

Economic growth alone will not solve the “inequality traps.” UN data show that average growth in household income has been lagging in recent decades, far behind the per capita gross national income (GNI). Inequalities are increasing significantly, and, as Piketty has shown, these cannot continue indefinitely.

Economic growth alone will not solve the “inequality traps.” UN data show that average growth in household income has been lagging in recent decades, far behind the per capita gross national income

Social movements in the Arab countries need a new vitality and awakening, similar to what took place at the end of the 19th century. A new chapter needs to begin, which goes beyond polarization and fights for human rights and social protection for all. There can be no general well-being with polarization and weak state institutions, taken over and weakened by careless “elites,” who are continuously pushing their countries towards “development disasters.” Cer-

tainly, the human and financial costs of reducing inequalities and obtaining basic social protection are high. But they are undoubtedly much lower than those of the civil conflict and wars we are witnessing today.

Bibliography

- CHANCEL, L.; PIKETTY, T.; SAEZ, E.; WUCMAN, G. et al. *World Inequality Report 2022*. World Inequality Lab wir2022.wid.world
- EL SAWY, Nada. “Women’s wealth in the Middle East to grow an average 9% annually by 2023, says BCG.” *The National Business*, 1 June 2020, www.thenationalnews.com/business/money/women-s-wealth-in-the-middle-east-to-grow-an-average-9-annually-by-2023-says-bcg-1.1027466.
- ESCWA. *Inequality in the Arab region. A ticking time bomb*. E/ESCWA/CL2.GPID/2022/2, 2022.
- ESCWA. *Social Protection Reform in the Arab Countries*. E/ESCWA/SDD/2019/1, 2019.
- ILO. *World Social Protection Report 2020-2022*. 2021.
- PATHFINDERS: *From Rhetoric to Action: Delivering Equality and Inclusion*. Flagship report. September 2021.
- WORLD BANK: *Inequality, Uprisings, and Conflict in the Arab World*. Mena Economic Monitor, October 2015.

Citizens' Expectations for Individual Well-Being: Rethinking Well-Being Around the Idea of Dignity

Habib Tiliouine

Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Oran

This short paper discusses what people aspire for in order to lead the type of life they desire; a life in which they can pursue their own goals, exercise their capacities, are able to express themselves and gain more in terms of happiness and life satisfaction. Put simply, a dignified life in which they experience good levels of well-being. Nonetheless, questioning the nature of human well-being and identifying its determinants and driving factors remains a central topic of discussion in diverse social research fields. These interdisciplinary debates have recently yielded very important implications in relation to policymaking.

This paper begins by examining the notion of citizenship, and then explores the role of the socioeconomic factors in meeting the expectations of citizens in relation to their well-being. The limits of the economic factors as antecedents of any study of human well-being will be reviewed and alternative positions considered. This will lead to an analysis of the notion of dignity regarding well-being and social progress schemes. The final recommendations will throw some light on the way forward within the current contexts of the pandemic and violence.

Citizenship: An Evolving Concept

The meaning of "citizenship" has evolved considerably across time. While in the past, the label of "citi-

zen" was assigned to the richest and influential few, nowadays it is given to all a state's nationals, regardless of their social background, belief system or cultural belonging. Essentially, citizenship refers to the links between the state and its citizens. While citizens owe their allegiance, or simply loyalty, to the state, the latter, in return, guarantees its citizens a range of privileges, listening to their aspirations and providing well-timed responses to their demands. Securing them against internal and external threats also constitutes a crucial part of this role.

People's ever-growing expectations vary from one society to another, inasmuch as the specific conditions of states and their capacities to meet them vary considerably. For example, what have come to be known as "welfare states," are societies which already meet their populations' expectations in terms of basic human needs, mainly food and housing. Welfare states also have good track records in running a variety of social security programmes.¹

According to the definition of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), social security covers programmes targeting support of the elderly, children's upkeep, medical treatment, parental and sick leave, unemployment, and disability benefits, support for sufferers of occupational injury, etc.² Meanwhile, and in contradiction with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which asserts, mainly in articles 22 and 25, that all members of a population have the right to social security and an adequate standard of living, developing countries are still struggling to secure their citizens' basic needs.³

But, unfortunately, having higher incomes and more goods does not always go hand in hand with enjoy-

¹ www.britannica.com/topic/welfare-state.

² www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/social-security/lang--en/index.htm.

³ TILIOUINE, Habib and ESTES, Richard J. (eds). *The state of social progress of Islamic societies*. SpringerCham, 2016.

ing higher returns in terms of quality of life. We now know that the latter is a generic notion consisting not only of having material wealth, but also reaching good levels of life enjoyment, as exemplified by levels of satisfaction and self-reported personal happiness. Easterlin⁴ examined time series data for countries with different development levels and found that short-term fluctuations in happiness and income are positively related, but long-term trends are not associated. He observed a satiation level beyond which self-reported well-being levels do not increase, despite incomes and economic growth continuing to improve in developed nations.

Having higher incomes and more goods does not always go hand in hand with enjoying higher returns in terms of quality of life

If, at the individual level, wealth can be estimated through the level of household or personal income, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a well-established and commonly used measure of a country's economic output. GDP measures "the market value of all final goods and services produced within a country's borders over a specific time period."⁵ It combines the amount of spending for goods and services into one single number. When high, this number brings good news, and vice versa. But, Kuznets, the economist who proposed the GDP measure in the 1930s, warned against abuses of such measures. He stated that: "Distinctions must be kept in mind between quantity and quality of growth, between costs and returns, and between the short and long run. Goals for more growth should specify more growth of what and for what" (Goodwin et al., 2019). Political leaders such as Kennedy⁶ declared in 1968 that this type of macro-economic indicator "measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

This leads us to the crucial question of what makes a good policy, and as a consequence of this, what is the best way to properly assess the impacts of policies, in view of the limits of GDP? O'Donnell et al.⁷ offered a good explanation of the basic assumption behind the standard economic model which dominated economic policy evaluation for many years: "*consumers prefer more to less, that they have consistent and relatively stable preferences, and do the best that they can for themselves given the constraints they face. In the simplest version, they choose the bundle of goods and services that they like best given their incomes and the prices of each of those goods and services*" (p.18). This type of thinking has survived because it simplifies the complex task of predicting consumer behaviour, especially when prices and incomes change. In the same vein, the highly influential Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission report declared that too much emphasis on GDP as the sole benchmark can lead to misleading indications about how well-off people are and entails the risk of leading to misguided policy decisions.

"Beyond GDP": What Matters More?

How close are we to finding effective alternative measures? And to what extent is there likely to be consensus in backing any new measures within policymaking circles? Based on social research advances, propositions that do not replace, but rather complement and reinforce GDP metrics have been considered most appropriate. For instance, the Canadian Index of Well-being, the UK's Measuring National Well-being Programme, and the OECD's "Better Life Initiative" constitute a prelude to some more official propositions. The "Beyond GDP" Movement, or the beyond material welfare movement, has therefore led to the resurgence of the need for new indicators of personal and societal progress. Today, this area seems to be witnessing a conceptual inflation, with the inclusion of numerous concepts such as: Happiness, Well-being, Subjective Well-being, Personal

⁴ EASTERLIN, Richard. "Happiness and Economic Growth: The Evidence." *IZA Discussion Paper No. 7187*, 2013.

⁵ GOODWIN, Neva et al. *Principles of economics in context*. Routledge, 2019(p. 42).

⁶ STIGLITZ, Joseph E.; SEN, Amartya and FITOUSSI, Jean-Paul. "Report by the commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress." 2009.

⁷ O'DONNELL, Gusset al. "Wellbeing and policy." Report commissioned by the Legatum Institute, 2014.

well-being, Psychological well-being, Cognitive Well-Being, Emotional Well-Being, Quality of Life, Satisfaction with Life, Positive and Negative Affect, etc. Despite the differences, all these concepts fall within the soft cluster of psychological constructs. Specifically, quality of life is usually viewed as an equivalent of well-being. But, subjective well-being is considered just a small part of both of these notions, since objective well-being and objective quality of life are just parts of a whole. Recently, Barrington-Leigh (2021)⁸ indicated that the concepts of life evaluations, experienced well-being, or simply well-being refer to respondents' quantitative answers to the satisfaction with life question as a primary representative of the data informing policymakers about overall quality of life. Moreover, happiness continues to inspire research circles and international organizations, e.g., the yearly publication of *"The World Happiness Report."* Quality of life also remains an inspiring notion and represents an output variable for interventions, ranging from clinical interventions at the individual level, to interventions at state level. "Life satisfaction," however, has acquired appeal amongst behavioural economists as a "transparent, compelling, comprehensive and sensitive measure. It acts as a meaningful indicator for human well-being and is increasingly used as a quantitative guide to decision-making in government" (Barrington-Leigh, 2021: 175). This choice is proposed to help resolve the confusion that may result from using distinct measures of well-being and with policy held accountable to them in different ways. However, in order to better understand well-being, it is generally recommended that an "evaluative" or cognitive component, reflecting overall life satisfaction; an "eudaimonic" component, reflecting sense of life purpose; and an "emotional" dimension, including affective states should be considered. Despite these distinctions, the terms life satisfaction, happiness and subjective well-being are often used interchangeably (Barrington-Leigh, 2021 Maccagnan et al., 2019).⁹

Areas of great concern as determinants of well-being are related to religion and spirituality, even beyond health factors

To sum up, the Beyond GDP movement has gained impetus and researchers have succeeded in developing alternative measurements. Critics, however, are warning against the so-called "hegemony of happiness."¹⁰ Other critics have focused on the absence of analytical frameworks for using well-being knowledge to improve well-being at the population level, knowing that such a framework should combine theoretical and conceptual aspects. For example, Cummins proposed that personal well-being is the average score of satisfaction for the 7 to 8 life domains. These result from the first-level elimination of overall satisfaction with life and contribute empirically to general life satisfaction. The domains are: standard of living, personal health, achievement in life, personal relationships, personal safety, community connectedness and future security.¹¹ The religiosity/spirituality domain did not meet the set empirical condition in all the studied societies. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)¹² also developed a well-being framework, stating that well-being is multidimensional and blends both the material and the emotional aspects of lived experience. This framework includes 11 dimensions of well-being: income and wealth, jobs and earnings, housing, health status, education and skills, work-life balance, civic engagement and governance, social connections, environmental quality, personal security and subjective well-being. Additionally, it recognizes that four sets of resources generate well-being over time across each of those dimensions: economic capital, environmental capital, human capital and social capital. The OECD's effort to understand well-being led the organization to later incorporate research on "Trust" within its "Better Life Initiative."

⁸ BARRINGTON-LEIGH, Christopher P. "Life satisfaction and sustainability: a policy framework." *SN Social Sciences* 1.7: 1-25, 2021.

⁹ MACCAGNAN, Anna, et al. "Wellbeing and society: Towards quantification of the co-benefits of wellbeing." *Social Indicators Research* 141(1): 217-243, 2019.

¹⁰ AUSTIN, Annie. "On well-being and public policy: Are we capable of questioning the hegemony of happiness?." *Social Indicators Research* 127.1: 123-138, 2016.

¹¹ TILIOUINE, Habib; CUMMINS, Robert A. and DAVERN, Melanie.. "Measuring wellbeing in Developing Countries: The case of Algeria." *Social Indicators Research* 75:1-30, 2006.

¹² OECD. *How's life? 2015: measuring well-being*. Paris: OECD, 2015.

Basic Drivers of Individual Well-Being

A variety of factors has been explored in relation to well-being. For instance, O'Donnell et al. divided the factors influencing well-being into three categories: economic, social and personal.

Income: An important and recurrent finding of research is that satisfaction with income stands as the main contributor to an individual's satisfaction with life, particularly in developing countries (e.g., Tiliouine et al., 2006). Relying on this evidence, policymakers are often required to increase incomes as a way to improve a population's well-being. However, a "diminishing marginal utility of income" has been noticed, consisting of a noticeable difference in the effect of financial subsidies when comparing the poor and the wealthy.¹³ In short, it was noticed that "a poor person values an extra dollar ten times more than a person who is ten times richer than him."¹⁴

Education: Evidence has been found to corroborate high correlations between, on the one hand, education and, on the other hand, income: life satisfaction can be positively affected by education despite the difficulty in proving a direct relationship. But, the effects of education on a citizen's understanding and commitment to social and cultural issues can be more straightforward.

Employment: Surveys indicate that the negative impact of unemployment is comparable in size to the negative effect of separation from or losing one's partner. Its positive effect cannot only be noticed in improved incomes, but also in the psychological effect of being useful and can provide people with a sense of belonging and hence an improved life satisfaction. Generally, research found that any job can be better for well-being than no job.^{15,16}

Family factors: Good family life universally stands as a key factor in achieving higher levels of satisfaction with life for individuals. This is due to the support and often the protection which the family institution provides to its members. Achieving the balance between work and family life is decisive to one's well-being.

Trust, support, freedom and values in the community: The Gallup World Poll surveys gathered important international data regarding the relationship between community factors and people's life evaluations. The general results show that just six variables explained inter-country variations in average life-evaluation at a similar level: the levels of support, freedom, corruption, family break-up, life expectancy and per-head GDP. Trust within the community has recently opened new horizons for understanding issues raised in well-being research. Other areas of great concern as determinants of well-being are related to religion and spirituality, even beyond health factors.¹⁷ Most religions are found to boost morale during hard times. Comparative studies have also found the quality of the environment and availability of infrastructure within the community to be important contributors to well-being. Mental and physical health factors cannot be excluded as basic drivers of well-being in all societies. Household surveys often show that about 20 percent of the adult population in advanced countries are diagnosed with mental illness, most commonly clinical depression or chronic anxiety disorders and these states accompany low well-being (O'Donnell et al., 2014). Having pointed out some of the common determinants of well-being, I will now turn to the important concept of dignity, which is often described as a feeling, an emotion, a social value, a human attribute, etc.

Human Dignity as a Central Driver for Human Well-Being

The concept of dignity has a long history.¹⁸ All known religious traditions have the notion of dignity in their teachings. Catholicism teaches that God created man in His image and hence humans deserve the highest admiration and respect. In the Qur'an, dignity is understood as a valuable gift of the Almighty God to humankind. "Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out

¹³ HELLIWELL, John; LAYARD, Richard and SACHS, Jeffrey. *World happiness report. The Earth Institute*, Columbia University, New York, 2012.

¹⁴ O'DONNELL et al. *op. cit.*

¹⁵ HELLIWELL et al. *op. cit.*

¹⁶ O'DONNELL et al., *op. cit.*

¹⁷ TILIOUINE, Habib; CUMMINS, Robert A. and DAVERN, Melanie. "Islamic religiosity, subjective well-being, and health." *Mental health, religion & culture* 12.1: 55-74, 2009.

¹⁸ MISZTAL, Barbara A. "The idea of dignity: Its modern significance." *European Journal of Social Theory* 16.1: 101-121, 2013.

of the good things of life, and favoured them far above most of Our creation" (The Qur'an, 17:70).

In Philosophy, Kant is a major theorist of dignity. He asserted that simply because human beings are capable of reason, they should be respected and their rights preserved. This means that dignity is an absolute inner value all human beings possess. For Kant, autonomy is the foundation of dignity, and "a man cannot be used merely as a means by any man... but must be used at the same time as an end" (Misztal, 2013: 102). This assumption contradicts the idea that dignity is associated with utility. Notable is that Kant's views of dignity have impacted the world's legislation. At the end of WWII, dignity was incorporated into human rights founding texts. For instance, article 23 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that "*Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity.*" This concept inspired the human rights prohibition of inhuman treatment, exploitative working conditions, slavery, discrimination, torture, etc. Endless discussions have been held over the operationalization of the dignity concept, either as a specific norm or as a general principle in law.

During the 1990s, coupled with the gradual decline of the religious foundations of morality, mainly in the West, the concept of dignity acquired a specific appeal to social scientists, perhaps as a replacement of the old notion of *honour*.¹⁹ Nowadays, discussions over topics, such as the elderly and end-of-life care, indigenous peoples, immigration issues and, among other things, animal rights have revived interest in the notion of dignity. Similarly, within current political theories, we are witnessing a surge of interest in this concept, not only as a key legal notion, but as a fundamental aspect of a democratic society. During the recent revolts of the Arab Spring, besides freedom and economic factors, dignity was a basic demand of the populations involved.

The Tunisian revolution moved gradually from the socioeconomic to the political and from the margins to the centre, with its persistent call for jobs, dignity and freedom. It is also interesting to see that dignity has been at the heart of policies which address marginalization and reparation. For example, the Tunisian

government created the *Instance Vérité et Dignité* (IVD, Truth and Dignity Commission) with the task of identifying zones that have suffered systematic marginalization or exclusion. A life of dignity would stipulate the adoption of policies aimed at guaranteeing equity between individuals, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status and other regional, religious and cultural differences.

During the recent revolts of the Arab Spring, besides freedom and economic factors, dignity was a basic demand of the populations involved

At a wider level, the UNDP estimates that poverty is challenging human dignity worldwide. It hits 1.3 billion people, half of whom are under 18 and a third under 10, according to the 2019 Multidimensional Poverty Index. For the UNDP "mapping the essentials for a dignified life" requires looking closely at what people are deprived of when they lack the essentials for a dignified and decent life. The expanding interest in the notion of dignity led human development theorists and practitioners to further examine its implications in processes that aim to eradicate poverty, as stipulated in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The following section will examine the predominant development frameworks, such as the capability and well-being approaches and the role of dignity in alleviating hardship and socioeconomic deprivation.

Dignity, Capability and Well-Being

Firstly, when "poverty" is understood as the deprivation of the capability of living a good life and "development" as the capability of expansion, this will lead to the re-examination of human well-being and the revision of the basic assumptions behind development efforts. Amartya Sen, the economist who initiated this broad normative approach, the "*Capability*

¹⁹ BERGER, Peter. "On the obsolescence of the concept of honor." *European Journal of Sociology* 11.2: 338-347, 1970.

Approach," had to address four basic concerns with regard to the evaluation of human well-being:²⁰ 1. Individuals can differ greatly in their abilities to convert the same resources into valuable functionings ("beings" and "doings"), i.e., we should not focus on the means *per se* without considering who is to use them; 2. The phenomenon of "adaptive preferences" leads people to internalize the harshness of their circumstances, such as a person who is physically very ill, yet says they feel fine. This means that evaluation should not rely on subjective declarations alone; 3. Evaluation must be sensitive to both actual achievements ("functionings") and effective freedom ("capability"). The fact that people are able to choose among many options is important, e.g., the choice not to eat should be recognized despite the fact that starving and fasting have the same nutritional state; and 4. Evaluation should reflect the complexity of the lived reality. For instance, happiness matters for evaluating how well people are doing, but this should not be the only aspect taken into consideration.²¹

Living and working in a safe environment and being treated with respect constitute the basis for a life of dignity

It is beyond the scope of this short chapter to present a comprehensive review of the ramifications that followed Sen's propositions. Nevertheless, some brief illustrations may suffice to illustrate the link between capabilities and the development of citizens' capabilities, their well-being and the idea of dignity. In fact, many researchers expressed their discomfort with the vagueness of a lot of Sen's theoretical accounts. This led them to offer alternative explanations and suggest arguments with many applied intentions. For instance, the American philosopher, Nussbaum, emphasized that the capability approach is a human rights approach, and proposed to ground her version in the specific concept of human dignity. Nussbaum sought to provide a theory of justice which is

based on dignity, a list of fundamental capabilities and a threshold.²²

Nussbaum identified a list of ten human capabilities: 1. Life; 2. Bodily health; 3. Bodily integrity; 4. Senses, imagination and thought; 5. Emotions; 6. Practical reason; 7. Affiliation; 8. Other species; 9. Play; and 10. Political and material control over one's environment. This list identifies the central capabilities in any human life, which should be pursued and provided as basic political principles and embodied at the same time in constitutional guarantees, human rights legislation and development policy. More specifically, capability 7 in the list provides for the elimination of any discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin, etc. As for capability 10, this indicates a political environment which should allow for effective participation in political choices that govern one's life and having the right to political participation, protection of free speech and association.

In contrast with Sen's emphasis on freedom, Nussbaum's account is motivated by a view of human dignity, which she links to flourishing in the Aristotelian sense. She argues that her fundamental capabilities follow from the requirements of dignity. This was tested and adapted over the course of an extensive cross-cultural dialogue she carried out. Furthermore, for Nussbaum "everyone must be entitled by their governments and relevant international institutions to each of the cited capabilities in accordance with a 'sufficientarian' principle that specifies the minimum requirements of justice." She argues that while access to these ten capabilities is required by human dignity, the free choice of not exercising one's rights should also be respected as an aspect of one's dignity, e.g., fasting may have a negative influence on bodily health, but should be respected if done voluntarily (see Wells).

Nussbaum's propositions were also intensely criticized on epistemological, as well as ideological grounds. For example, the theory is viewed as stemming from an American liberal ideology, rather than global human values. For some researchers, the theory reflects an elitist vision and contains a paternalistic attitude. Nussbaum recognized that in order to

²⁰ see Sen's most influential and comprehensive account of his: *Capability Approach*, SEN, Amartya *Development as Freedom*, Anchor, 2000.

²¹ WELLS, Thomas. "Sen's Capability Approach." from <https://iep.utm.edu/sen-cap/#H1>

²² NUSSBAUM, Martha C. "Creating capabilities: The human development approach and its implementation." *Hypatia* 24.3: 211-215, 2009.

be implemented, her theory is left to democratic deliberation and decision by those concerned. However, if Sen succeeded in providing a general framework for evaluating the quality of life of people, Nussbaum, among others, produced a more or less coherent philosophical theory of justice.

Citizens' Dignity, Well-Being and Happiness: A Tentative Conclusion

It is clear from the way human development is approached that philosophers are primarily concerned with analysing what constitutes a good life and how people should live it. Meanwhile, the prime concern of social sciences, mainly the empirically-oriented ones, lies with measuring and designing interventions to improve citizens' lives, either as individual citizens or as communities. However, these approaches complement each other. While dignity can act as a basic shared value that should be promoted for all, policymaking should stress capabilities which enable citizens to enjoy diverse life opportunities to the fullest extent.

Materialistic penchants alone have led to the expansion of consumerism, little respect for environmental considerations and an increase of inequalities between the world's regions and between people in the same society. These, among other reasons, have led to increased levels of misery, violence, hatred and multiple fractures within and among human societies. Living and working in a safe environment and being treated with respect constitute the basis for a life of dignity. Such a life is also expected to enhance feelings of well-being, if one considers what social research has proved regarding the relevance to human well-being of, in particular, having a decent job, a family, rewarding social relationships and feeling accepted. Of course, people do differ in their life circumstances, but some levels of equity remain possible, meaning a justice system could be implemented based on human dignity and a well-negotiated list of capabilities.

Major recent events, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, have proved once again how vulnerable humans, the world's economy and geopolitical relationships are. The right to security and peace seems greatly jeopardized with uncalculated ventures, such as the war launched by Russia against the sovereign State of Ukraine. Now the race for developing and acquir-

ing more sophisticated weapons is escalating and this unfortunately is having nasty consequences on the world economy and people's general quality of life and well-being.

Major recent events, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, have proved once again how vulnerable humans, the world's economy and geopolitical relationships are

It is worth remembering that the main functions of a government are to identify the ever-expanding expectations of people by opening public dialogue, setting development priorities and allocating the needed resources. Priorities however, differ from one society to another, and to some extent they vary from one community to another in the same country. This applies to Mediterranean countries, which are far from being a homogenous group, culturally, religiously, linguistically and, most obviously and above all, economically. They therefore have different expectations with regard to development priorities. Richer nations of the region have the institutions, the infrastructure, and the required know-how. They are attractive destinations to all kinds of competences. In contrast, the other regions of the Mediterranean are mostly impoverished and deprived of basic political, cultural and social rights. Institutions are generally weak, corrupt and badly managed. Non-organized immigration, for instance, is the cause of tragedy upon tragedy, with thousands drowning every year in Mediterranean waters. Moreover, the stability of the region is at risk, with the ongoing armed struggles in North Africa, sub-Saharan regions and the Middle East (e.g., Libya, Syria, Palestine, etc.). In these latter contexts, restoring human dignity is a priority. Autocratic ruling, mismanagement of social services, anarchical development and corruption are all aggressions against the basics of human dignity. This concept, which should be an underlying principle of all development policies, is expected to strengthen populations' well-being. In turn, such strength will create the required dynamics to induce the negotiated socio-cultural and economic change

Dossier: Social Policies and the Challenges to Improve Well-being in the Mediterranean Area

City Diplomacy: An Emerging Tool to Enhance Well-being in MENA Cities

Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi
City Diplomacy Lab, Paris

“While it comes into existence for the sake of life, it exists for the sake of good life,” argued Aristotle about the polis, the city-state of Ancient Greece. Today, this primal vocation of cities appears all the more difficult to fulfil. The impressive acceleration in urbanization has generated a long list of challenges in social, economic and environmental terms in urban centres worldwide.

This dynamic appears particularly evident in the MENA area, whose urban population has increased from 35 percent in 1960 to 66 percent in 2020,¹ a consequence of both fertility rates and internal and international migration. This increase in population has, in fact, generated growing inequalities, made manifest by informal neighbourhoods, unemployment, especially among youth, increasing pressure on infrastructure, and health risks related to the unsanitary housing conditions of a large part of the population, a primary cause of the spread of infectious diseases such as Covid-19. In addition to this, for millions of Libyan, Yemeni, Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian, and Israeli citizens come risks related to wars, conflicts and systemic violence.

Hence, it seems clear that the challenge of improving the well-being of their residents appears particularly complex for cities in the MENA region. However, an innovative tool is strengthening the capacity of such municipalities to act in this field: city diplomacy. Through the skillful use of it, in both its regional and global dimensions, municipalities obtain technical, economic and political resources through which to

improve the various indicators that make up the concept of urban well-being. This article provides insight into the regional impact of this burgeoning dynamic, outlining its potential evolution.

Urban Well-being in the MENA Region

Addressing urban well-being in MENA poses a sizeable conceptual challenge. First, the region's cities are heavily influenced by its stark political, socioeconomic and cultural diversities and contradictions. Therefore, it seems reasonable to question whether it is legitimate to consider urban centres of such different sizes, development levels and even security conditions as coherent and comparable entities.

Nevertheless, in the MENA region, as in the rest of the world, cities share two main characteristics, the first stemming from their institutional identity, the second pertaining to the role they play in major transnational dynamics on both regional and global scales.

From an institutional angle, regardless of the actual powers and rules of operation assigned to them by national law, cities universally constitute the political institution closest to citizens. This allows them not only to be able to gain in-depth knowledge of local dynamics but also to engage citizens and local actors in participatory strategies.

This closeness takes on its whole meaning precisely in relation to major transnational dynamics that represent predominantly urban challenges bearing severe repercussions for citizens' well-being. From climate change to migration, from cultural diversity to uncontrolled urbanization, humanity's major global

¹ WORLD BANK GROUP, “Urban Population (% of Total Population) – Middle East & North Africa | Data.” accessed 16 May, 2022, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=ZQ>.

challenges indeed affect MENA cities with particular harshness. They are also compounded by challenges with a particularly marked regional dimension related to the influx of displaced persons, the challenges of terrorism and administrative centralization of governance and resources, which often goes hand in hand with considerable limits in terms of spending capacity on the part of municipalities.

It is precisely the awareness of sharing challenges of such urgency that has prompted a growing number of cities in the region to explore the innovative tools offered by city diplomacy.

A Diplomacy of Cities to Address Shared Challenges

The term “city diplomacy” refers to municipal governments’ practice of cross-border interaction with their peers from all over the world internationally with each other and with actors such as international organizations, development banks, NGOs and even foreign nations. Like nation-state diplomacy, city diplomacy takes the form of a series of bilateral and multilateral interactions aimed at pursuing interests or promoting values.² This dynamic represents a major contribution to the evolution of how international relations work, overtaking the centuries-old order enshrined in the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, under which the only legitimate actors on the international stage are countries.

Launching what is now generally considered to be the (re)entry of cities on the international stage, namely the creation in 1913 of the International Union of Cities, the first international network of cities, the then-mayor of Ghent Emile Braun illustrated what persists in fact to this day as city diplomacy’s purpose and driving force: “to deliberate on the major problems that arise from the universal nature of the conditions of present-day life, which are more or less the same everywhere.”³

Through knowledge exchanges and the launching of joint projects, the countless bilateral twinning and cooperation agreements and more than 300 international networks of cities have enabled them to de-

ploy concrete solutions to their most pressing challenges. This dynamic is clearly visible in the way the United Nations has changed its interaction with municipal governments, initially categorized as mere expressions of civil society and now recognized as actors in their own right.

It seems clear that the spread of city diplomacy in the region is largely linked to cross-border collaboration with municipalities and networks in more decentralized countries

As illustrated by the recent “Our Common Agenda” by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the involvement of cities is an integral part of the desired “more inclusive multilateralism.” In line with this aspiration are the many initiatives that global and regional international organizations have devoted to cities, ranging from platforms to foster their exchange of best practices and joint planning (such as the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, UNICEF’s Child Friendly Cities Initiative), to capacity-building activities for mayors (Asia Pacific Mayors Academy of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and UN-Habitat), and official gatherings to enable them to develop joint advocacy (Forum of Mayors of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe).

Urban Well-being and the Diplomacy of MENA Cities

Although still less widespread than in Europe or the Americas, city diplomacy represents a burgeoning dynamic in North Africa and the Middle East. In line with the global dynamic, city diplomacy in that region owes its diffusion precisely to its ability to foster a joining of forces to address shared challenges to the urban dwellers’ well-being and the sustainability of ur-

² KIHILGREN GRANDI, Lorenzo, *City Diplomacy*, Cities and the Global Politics of the Environment (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-60717-3>.

³ UCLG, “100 Years: Testimonies.” 2013, [www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/libro%20centenario-web%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/libro%20centenario-web%20(1).pdf).

ban development. It is not surprising, then, that such action is particularly dedicated to combating the socioeconomic consequences of unregulated urbanization, climate change, the welcoming and integration of migrants, unemployment, inequalities by gender and socioeconomic group, and the often inadequate structures of municipal finance, which is highly dependent on transfers from the central government.

It is the specific characteristics of these dynamics in MENA cities that nourish the latter's international action regarding the concept of urban well-being on a daily basis

The latter challenge is actually the consequence of the very pronounced level of centralization in the region, with only a few partial exceptions. Paradoxically, in fact, among the main drivers of the diplomacy of the region's cities appears to be precisely the desire to overcome the constraints imposed by their respective national systems on the deployment of strategies aimed at ensuring urban welfare and sustainability. It is a challenge that unites the region's cities and has found valuable allies in actors outside of it. Indeed, it seems clear that the spread of city diplomacy in the region is largely linked to cross-border collaboration with municipalities and networks in more decentralized countries, especially those in Europe. Countless European cities and city networks have shown a marked willingness to collaborate with counterparts in the MENA region. This is reflected in networks such as MedCities and programmes such as Mediterranean City-to-City Migration (MC2CM), which are designed with a strong partnership and exchange perspective among cities in the macro-region.

Such interaction involves, with increasing frequency and intensity, even the municipalities most undermined by conditions generated by war and armed violence. This is particularly the case with Libyan municipalities, the targets of numerous capacity-building programmes by European partners such as ANCI and VNG International, the Italian and Dutch national city networks, respectively.

Quite often, foreign and international partners also play a key role in strengthening collaboration between cities in the same MENA country, involving them in projects that enable dialogue, collaboration and the exchange of best practices. For example, the National Federation of Tunisian Municipalities (FNVT) has, over the past few years, obtained support from UNDP, Cities Alliance, GIZ, VNG International and Medcities to strengthen the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Similarly, UNDP and the European Union have launched the Capacity-building Programme of Local Development Actors (CapDel) for Algerian cities, in partnership with the Ministry of Interior.

Alongside these transregional partnerships, a regional and cultural component completes the landscape of MENA city diplomacy. Examples are the activities of networks based on Arab identity (Arab Towns Organization, based in Kuwait City) and Islamic identity (Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities, affiliated to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, whose General Secretariat is based in the city of Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). Islamic urban identity has also been defined from an environmentalist perspective by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for Education, Science and Culture (ISESCO) with the recent launch of the Islamic Green City Excellence Award.

At the Maghreb scale, existing cooperation between cities has benefited from the impetus of external contributions, such as in the case of the *Coopération des Villes et Municipalités au Maghreb (2016-2019)* programme, sponsored by GIZ with the aim of strengthening municipal leadership in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia in the field of sustainable development, or numerous technical and political meetings organized by the International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF). Maghreb cities have also benefited from such support in the framework of Africa-wide activities, such as within the framework of the AIMF itself, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA), and thematic projects such as ASToN, a network of African cities sponsored by the French Cooperation Agency (AFD).

In summary, it is the specific characteristics of these dynamics in MENA cities that nourish the latter's international action regarding the concept of urban well-being on a daily basis. Among the multiplicity of

areas involved to which this methodology is applied, this article directs its reflection to two of the main challenges to the well-being of MENA cities: migration and the relationship with nature.

Migration and Diplomacy in MENA Cities

Cities represent the primary destination for migrants and asylum seekers. It follows that, almost everywhere in the world, the way in which international migration is managed affects the general level of urban welfare in profound and multifaceted ways. Such management, therefore, is necessarily holistic to embrace both its manifold impact on the lives of its protagonists, that is, the welcoming and integration of the migrants themselves understood as individuals and groups, as well as what their arrival implies in terms of social, economic and cultural development on an urban scale.

While not being able to intervene in the management of migration flows or the status of migrants themselves – competencies firmly in the hands of national governments – a proactive attitude toward the reception and integration of migrants and asylum seekers is imperative for municipal governments. As a matter of fact, whenever not adequately managed on a local scale, international migration is a potential cause of socioeconomic indicators worsening related to the difficulty of absorbing an increased labour force and ensuring a peaceful coexistence among the different communities in the territory. Moreover, the fact that the influx of people requires adjustments to services such as transportation, waste management, or medical facilities to prevent them from being overburdened is generally well understood by both local decision-makers and public opinion. Finally, this is compounded by a challenge in terms of equity and decent working conditions, linked to the process of informalization that migration often generates in urban economies, with the spread of informal and underpaid labour often representing the first, if not the only employment opportunity for large segments of migrants, particularly if undocumented.

It is worth noting that, over the past decades, the relationship between MENA cities and the migration

phenomenon has gradually evolved. From being almost exclusively areas of origin and transit of migration, these urban areas are now also destinations for migration. Whether it is sub-Saharan migration to cities in countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, or migration from Africa and Asia directed toward Gulf cities, a significant share of the region's urban centres are thus confronted with the multifaceted and complex impact of incoming migration.

Indeed, such shared challenges and characteristics have prompted cities in the MENA region to initiate and join multiple multilateral urban partnerships on a global and regional scale on migration. The most celebrated actors active in the urban dimension of migration in the MENA region turn out to be the Mayors Migration Council and Cities Alliance (active on a global scale), the Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue, the Mediterranean MC2CM initiative, and various bilateral programmes within the framework of relationships between national networks of cities, as well as twinning and cooperation agreements. Other major partners are international organizations and, in particular, the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The activities implemented through such partnerships are numerous and highly varied. They include peer-to-peer exchanges – often facilitated by international experts – the production of research on qualitative and quantitative aspects of migration on an urban scale, the adoption of joint agendas and strategies, and advocacy directed essentially at strengthening the voice of cities in national, as well as regional and global contexts.

The Regional and Global Challenge of Urban Environmental Policies

As a global phenomenon par excellence, climate change has a particularly catastrophic impact on cities in the MENA region, whose structural vulnerability to climate hazards increasingly and severely undermines the well-being of residents.⁴

⁴ NAMDAR, Razieh; KARAMI, Ezatollah and KESHAVARZ, Marzieh, "Climate Change and Vulnerability: The Case of MENA Countries." *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information* 10, no. 11 (2021): 794, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijgi10110794>.

The consequences for the well-being of citizens are obviously numerous, starting with the serious health risks related to both pollution and heat island phenomena, a 90 percent urban phenomenon that increasingly puts the very survival of MENA urban dwellers at risk.⁵

Also notable is the impact of climate change in terms of food security. In fact, climate disruption significantly worsens a systemic problem in a region whose percentage of arable land is the lowest in the world (4.6 percent of total land, according to 2018 World Bank estimates). Increasing desertification and floods, combined with population growth, threaten to make MENA countries even more dependent on foreign food imports, exposing the population to volatile international prices.

The increasingly celebrated strength of international city action lies precisely in its ability to enable cooperation quickly and often informally, but effectively

However, the significant differences observed in scientific studies related to the vulnerability of MENA countries to climate change make it impossible to identify a one-size-fits-all solution and underscore the need to integrate context-specific adaptation and mitigation into plans.⁶ The increasingly celebrated strength of international city action lies precisely in its ability to enable cooperation quickly and often informally, but effectively, according to the specific challenges, both bilaterally and within multilateral programmes and city networks.

The environmental diplomacy of MENA cities thus appears to consist of two components, mainly developed together: a branding dimension and a cooperation component.

While the purpose of branding is certainly to make the city more attractive by climbing international urban competitiveness rankings, it is increasingly the

subject of joint reflection and sharing of best practices. Similar to what is happening in the field of migration, MENA cities appear to be fully and increasingly integrated into global thinking related to sustainable urban development.

A recent example is that of the 15-minute city, a concept developed by French-Colombian academic Carlos Moreno for the city of Paris and which owes much of its rapid global diffusion precisely to city diplomacy. In fact, this concept, which aims to rethink cities from the perspective of sustainability and quality of life by providing access to all essential and quality-of-life-related services (nature, arts, culture, sports), has become a major topic of discussion among a growing number of MENA cities thanks to the fact that it has been conveyed by numerous city networks with members in the region, such as ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group.

Also noted in this debate is the growing importance of cities' interactions with international organizations, research institutions and universities based or active in the region. Indeed, these actors are increasingly playing the role of facilitators of municipal and regional government involvement in the international climate change debate.

Despite being a slogan embraced by a growing number of mayors in the region, the 15-minute city concept exemplifies the considerable obstacles in turning the environmentalist ambition of MENA mayors into a reality. Reversing dynamics such as the feeble urban density rate, limited planning of urbanization processes, and the resulting high dependence on cars will require massive investment in terms of urban interventions and infrastructure, long-term strategic planning capacity, and financial capability which, for now, most cities in the region, with the exception of those in the Gulf, do not have.

How to Unlock the Full Potential of City Diplomacy for Well-being in the Region?

The broad participation of MENA cities in countless international meetings and virtual or hybrid events,

⁵ ZITTIS, George et al., "Business-as-Usual Will Lead to Super and Ultra-Extreme Heatwaves in the Middle East and North Africa." *Npj Climate and Atmospheric Science* 4, no. 1 (23 March, 2021): 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41612-021-00178-7>.

⁶ NAMDAR; KARAMI and KESHAVARZ, op.cit

dedicated over the past few months to migration and combating climate change, demonstrates the existence of a regional debate to secure and improve the well-being of urban residents and their full integration into the debate on a global scale. However, it seems clear that progress on the ground remains partial in every part of the region, revealing the need for strengthening the capacity for strategic vision and concrete application of solutions needed on a large scale, moving beyond short-term and one-off pilot project-based approaches. Equally important is overcoming the obstacles associated with the already mentioned historical centralization of MENA countries, resulting in the limited autonomy of municipalities in terms of financial planning and financial resources, which are almost always inadequate in view of the magnitude of the challenges faced.

A promising response comes from the most recent, twofold evolution of city diplomacy. From the point of view of concrete actions carried out in the framework of international projects, almost all of them have been supplemented in recent years, enabling them to be streamlined and strengthened with a special emphasis on participation, impact assessment and communication.⁷

From the perspective of the long-standing obstacles related to centralization, advocacy campaigns by cities and their international and regional networks

are benefitting from the increasingly convinced support in terms of both content and visibility from international organizations, which in the MENA region are headed by the UN Regional Commissions for West Asia (ESCWA) and Africa (UNECA) and UN-Habitat. Cities and international organizations are thus forging an “informal pact,” whose overt vocation is to innovate the management of well-being and sustainability according to the multilevel governance approach.

Cities and international organizations are thus forging an “informal pact,” whose overt vocation is to innovate the management of well-being and sustainability according to the multilevel governance approach

Will cities and international organizations in the MENA region be able to develop joint advocacy capable of fully engaging national governments in such a shared effort for urban well-being? Given the urgency of what is at stake, one must hope for a prompt positive response.

⁷ KIHILGREN GRANDI, op.cit

Dossier: Social Policies and the Challenges to Improve Well-being in the Mediterranean Area

Job Creation, Innovation and Sustainability in the Arab Countries in the Southern Mediterranean: Will this Time Be Different?

Zafiris Tzannatos¹

Lebanese Center for Policy Studies

Arab countries had made some gains since the last decade of the 1980s. Then came the global financial crisis in 2008, which was soon followed by the Arab Spring in 2011, a period associated with significant political and economic disruptions, as well as domestic conflicts and refugee crises. The more recent Covid-19 pandemic took a toll on lives and livelihoods due to its adverse effects on health and economies, and not only among Arab countries. Today, countries are trying to reignite their economies, facing the dual challenge of combating inflation and avoiding the recessionary prospects that typically come with it, which have been amplified by the Ukraine-Russian war and the associated additional concerns for food insecurity and the adverse environmental impact of the return to the use of non-renewable resources following the energy crisis.

While it is difficult for individual countries to avoid the fallout from what seems to be a looming perfect storm globally, some may weather its effects better than others – like in the case of countries that adopted different responses to the pandemic. Still, many Arab countries face the future without having effectively addressed many pre-existing challenges, especially in areas such as employment, innovation and, more broadly, private sector development, and most importantly governance and modern and transparent institution building. This paper discusses these challenges for Arab countries in the southern Mediterranean, namely Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority

(aka occupied Palestinian territory: oPt), Syria and Tunisia. For the purpose of brevity, this group is referred to hereinafter as SMAC (southern Mediterranean Arab countries).

The SMAC are a very diverse group of countries. Politically, some have been and still are in the midst of outright conflict. Economically, others are already facing insolvency due to high public debts or are likely to face it in the not-so-distant future unless they receive support in the form of international assistance, which is often driven by donors' geopolitical considerations. The food insecurity resulting from the Ukraine-Russia war is affecting some of the SMAC more than others. Soaring energy prices are benefiting oil producers at the expense of oil importers. So, making generalizations for these countries is as difficult as it is risky.

However, the SMAC share two common characteristics. On the one hand, their statistical base is generally weak: the available indicators are often incomplete, made available selectively or too late, and at times are irrelevant for assessing what they are supposed to diagnose. On the other hand, the SMAC have never been short on knowing (or being told) what they should do. In a nutshell, they have to do everything, do it better and do it now.

The last two observations drive the present paper, which offers a number of statistics, with the appropriate caveats, in an attempt to infer how policymaking can produce better results in the future compared with the past. The objective is not to add to the already overwhelming long list of recommendations, as none have been omitted since the 1980s, if not earlier. Rather, the aim of this paper is to explore whether there is any misuse of statistics or leaps of faith in

¹ The author wishes to thank Khalid Abu Ismail (ESCWA), Aya Jaafar (ILO) and Mary Kawar (ERF) for their comments.

the region’s development discourse. The coverage is unavoidably eclectic given the shortness of space. The paper therefore focuses, first, on the case of youth and women in the labour market, and then on the interplay between political consideration and economic outcomes from the perspective of innovation, growth, employment creation and sustainability.

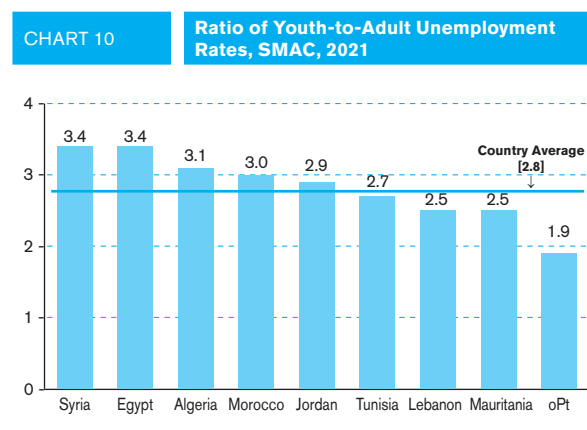
Whether jobs are decent is an additional requirement in all economies, but there cannot be decent jobs, if there are no jobs in the first place

There are three conclusions from the discussion. First, although lack of job creation and the high incidence of unemployment appear to be a youth and gender issue in the SMAC, the true causes of unemployment are structural or, alternatively said, the region’s economies do not create jobs for youth *and* adults and also for women *and* men. Second, as already noted “there is significant evidence that cronyism has led to stagnant economic growth and poor job creation” (Galal et al., 2017). And third, lack of innovation is yet another symptom of an anemic private sector, as are sluggish productivity growth and low wages. In short, the SMAC are facing the future with deeply rooted pre-existing challenges that have not been addressed for decades. It remains to be seen whether the governments in the region will address the emerging challenges differently to in the past or focus on short-term crisis management, as they did after the global financial crisis (Tzannatos, 2010) and the Arab uprisings (ILO, 2012).

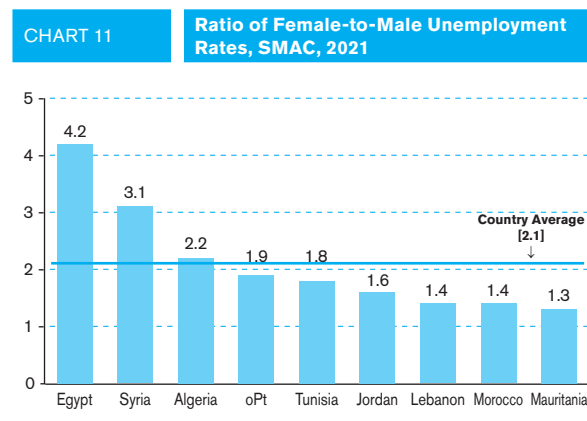
Unemployment Is More an Adult and Male Issue

Job creation is a surefire way to reduce unemployment. Whether jobs are decent is an additional re-

quirement in all economies, but there cannot be decent jobs, if there are no jobs in the first place. So, focusing on the former, there is nearly universal consensus that “Unemployment in this [MENA] region remains, by and large, a phenomenon affecting young people between 15 and 24 years old and, more *particularly*, [emphasis added] young women.”² This is based on the premise that the youth and women’s unemployment rates are much higher than those of adults and men (Chart 10 and Chart 11). In fact, among the SMAC, the youth unemployment rate is 2.8 times higher than the adult unemployment rate, the two rates averaging, respectively, 30.5 percent and 11.3 percent. And the female unemployment rate is nearly double that for men, the two rates being, respectively, 22.4 percent and 12 percent.



Source: ILO modelled estimates 2022.



Source: ILO modelled estimates 2022.

² International Labour Organization (2015) as quoted in Ayadi, Rym and Raul Ramos (2017). See also Suleiman (2021) who agrees that “unemployment is largely a youth unemployment issue.” In a recent publication by the IMF all references to unemployment are about youth only, see Verdier et al. (2022).

The significant youth-to-adult difference is often attributed to the poor quality of the output from the education system or its irrelevance to the needs of the labour market, as well as a lack of skills and motivation among the youth who are also said to be picky when it comes to accepting jobs that do not match their “unrealistic” aspirations – a proposition that can be compared to the fact that the Arab region is the only one in the world where the risk of unemployment increases as the level of education increases.³ With respect to women, another belief is that religious, institutional and social values are responsible for their exclusion from activities outside the home, which are not compatible with persisting patriarchal values.

Country	Year	Female	Male	Youth	Adult
Algeria	2017	35%	65%	36%	64%
Egypt	2020	37%	63%	39%	61%
Jordan	2020	22%	78%	37%	63%
Lebanon	2019	40%	60%	38%	62%
Mauritania	2017	42%	58%	34%	66%
Morocco	2016	30%	70%	36%	64%
oPt	2021	32%	68%	33%	67%
Syria	2010	39%	61%	52%	48%
Tunisia	2017	42%	58%	31%	69%
Average	2018	36%	64%	37%	63%
Total (,000)		2,506	4,653	2,684	4,475
Memo items (%)					
World		43%	57%	35%	65%
Arab League*	latest	41%	59%	33%	67%
South Europe**		51%	49%	17%	83%

* The Arab League includes all 22 Arab countries.

** The South Europe region includes 16 countries.

Source: ILOSTAT: National Sources (countries) and modelled estimates (world and regions).

These factors relate to the employability and/or the preferences of citizens and households, and they may well play a role. The issue is whether that role is an important one as it considers only one part of the labour market (the labour supply side). What is missing from this narrative is the labour demand side. Employability and preferences on the labour supply side do not create employment. The question therefore becomes, if there were enough jobs for youth and women so that their unemployment rates could be reduced or even eliminated, would this result in a

significant reduction in unemployment? Or to put in another way, is unemployment predominantly a school-to-work transition and gender issue?

The answer to these questions is mainly “no.” And this is because adults and males constitute a much larger share of the unemployment pool than youth and females. The difference between adults and youth is 1.8 million and 2.1 million between males and females (Table 9). In ratios, there are 67 percent more unemployed adults than unemployed youth, and 86 percent more unemployed males than unemployed females. The share of unemployed youth in the total unemployment pool among the SMAC (37 percent) is practically comparable to the world average (35 percent) and also to that of all Arab countries (33 percent). And although in South Europe the share of unemployed youth is half that of the SMAC, this is largely because almost half of the total population in the southern Mediterranean (47 percent) is under the age of 24, with the majority of this share (31 percent of the total population) below the age of 15 years. This makes the SMAC one of the youngest regions in the world, after sub-Saharan Africa, where 62 percent of the population is under 24.⁴

Creating more and better jobs is mainly about increasing market contestability to ease firm entry, and to ensure efficient growth and firm exit

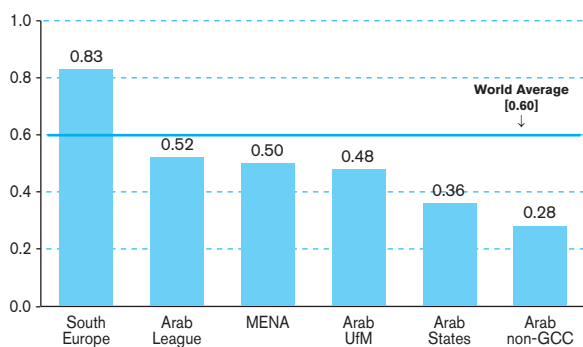
However, and rather unexpectedly, in the rest of the world and also among southern European countries, female unemployment is more serious than among the SMAC: the share of females in the unemployment pool is only 36 percent among the SMAC, but 43 percent in the world, and more than half (51 percent) among southern European countries. To some extent, the low share of Arab women in the total unemployment pool is the result of their low labour force participation rate. This is a labour supply issue and calls for different policies than those relating to unemployment.

³ Quoted from Ghafar (2022).

⁴ World Bank Development Indicators.

As for the “particular” phenomenon of unemployment affecting especially young Arab women, the number of unemployed young Arab women is significantly smaller than the number of unemployed young Arab men (Chart 12). The difference is strikingly smaller than that found in southern European countries and well below the global average. In terms of numbers, there are nearly one million (974,000) more unemployed young Arab males than young Arab females. Moreover, adult females have a higher share of unemployment among females than young women.

CHART 12 Ratio of Female/Male Unemployed Youth



Source: ILO modelled estimates 2022.

Youth unemployment is a serious issue. Although attention paid to it (and also to women) is not misplaced, it misses the point that total unemployment is a bigger issue as it also affects adults and men. Focusing only on the unemployment *rate* is not a reliable indicator of the magnitude and causes of unemployment.⁵ For example, it leads to the (in part justified) inference that the problem of youth unemployment is the employability or attitudes of the youth. If this reasoning is accepted, then the problem is delegated to the education system, teachers and families, that is, the supply side of the labour market. Similarly in the case of women, it gives undue weight to social factors while a prime determinant of female employment during the course of development is how tight labour markets are (on the labour demand side) and how high wages are to attract women into the labour market (on the labour supply side). All in all, the level

and type of employment and therefore unemployment depend on the level and structure of aggregate demand, in short, it is primarily a macroeconomic issue. Specific labour policies, including active labour market programmes, can help, but only within the limits set by the rate and type of economic growth. This is discussed below.

The Big Issue: The Capture of the Private Sector

Governments can affect job creation, reduce informality and promote entrepreneurship and innovation through enlightened visions and effective policies. This depends critically on whether governments are prepared to create a level and transparent playing field in the private sector compared to preserving the political control and economic interests of a small group of insiders. The Arab countries, and within them the SMAC, have generally failed to let the private sector off the leash. This has led to the creation of “rentier states” rather than “productive states” (Raz-zaz, 2013). The role of governance cannot be over-rated in this respect.

A common characteristic across Arab countries, including the SMAC, is their anocratic, if not outright autocratic, governance. In addition to political oppression, economic growth has also been depressed. Focusing on the decade preceding the Arab uprisings in 2011 is illuminating. By that year, the impact of economic reforms that had been initiated in the early 1990s reached their potential. Moreover, that decade is void of the shocks that have taken place since, including 2008’s global financial crisis, the Arab uprisings in 2011 and the more recent pandemic. Thus, the 2000s can be considered to be indicative of the course of development as envisaged by policy makers among those countries.

Chart 13 shows the relationship between per capita economic growth and the “voice and accountability” index as a proxy of the quality of governance. Per capita incomes are relatively easy to measure (GDP/person) and the data have been derived from the IMF. The index of Voice and Accountability (VnA) is de-

⁵ “The reason for singling out the youth (15-24 years old), is that their *rates* [emphasis added] of unemployment are among the highest in the world ... This phenomenon is largely a problem of youth insertion into the labour market ... To address the problem of youth unemployment in the short run, South-Med governments could launch Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs).” See Galal et al. (2017)

rived from the joint *Worldwide Governance Indicators Project* of the Natural Resource Governance Institute, the Brookings Institution and the World Bank. The value of the index ranges from minus 2 to 2. The index covers practically all countries in the world, more than 200. In simplified terms, it is based on whether citizens can express their voices, have political rights and can select their governments, whether there is freedom of association or corruption, the role of the military in the political process, whether the official statistics are reliable or manipulated and so on. Overall, the relationship between economic growth and VnA is negative. However, this should not be taken to imply that there is a negative tradeoff between these two variables. Rather, this is related to the fact that faster economic growth (increase in average per capita incomes) is more common in developing/low-income countries that have more slack to absorb and can benefit from intensive growth. High income countries have better governance but had fast growth in the past and cannot grow fast forever (the so-called “regression toward the mean”). It is indicative that the countries scoring highest in the VnA index had some of the lowest rates of economic growth, namely, four Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) together with Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The most densely populated quadrant is the southwest one that one should better not be in it. It is dominated by two groups of countries, that is, those located in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab countries. In fact *all* Arab countries are in that quadrant, despite the fact that practically all had introduced various pro-market reforms before 2011. The pro-market reforms since the 1990s produced faster economic growth rates compared to the previous decade, reduced deficits and debts, as well as inflation and unemployment. Still, in a globalizing world what matters is not so much how fast you move, but how fast you move relative to others. The increasingly educated Arab youth could see that they were falling behind in the globalization race with limited opportunities to voice their concerns. Not unjustifiably, economic growth was perceived by Arab citizens to be inequitable following the significant rollback of the state from the provision of social services and in view of the preferential treatment granted to politically connected firms and crony capitalists, who effectively captured the privatization process (Diwan et al, 2016 & Reijkers et al, 2014). The grip of state-owned enterprises on the economy, as well as that of politically connected firms, are widely acknowledged to be important reasons for the lack of dynamism of the private sector, especially among



Source: IMF (GDP per capita) and Worldwide Governance Indicators Project (VnA).

small enterprises (UNDP, 2022). This has an impact on how growth affects household incomes. Households in Arab countries have the second lowest rate of growth pass-through in the world after sub-Saharan Africa: For every 1 percent growth in the private consumption expenditure component of GDP, only one-third of it is experienced at household levels (Abu Ismail et al., 2022)

The Arab states can therefore be described as hybrid economic systems driven by governance based on political and economic exclusion. They have placed more emphasis “on accommodating the interests of the politically connected rather than serving the purpose of productivity gains and job creation”(Galal et al., 2017). In such an environment the private sector is subjected to cronyistic and informal arrangements, whereby institutions are weak and non-transparent rules shield insiders against competition.

Under such conditions, economic growth is lower than it ought to be, leading to lower levels of job creation and inferior employment conditions (including wages). The evidence regarding SMAC suggests that economic policies have “suffered from being fundamentally inward looking, promoting old rather than new products, with no time limits on the duration of infant industries until they grow. This policy also seems to have encouraged rent-seeking behaviour and cronyism” (Sekkat, 2010).

Innovation: Another Victim of Constrained Private Sector Development

All in all, the failure to achieve fast economic growth can be traced to many causes, which could be summarized as a failure to promote a dynamic private sector, with its corresponding consequences on not only the labour market, but also on innovation. While small firms are predominant in the region, they “tend to stay small, and large firms stay large, resulting in a ‘missing middle,’ the component of the private sector that tends to exhibit the greatest degree of innovation in other countries” (Galal et al., 2017).

The positive relationship between innovation and development is well established (WIPO, 2021). The global innovation index takes into consideration institutions, human capital and research, infrastructure, market sophistication and knowledge, technology and creative outputs. It then groups the underlying in-

dicators into a single score and ranks countries accordingly (Table 10).

TABLE 10 Global Innovation Index 2021 Rankings			
	Rank	Score	Index
Switzerland (top)	1	65.5	100
Median country	66	31.8	49
Tunisia	71	30.7	47
Morocco	77	29.3	45
Jordan	81	28.3	43
Lebanon	92	25.1	38
Egypt	94	25.1	38
Algeria	120	19.9	30
Angola (last)	132	15.0	23

Notes: No data for Mauritania, oPt and Syria.
Source: WIPO 2021.

Some SMAC countries have made definitive progress towards promoting innovation, such as Morocco, which has recently been classified as a relatively top performer (8th among the 34 lower-middle-income groups of countries as classified by the Global Innovation Index 2021). This progress has put Morocco practically on a par with Tunisia and Jordan. Yet all the Arab countries in Table 10 are below the median country in rank and score, with Lebanon, Egypt and Algeria being significantly lower.

More generally, the MENA region has one of the lowest R&D expenditures. Only 15.2 percent of firms in the MENA region spend on R&D, in comparison with 27.4 in South Asia and 25 percent in Africa. More worrying is the fact that the region’s trend in innovation performance is declining. In addition to factors arising from the development model pursued by governments, the low innovation performance has been attributed to low government support for innovation, science and technology, weak institutional frameworks, lack of investment in knowledge-intensive services and knowledge creation, the fragmentation of innovation systems, slow adoption of the evolving global knowledge and technology and, unsurprisingly, a weak link between innovation inputs and innovation outputs (Morrar, 2019).

To summarize, creating more and better jobs is mainly about increasing market contestability to ease firm entry, and to ensure efficient growth and firm exit. However, “most MENA countries lack market contestability, favouring incumbent firms (SOEs or private) over new entrants” (World Bank, 2012).

Concluding Remarks

Countries do not usually default. They typically avoid this with assistance from international financial institutions (IFIs) and donor support. The fiscal effects of the pandemic in the SMAC, arising from elevated public spending to support economic activity and citizens' welfare, came on top of the spending spree that followed the Arab uprisings (ILO, 2012). Economic growth rates and job creation are expected to drop following the war between Ukraine and Russia and the looming stagflation pressures. Among the SMAC, and others, policies to contain inflation may pressure their already weak fiscal accounts, worsen financing conditions, spur capital outflows and add to growth headwinds, amid already elevated debt levels. Rising prices may raise social tensions in countries with weak social safety nets, few job opportunities and unpopular governments (Kammer et al., 2022). In addition, neighbouring SMAC may face disrupted trade and supply chains, reduced remittances, as well as continuing refugee flows.

The impact on employment could be severe. Job creation is likely to be adversely affected by fiscal responses to contain deficits and debts, which are only too well known to accompany austerity measures. Thus, not only will new entrants to the labour force face limited opportunities, but they will also add to the existing large pool of unemployed women *and* men, youth *and* adults. Labour policies can have only a limited impact (and many require additional fiscal outlays). Perhaps little can be done in this respect in the short run until the fiscal situation is contained and economic growth rates resume. However, it should be recognized that unemployment for a particular group is not isolated from the unemployment of other groups: different types of labour (and capital) can substitute each other. Examining unemployment (a quantity) without due regard to wages (prices) is bound to lead to misplaced policies.

In the case of SMAC (and other Arab countries), wages are relatively compressed and the returns to education are among the lowest in the world (Tzannatos et al, 2016). This may of course relate in part to protective legislation for older workers – something that

can easily be identified and addressed. But from an economic perspective, unless there is a sharp differential between youth and adult wages, employers would prefer workers with more experience. Either way, Arab employers use relatively basic labour-intensive production techniques, taking advantage of the presence of surplus labour, which results in low wages. Their training offer for workers is among the world's worst. All these symptoms suggest that the education of job seekers is not a real constraint at present, though they may well become so in the rather distant future, as it takes a long time for the private sector to modernize and adopt knowledge-intensive production techniques. Another symptom that indicates that a lack of skills is not really a labour market constraint is that many young Arabs emigrate and thrive in countries that are more technologically advanced (Kawar & Tzannatos, 2013). In short, they can be employed in more demanding jobs elsewhere, but not in their own countries. All in all, "young people need jobs, and so do their parents" (Kawar & Tzannatos, 2017).

The case of female unemployment (and low participation rate) is different, but not from an economic perspective, if the role of wages, incomes and household decisions are taken into account instead of focusing only on "quantities." If the economy is not creating enough jobs or, from a household perspective, men are more likely to be more permanently attached to the labour force and be paid more than women, it is not surprising (though not always justified) that female unemployment rates will be higher than male unemployment rates.

While it is true that "the unemployment rate of young people in the MENA region of 26%, which doubles the world average, speaks for itself,"⁶ it does not speak for all the unemployed. The unemployment rate in MENA was 10.5 percent in 2019, which was also nearly double the global unemployment rate of 5.6%. Given the limited ability of governments to spur growth through a rise in public spending and monetary easing, future economic growth would primarily come from the private sector. The SMAC have largely failed to create a vibrant competitive private sector. Their development model has not changed markedly even during their better years of the past. The present calls

⁶ IEMed (2020). The latest statistics available indicate the youth unemployment rate was indeed 27.2 percent in the MENA region, while the world average was 17.9 percent. See, respectively, www.iemed.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Report-no30_MED-Confederation_Youth-Financial-Inclusion.pdf and <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>.

for bold changes, not marginal ones. With or without political openness, the SMAC should now revise their policies to ensure a level economic playing field and truly promote output diversification and achieve sustainable growth, as there is no room for preserving “the privileges for small elites, tolerating cronyism or neglecting social justice. Are South-Med countries willing and able to meet the challenge? The answer remains to be seen” (Galal et al., 2017). This is also the question posed in this paper.

References

- ABU-ISMAIL, Khalid; AL-BIZRI, Mohammed; HAMIE, Hassan; HLASNY, Vladimir and JOUNI, Jinane. Obstructed Poverty Reduction: Growth Pass-through Analysis. Beirut: ESCWA, Technical Paper No. 18, 2022.
- AYADI, Rym and RAMOS, Raul. “Regional Integration and Creation of Youth Employment in the Mediterranean Region.” *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2017*. IEMed, 2017.
- DIWAN, I.; KEEFER, P. AND SCHIFFBAUER, M. Pyramid Capitalism: Cronyism, Regulation and Firm Productivity in Egypt. New York: Inter-American Development Bank. Working Papers Series No. IDB-WP-739, October, 2016.
- GALAL, Ahmed et al. Economic Management under Fire. Euromed, Economic Research Forum and Femise. 2017.
- GHAFFAR, Adel Abdel (ed.) *Youth Employment in North Africa: Case Studies from Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria & Morocco* page 5. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung: Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean, 2022.
- IEMed Report on “Advancing Youth Financial Inclusion to Boost Job Creation and Growth in the Mediterranean Region.” Barcelona: European Institute of the Mediterranean. June, 2020.
- ILO *Rethinking Economic Growth: Towards Productive and Inclusive Arab Societies*. Beirut: International Labour Organization, 2012.
- ILOSTAT (as of June 2022). Modelled Estimates and National Statistics. Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- KAMMER, Alfred et al. *How War in Ukraine Is Reverberating across World's Regions*. Washington DC: International Monetary Fund, 2022.
- KAWAR, Mary and TZANNATOS, Zafiris. *Private Sector does not Demand Enough Skilled Labor*. Beirut: Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 2012.
- KAWAR, Mary and TZANNATOS, Zafiris. “Young People Need Jobs, and So Do Their Parents.” *Venture*, 11 September 2017.
- MORRAR, Rabeh. “Innovation in the MENA Region.” *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2019*. Barcelona: European Institute of the Mediterranean, 2019.
- RAZZAZ, Omar “The Treacherous Path towards a New Arab Social Contract.” Beirut: Issam Fares, 2013.
- REIJKERS, Bob; FREUND, Caroline and NUCIFORA, Antonio Maria. “All in the Family – State Capture in Tunisia.” Washington DC: World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 6810, March, 2014.
- SEKKAT, K. (ed.) *Market Dynamics and Productivity in Developing Countries: Economic Reforms in the Middle East and North Africa*. Springer, 2010.
- SULEIMAN, Hussein “Youth Unemployment in the South of the Mediterranean: A Chronic Challenge to Development and Stability.” *Euromesco paper* no. 48, 2021.
- TZANNATOS, Zafiris. *The Regional Impact and Responses to the Global Financial, Economic and Social Crisis*. Beirut: International Labour Organization, Regional Office for the Arab Countries, 2009.
- TZANNATOS, Zafiris; DIWAN, Ishac and ABDEL AHAD, Joanna. “Rates of Return to Education in Twenty Two Arab Countries: An Update and Comparison between MENA and the Rest of the World.” Cairo: Economic Research Forum Working Paper No. 1007, 2016.
- VERDIER, Genevieve et al. *Revenue Mobilization for a Resilient and Inclusive Recovery in the Middle East and Central Asia*. Washington DC: International Monetary Fund. 6 July 2022.
- UNDP. *Arab Human Development Report 2022: Expanding Opportunities for an Inclusive and Resilient Recovery in the Post-Covid Era*. NY: United Nations development Programme, 2022.
- WIPO. *Global Innovation Index 2021*. Geneva: World Intellectual Property Organization, 2021. 14th edition.
- WORLD BANK. *Jordan Economic Monitor, Spring 2022: Global Turbulence Dampens Recovery and Job Creation*. Washington DC: The World Bank. July 2022.

Dossier: Social Policies and the Challenges to Improve Well-being in the Mediterranean Area

Make Way for Numbers: The Age Race in the Mediterranean

Isabelle Blöss-Widmer

Senior Lecturer in Demography
Aix Marseille University
CNRS, Sciences Po Aix, MESOPOLHIS, *DemoMed*,
Aix-en-Provence

Six out of Ten Inhabitants in North Africa and the Middle East

The population of the twenty-six Mediterranean countries amounted to approximately 560 million inhabitants in 2020.¹ The majority of the Mediterranean population (6 out of 10 inhabitants) is now located in North Africa and the Middle East (MENA),² since the rapid and intense demographic transition this southern and eastern Mediterranean region has experienced over the past 70 years.

While the population of the Mediterranean as a whole increased on average by 2.4 between 1950 and 2020, the population of the North African and Middle Eastern countries increased almost fivefold. It has gone from 72 million inhabitants to 334 million today. The MENA region, which had only two countries with over 10 million inhabitants in 1950 (Turkey and Egypt), had five by 1990 (Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco and the Syrian Arab Republic) and has seven today (Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Jordan). This development contrasts sharply with the situation of the countries of southern Europe and the Balkans on the North Shore, a geographical area that has grown from 158 million

to only 226 million inhabitants (i.e. a 1.4-fold increase) in the same period. The average annual growth rate of the North Shore countries has been nil or very slightly negative since 2017, while that of the North African and Middle Eastern countries has been +1.5% per year in recent years (this growth rate is out of all proportion to those of the North Shore countries, most of which have experienced a less intense demographic transition because it has been spread over a longer period). Egypt and Turkey, with growth rates of more than 2% per year for over 30 years, have seen their populations increase spectacularly (Chart 14), thereby helping to considerably transform the demographic order that prevailed in the 1950s, when 70% of the inhabitants were still located on the northern and eastern shores.³ While the demographic transition has led to a very sustained increase in the populations of the MENA countries over the past 70 years, it has also transformed the relative weights of the various constituent age groups.

Share and Number: The Weight of Age Groups

Among the demographic challenges pointed out by demographers specializing in the Mediterranean (Ambrosetti, 2020), the transformation of the population's age structure during the process of demographic transition appears crucial. Indeed, these transformations may be considered assets for a time because they bring potential growth (the demographic dividend), but at the same time they may be-

¹ Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, TFYR Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey.

² To illustrate the evolution of the weight of the different age groups since the 1950s, we have analysed the growth of the following 11 countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey. We shall use the acronym MENA – Middle East and North Africa – to designate this group.

³ The order of the shores was reversed in the early 1990s.

come a source of concern when the population that is unemployed or too old to work rises rapidly and becomes a burden for the middle generations. In order to describe the evolution of the age composition of the MENA countries' population since the 1950s in its uniqueness compared to other Mediterranean countries, we have made the unusual choice of classifying the total population into three main groups: the under-30s (youth), the 30-69s (middle) and the 70s and over (seniors or elderly). This division into groups of roughly equal magnitude provides an image of youth and old age that is more independent of the usual economic classifications (60 or 65 years) by focusing more on an age beyond which situations of dependency are more likely to arise. The age of 30 was chosen because it corresponds to a stage in the life cycle when people are fully established in adulthood, when they have a family and have been able to stabilize themselves in gainful occupation. These choices also make it easier to compare different countries for which the 0-14 and 60+ age groups do not correspond to the same realities. The age at which one is considered a senior citizen is different from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, but

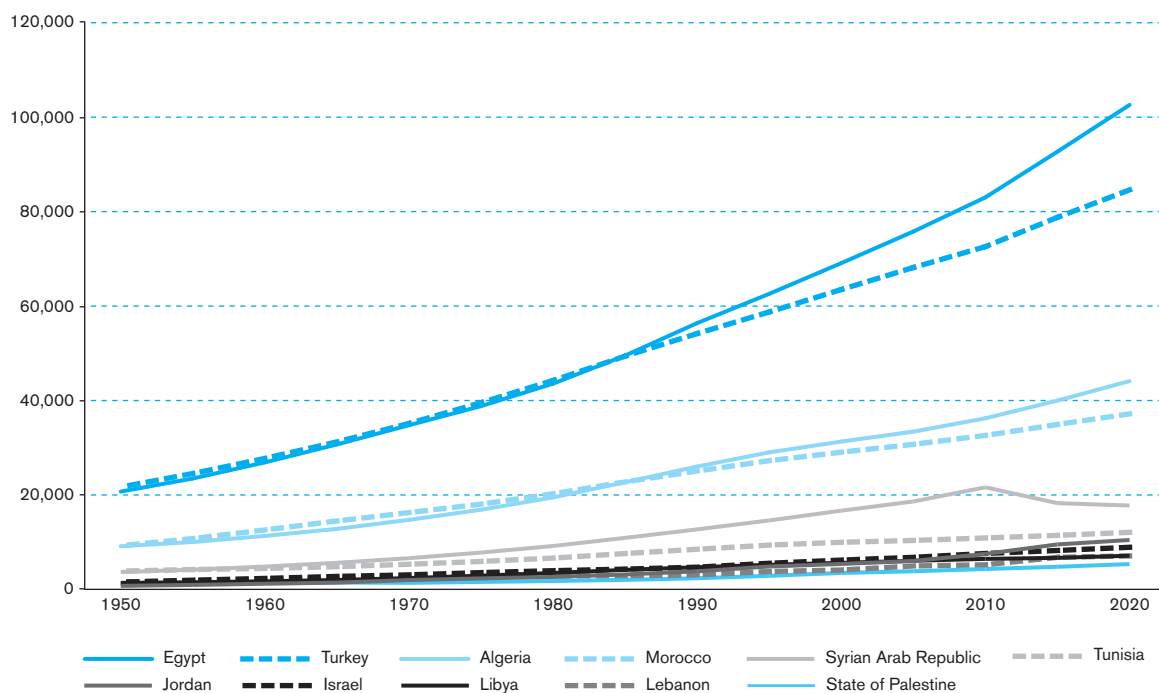
medical progress has led to a real convergence of life expectancy towards a common age of over 70.

Young People: 7 Out of 10 in North Africa or the Middle East

In the Mediterranean, the total population under the age of 30 amounted to 248 million people in 2020 (compared to 130 million in 1950). 178 million of them live in North Africa and the Middle East (Chart 15), i.e. 72% of the total. This situation was the opposite in 1950, when only 3 to 4 in 10 young people lived in MENA countries.

The proportion of youth in MENA countries is now 53% (Chart 16). It has always been above 50% since the 1950s, reaching a peak in 1975 and 1980 (69%). The annual growth rate of young people in MENA countries was particularly high from the 1950s to the 1990s (average annual growth of more than 2% per year) due to the decline in mortality, and then slowed down to an average annual growth rate of approximately 1% over the last thirty years, because the decline in fertility has led to fewer children in the younger age groups.

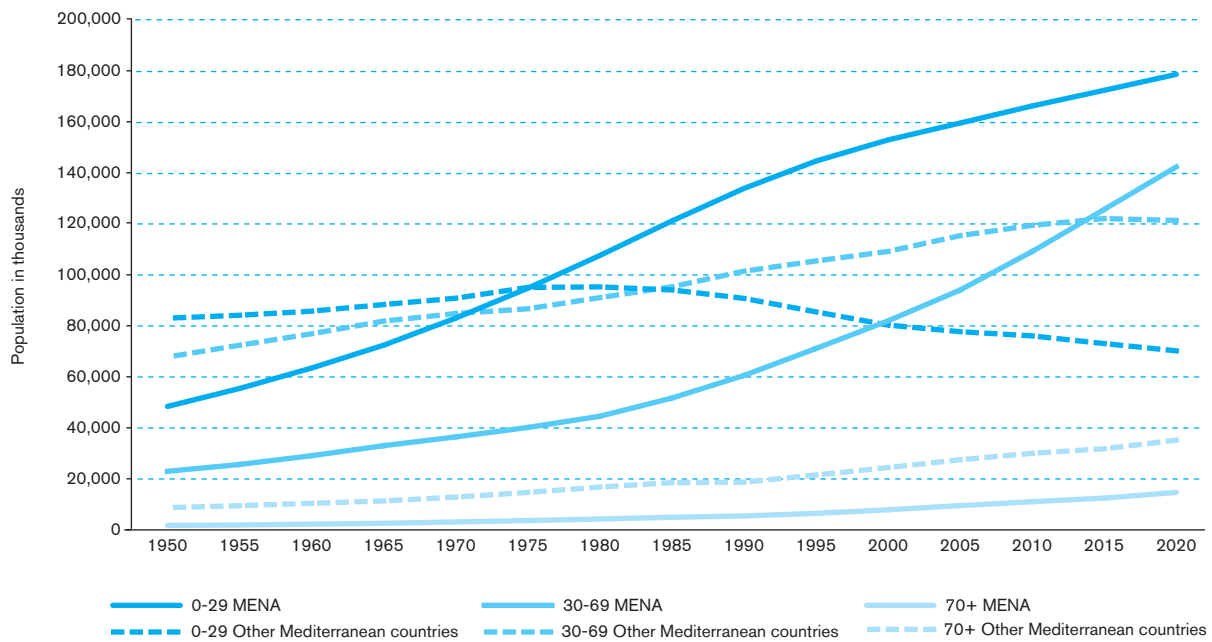
CHART 14 Comparative Population Trends for North Africa and the Middle East, 1950-2020 (total population, both sexes combined, as of 1 July, in thousands)



Source: prepared by the author using UN data, 2019 (United Nations et al., 2019).

CHART 15

Population of Different Age Groups (0-29, 30-69, 70+). Comparison of MENA Countries with Other Mediterranean Countries, 1950-2020 (in thousands)



Source: prepared by the author using UN data (2019).

The North Shore Has Lost 1 in 4 Young People over 40 Years

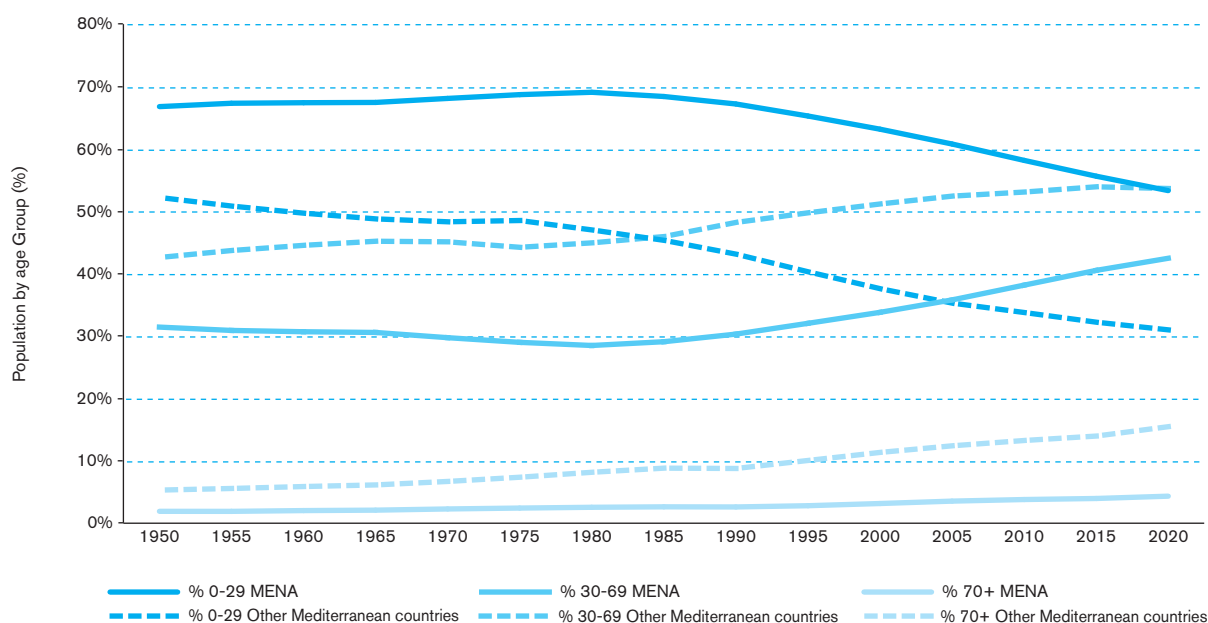
Conversely, the countries of southern Europe and the Balkans on the North Shore, which had as many as 95 million young people in the early 1980s, had only 69 million in 2020, a drop of 26% in 40 years (Charts 15 and 16). By way of comparison, the number of under-30s on the South Shore almost doubled in the same period. The growth rate of young people on the North Shore became negative in the mid-1980s and has been around -0.8% per year for over 10 years. This negative growth means that each year that passes, these countries lose 1 in 100 young people under 30. If we look simultaneously at the weight of young people not in terms of proportion, but in terms of numbers (Chart 15, solid and dotted red curves), this decrease in the number of young people on the North Shore contrasts sharply with the increase in the number of young people in MENA, the curves intersecting in the mid-1970s. Chart 16, which depicts the percentage of the different age groups in the total population, reveals, however, that in the MENA countries the weight of the youth age group is decreasing compared to the increasing weight of the other age groups, especially the middle age group (30 to 69-year-olds), but also

more discreetly that of the 70+ age group. It is therefore this latter group – the seniors – that, due to demographic inertia, is experiencing the most rapid progress, catching up with the under-30s in terms of numbers and proportion. In the MENA countries, the growth of the middle (30-69) age group is currently around 2.5% per year. For the first time, on the other hand, the average annual growth rate of the same population on the North Shore has become negative.

The Highest Rate of Increase: The 70+ Age Group, on Both the South and North Shores

In 2020, the Mediterranean had 49 million people aged 70 and over (9% of the total population). 14 million belong to the 11 MENA countries we are studying, while 35 million are on the North Shore (Chart 15). The number of elderly people has thus multiplied by 10 since the 1950s in the MENA countries and by four for North Shore countries.

While these numbers may appear low when compared to other age categories, they are however the ones that are and will be growing fastest. The average annual growth rate of the 70+ age group in MENA countries is currently about 3.4% per year (2% per year on the North Shore). The prospects are also for a growth



Sources: prepared by the author using UN data (2019).

rate of the oldest people in this category, in particular centenarians on the North Shore and 80-84 and 85-89-year-olds on the South Shore. These increases have to do with the age pyramid, which is and will be feeding a significant flow of ageing people into the upper category from the middle one. This phenomenon is combined with gains in life expectancy that are increasingly concentrated at older ages (ageing from above). This situation, which is already poorly controlled on the North Shore, promises to be an immense challenge for the MENA countries, which cannot always prepare for it, as they are concentrated on coping with the very rapid growth in the number of under-30s and 30-69-year-olds. However, the situation will become critical much more quickly than for the countries of the North Shore, because of the speed and intensity of the demographic transition they have experienced or are just completing. While until now in these countries the economically inactive elderly were cared for by their children, private solidarity is crumbling and traditional models are being called into question by the younger generations, who are already facing economic insecurity. The time has already come for these countries to develop public solidarity policies for the elderly and to build specialized institutions for them, capable, if possible, of managing the rise in dependency (Sajoux and Amar, 2018).

What Is the Outlook for 2060?

In 40 years, United Nations projections (medium variant) predict that the populations of MENA countries will have reached nearly 500 million, against 200 million on the North Shore, i.e. a total of nearly 700 million inhabitants by 2060 (Table 11). The youngest population (under 30) will reach 253 million, the 30-69 age group 321 million, and the Mediterranean will also have more than 116 million people aged 70 and over, of which more than half (53%) will be in the MENA countries (Table 11).

One out of Three People Will Be over 70 in 40 Years on the North Shore

The share of elderly people by 2060 will be 27% on average on the North Shore. The highest proportions of elderly are expected in Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal (Table 11). These countries will gradually lose part of their population due to an excess of deaths over births, and migration policies will not be able to stem this phenomenon of ageing at the top of the pyramid in a context of very low fertility. This situation is increasingly reported by the media and the press. It worries employers in the countries concerned, who are already faced with a shortage of la-

bour. Chart 15 illustrates this already perceptible phenomenon of the decline in the numbers of young and middle-aged people. This situation also jeopardizes the welfare state and pension systems. For the MENA countries, the share of the over-70s is estimated to reach 13% on average by 2060, with strong contrasts between countries. The highest shares of elderly people are expected in Turkey and Lebanon (nearly 20%), followed closely by Tunisia and Morocco (Table 11). The challenges brought about by the rapid ageing of the Moroccan population, for example, have already been the subject of publications focussing on the matter of the resources and sacrifices needed to cope with it for the middle generations, i.e. the question of family solidarity in a context of shrinking family size and crises of all kinds that these societies have to face (Sajoux and Amar, 2018, p. 160): "Given the ongoing rapid ageing, it is important to ascertain which means and measures are likely to allow these solidarities to

be consolidated and relayed in some way as soon as possible."

The proportion of older people also varies greatly across a country. If the phenomenon is studied at finer administrative levels, it is common to observe much higher proportions of elderly people, particularly in rural areas. This situation of ageing and feminization of rural areas, accentuated by the departure of younger people to cities and the return of urban dwellers to their region of birth on retirement, creates tensions around the agricultural workforce as well as situations of distress and isolation for the elderly (Hovardaoglu and Calisir-Hovardaoglu, 2022).

By 2060: 85 Million under 30 in Egypt Alone

The highest numbers of people under 30 are expected in Egypt, which will have 1.5 times as many young people (85 million) as the entire North Shore combined (55 million). Israel and the State of Palestine

TABLE 11	2060: Population (in thousands) and Relative Share of Different Age Groups in the Total Population (%): Comparison of MENA Countries with Other Mediterranean Countries						
	0-29	30-69	70+	Total	% 0-29	% 30-69	% 70+
Egypt	84,680	79,148	13,710	177,538	48	45	8
Turkey	31,747	47,993	18,200	97,941	32	49	19
Algeria	25,530	30,199	9,250	64,979	39	46	14
Morocco	16,987	23,189	7,265	47,440	36	49	15
Syrian Arab Republic	13,655	17,031	4,549	35,235	39	48	13
Israel	5,950	6,174	1,911	14,034	42	44	14
Tunisia	4,751	6,775	2,438	13,964	34	49	17
Jordan	5,369	6,853	1,393	13,615	39	50	10
State of Palestine	4,670	4,585	659	9,913	47	46	7
Libya	3,104	4,332	1,201	8,637	36	50	14
Lebanon	2,101	3,250	1,212	6,563	32	50	18
Total MENA by 2060	198,543	229,529	61,788	489,860	41	47	13
France	20,925	30,741	15,417	67,083	31	46	23
Italy	12,416	23,000	15,142	50,557	25	45	30
Spain	10,460	17,919	12,667	41,046	25	44	31
Portugal	2,204	3,875	2,435	8,514	26	46	29
Greece	2,044	3,789	2,568	8,400	24	45	31
Serbia	1,760	3,234	1,488	6,482	27	50	23
Bulgaria	1,450	2,302	1,172	4,923	29	47	24
Croatia	813	1,476	806	3,095	26	48	26
Bosnia and Herzegovina	598	1,213	628	2,439	25	50	26
Albania	536	1,144	511	2,191	24	52	23
Slovenia	537	827	495	1,859	29	44	27
North Macedonia	480	871	382	1,734	28	50	22
Cyprus	364	686	312	1,362	27	50	23
Montenegro	175	279	112	566	31	49	20
Malta	112	191	112	415	27	46	27
TOTAL others by 2060	54,874	91,547	54,246	200,667	27	46	27
TOTAL Mediterranean	253,417	321,076	116,034	690,528	37	46	17

Sources: prepared by the author using UN data (2019).

also have expected under-30s proportions of approximately 50% by 2060, but these countries are not among the most populous in the Mediterranean.

The 30-69 Age Group by 2060: MENA – 230 Million / North Shore – 92 Million

The proportion is also largely concentrated in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East as regards the middle age group. The 30-69 age group will be two and a half times more numerous in the MENA countries than on the North Shore. The demographic heavyweights in this age group on the South Shore are, in descending order: Egypt (79 million), Turkey (48), Algeria (30), Morocco (23) and the Syrian Arab Republic (17). On the North Shore, France (31 million), Italy (23 million) and Spain (18 million) will be the only countries with more than 10 million 30-59-year-olds (Table 11).

Conclusion

These situations of demographic ageing and the reversal of the proportions between age groups from one shore to the other lead us to stress once again, by way of conclusion, that large-scale migratory movements are to be expected: “The region’s migration scenario in the future could be characterized by strong migratory pressures, particularly from the migration of young adults from the southeastern Mediterranean to Europe” (Ambrosetti 2020, 303). Whether desired or feared, these movements of young people and adults from one shore to the other are now more than certain, making the question of their management, i.e. the policies to be implemented, ever more salient. Beyond the strong growth shown by the demographic transitions in MENA countries, it should nevertheless be kept in mind that these will come to an end, since fertility is converging towards low levels everywhere. The fertility gap between the most and least fertile countries has thus fallen from 5 children per woman in 1950 to only 2.4 children in 2020. The highest fertility rates observed in the 1950s were over 7 children per woman, while the lowest were around 2.3 children per woman. Today, the highest fertility rates in the Mediterranean are around 3 children per woman, while the lowest have fallen to historically low levels of around 1.3 children per woman. Thus, “the

world’s populations, of different civilizations and religions, are on trajectories of convergence” (Courbage and Todd, 2014, 159; Blöss-Widmer et al., 2017). While waiting for the different Mediterranean countries to achieve more moderate growth across all age groups, it is nevertheless urgently necessary for them to try to cushion the most negative collective consequences of the demographic transition, foremost among which is the massive ageing of many generations expected on the North Shore and very soon on the South Shore as well.

References

- AMBROSETTI, Elena. “Demographic Challenges in the Mediterranean.” *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2020*. IEMed, 2020, p. 300-304, (www.iemed.org/publication/demographic-challenges-in-the-mediterranean).
- BLÖSS-WIDMER, Isabelle; AMBROSETTI, Elena and OLIVEAU, Sébastien. “Population Ageing: Convergences and Uncertainties in the Mediterranean.” In BLÖSS, Thierry *Ageing, Lifestyles and Economic Crises: The New People of the Mediterranean*, Taylor & Francis Group, Routledge, 2018 p. 10-17.
- COURBAGE, Youssef and TODD, Emmanuel. *A Convergence of Civilizations: The Transformation of Muslim Societies Around the World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- HOVARDAOGLU, Ozan, and CALISIR-HOVARDAOGLU, Seda. “Rural Aging, Demise of the Traditional Family and the Rise of New Family Structures in Rural Turkey: Evidences from the Province of Kayseri.” In *Research Anthology on Supporting Healthy Aging in a Digital Society*, IGI Global, 2022.
- SAJOUX, Muriel and AMAR, Mohammed. “Family Solidarities and Old Age in Morocco: New Realities, New Challenges”. In BLÖSS, Thierry. *Ageing, Lifestyles and Economic Crises: The New People of the Mediterranean*, 149-162. Routledge Studies in the European Economy. Routledge, 2018.
- UNITED NATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, POPULATION DIVISION. *World Population Prospects 2019. Volume II*. United Nations, 2019.
- UNITED NATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, POPULATION DIVISION. *World Population Prospects 2019*, Online Edition, Rev. 1.

Panorama: The Mediterranean Year



ALBANIA

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

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

Socialist Party of Albania (PSSH, social democrat)	74	Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI, social democrat)	4
Democratic Party of Albania (PDS, conservative)	59	Social Democratic Party of Albania (social-democracy, centre-left)	3

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Tirana (0.51)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Durrës (0.29); Elbasan (0.21); Vlorë (0.13)		
Area km ² :	28,750	Population age <15 (%):	17
Population (millions):	2.8	Population age >64 (%):	15
Population density (hab/km ²):	104	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.60
Urban population (%):	62	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	77/80
Average annual population growth rate (%):	-0.6	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	9

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	15,161
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	14,128
GDP growth (%):	-4.0
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	75.9
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-6.7
External Debt (millions \$):	10,859
Inflation Rate (%):	1.6

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	1,107
Outflows (millions \$):	89

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	2.5
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	1,100

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	1,466
Receipts (in % of GDP):	10.0

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	21.9
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	22.9
Services, value added (% of GDP):	55.2

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	49.8
Unemployment rate (%):	13.3
Youth unemployment rate (%):	30.3

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	36.4
Industry (% of total employment):	20.2
Services (% of total employment):	43.4

Energy

Production (TJ):	72,469
Consumption (TJ):	97,473
Consumption per capita (GJ):	34.2
Import (% energy used):	32.3

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	5,671	3,642	-2,209
in goods (millions \$)	4,328	904	-3,424
in services (millions \$)	1,343	2,558	1,215
in goods and services (% of GDP)	23.2	38.0	-14.8

Main Trading Partners
Import: Italy (25%), Turkey (10%), Greece (9%), China (9%), Germany (8%)
Export: Italy (45%), Serbia (7%), Spain (6%), Germany (6%), Greece (5%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	98.5/97.8
Net enrolment rate (primary):	96.2
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	94.3
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	57.8
Mean years of schooling:	10.1
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	4.0
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	..

Water

Water resources (km ³):	30.2
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	332
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	68.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	10.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	..

Security

Total armed forces (000):	8
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	1.4

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.795
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	69

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	18.8
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	28.9
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	5.2

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	1.4
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	4.0

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	18.6
Marine (% of territorial waters):	2.8

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	91.0
Households with computer (per 100):	20.2
Internet users (per 100):	72.2

ALGERIA

Official Name:	People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Form of Government:	Semi-presidential republic
Head of State:	Abdelmadjid Tebboune
Head of Government:	Ayem Benabderrahmane

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (National People's Assembly)

National Liberation Front (FLN)	98	People's Voice Party	3
Movement of Society for Peace (MSP, Islamist)	65	Good Governance Front	2
National Rally for Democracy (RND)	58	Justice and Development Front (FJD, Islamist)	2
El Moustakbel Front (FM, "Future," centrist)	48	Independents	84
National Construction Movement	39	Others	8

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Algiers (2.85)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Oran (0.92); El Djelfa (0.55); Blida (0.50); Constantine (0.42)		
Area km ² :	2,381,740	Population age <15 (%):	31
Population (millions):	43.9	Population age >64 (%):	7
Population density (hab/km ²):	18	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	2.99
Urban population (%):	74	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	76/78
Average annual population growth rate (%):	1.8	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	20

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	147,600
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	11,336
GDP growth (%):	-5.1
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	51.3
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-6.7
External Debt (millions \$):	5,178
Inflation Rate (%):	2.4

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	1,125
Outflows (millions \$):	16

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	..
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	60

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	1,682
Receipts (in % of GDP):	1.2

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	14.6
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	33.5
Services, value added (% of GDP):	51.9

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	15.4
Unemployment rate (%):	12.6
Youth unemployment rate (%):	31.0

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	9.6
Industry (% of total employment):	30.4
Services (% of total employment):	60.0

Energy

Production (TJ):	6,213,473
Consumption (TJ):	2,637,231
Consumption per capita (GJ):	61.1
Import (% energy used):	-135

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	42,910	25,155	-17,796
in goods (millions \$)	34,907	21,915	-12,992
in services (millions \$)	8,003	3,200	-4,803
in goods and services (% of GDP)	29.1	17.0	-12.0

Main Trading Partners
Import: China (18%), France (12%), South Africa (8%), Italy (8%), Germany (8%)
Export: Italy (19%), Spain (16%), France (10%), Netherlands (9%), United States (9%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	87.4/75.3
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.8
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	..
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	52.5
Mean years of schooling:	8.0
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	6.1
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.50

Water

Water resources (km ³):	11.7
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	248
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	64.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	2.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	631

Security

Total armed forces (000):	317
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	5.6

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.748
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	91

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	17.2
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	19.0
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	6.2

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	3.3
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	142.4

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	4.6
Marine (% of territorial waters):	0.1

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	103.9
Households with computer (per 100):	42.2
Internet users (per 100):	49.0

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Official Name:	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Form of Government:	Federal parliamentary republic
Head of State:	Milorad Dodik (Serb); Sefik Džaferović (Bosniak); Zeljko Komsić (Croat)
Head of Government:	Zoran Tegeltija

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

Party of Democratic Action (SDA, centre-right)	8	Democratic Front (DF, social democratic)	4
Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)	6	Our Party (social liberal) / Independent Bloc (conservative)	4
Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ, Croatian nationalist and conservative)	5	United Srpska (right)	2
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	4	Union for a Better Future (SBB, centre-right)	2
Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) / Party of Democratic Progress (PDP) (Serbian nationalism)	4	Others	3

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Sarajevo (0.34)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Banja Luka (0.20); Tuzla (0.12)		
Area km ² :	51,210	Population age <15 (%):	15
Population (millions):	3.3	Population age >64 (%):	18
Population density (hab/km ²):	64	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.25
Urban population (%):	49	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	75/80
Average annual population growth rate (%):	-0.6	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	5

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	19,951
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	14,504
GDP growth (%):	-3.2
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	36.5
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-4.7
External Debt (millions \$):	14,263
Inflation Rate (%):	-1.1

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	371
Outflows (millions \$):	-5

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	0
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	400

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	1,811
Receipts (in % of GDP):	9.3

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	7.3
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	28.0
Services, value added (% of GDP):	64.7

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	32.7
Unemployment rate (%):	15.3
Youth unemployment rate (%):	36.2

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	18.0
Industry (% of total employment):	31.7
Services (% of total employment):	50.3

Energy

Production (TJ):	226,292
Consumption (TJ):	301,974
Consumption per capita (GJ):	91.3
Import (% energy used):	27.3

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	9,683	6,796	-2,887
in goods (millions \$)	9,166	5,486	-3,860
in services (millions \$)	517	1,310	792
in goods and services (% of GDP)	48.9	34.3	-14.6

Main Trading Partners
Import: Serbia (15%), Croatia (15%), Germany (11%), Italy (9%), Slovenia (8%)
Export: Germany (14%), Croatia (12%), Italy (11%), Austria (11%), Serbia (10%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	../.
Net enrolment rate (primary):	..
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	..
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	37.9
Mean years of schooling:	9.8
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	..
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.22

Water

Water resources (km ³):	37.5
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	..
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	..
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	..
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	..

Security

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

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.780
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	73

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	21.6
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	34.9
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	9.1

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	6.3
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	20.7

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	4.0
Marine (% of territorial waters):	0.0

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	107.0
Households with computer (per 100):	62.2
Internet users (per 100):	73.2

CROATIA

Official Name:	Republic of Croatia
Form of Government:	Parliamentary constitutional republic
Head of State:	Zoran Milanović
Head of Government:	Andrej Plenković

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

Croatian Democratic Union Coalition (HDZ, conservatism)	64	Green-Left coalition	6
Social democrats (Independents)	18	Croatian Sovereignists (HS, right wing)	4
Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP, Social democracy)	13	Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS, centre left)	3
Bridge of Independent Lists (Most)	8	Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLs, Liberal)	3
Homeland Movement Coalition (DP, right wing)	7	Others	25

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Zagreb (0.77)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Split (0.16); Rijeka (0.11)		
Area km ² :	88,070	Population age <15 (%):	15
Population (millions):	4.0	Population age >64 (%):	21
Population density (hab/km ²):	72	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.47
Urban population (%):	58	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	76/82
Average annual population growth rate (%):	-0.4	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	4

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	57,204
GDP per capita (\$. PPP):	28,535
GDP growth (%):	-8.1
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	87.3
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-7.4
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	0.1

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	1,304
Outflows (millions \$):	235

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	5.50
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	5,600

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	3,976
Receipts (in % of GDP):	7.1

Economic Sectors

Agriculture. value added (% of GDP):	3.8
Industry. value added (% of GDP):	25.3
Services. value added (% of GDP):	70.9

Labour market

Labour participation rate. female (%):	44.7
Unemployment rate (%):	7.5
Youth unemployment rate (%):	21.2

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	6.2
Industry (% of total employment):	27.7
Services (% of total employment):	66.1

Energy

Production (TJ):	162,695
Consumption (TJ):	359,346
Consumption per capita (GJ):	88.3
Import (% energy used):	57.8

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	27,542	23,451	-4,091
in goods (millions \$)	23,568	13,737	-9,831
in services (millions \$)	3,974	9,714	5,740
in goods and services (% of GDP)	48.1	41.0	-7.2

Main Trading Partners
Import: Germany (15%), Italy (12%), Slovenia (11%), Hungary (8%), Austria (7%)
Export: Germany (13%), Italy (13%), Slovenia (10%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (9%), Hungary (7%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	..
Net enrolment rate (primary):	97.8
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	100.1
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	67.9
Mean years of schooling:	11.4
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	3.9
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	1.00

Water

Water resources (km ³):	105.5
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	173
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	11.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	26.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	..

Security

Total armed forces (000):	18
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	2.7

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.851
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	43

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	34.7
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	55.4
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	7.0

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	3.8
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	15.3

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	38.4
Marine (% of territorial waters):	9.0

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	106.6
Households with computer (per 100):	77.0
Internet users (per 100):	78.3

CYPRUS

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

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

Democratic Coalition (DISY, conservative)	17	Democratic Alignment (centrist)	4
Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL, socialist)	15	National Popular Front (ELAM, far right)	3
Democratic Party (DIKO, liberal)	10	Movement of Ecologists - Citizens' Cooperation (KOSP)	3
Movement of Social Democracy (EDEK)	4	Independent	1

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Nicosia (0.27)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Limassol (0.24); Larnacca (0.14)		
Area km ² :	9,250	Population age <15 (%):	17
Population (millions):	1.2	Population age >64 (%):	14
Population density (hab/km ²):	131	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.32
Urban population (%):	67	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	79/83
Average annual population growth rate (%):	0.7	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	2

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	24,672
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	41,347
GDP growth (%):	-5.2
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	115.0
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-5.7
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	-1.1

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	-3,647
Outflows (millions \$):	-5,954

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	0.6
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	700

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	577
Receipts (in % of GDP):	2.4

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	2.2
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	14.2
Services, value added (% of GDP):	83.6

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	56.4
Unemployment rate (%):	7.6
Youth unemployment rate (%):	17.4

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	2.4
Industry (% of total employment):	18.4
Services (% of total employment):	79.2

Energy

Production (TJ):	6,661
Consumption (TJ):	94,803
Consumption per capita (GJ):	108.0
Import (% energy used):	93.1

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	17,559	16,107	-1,452
in goods (millions \$)	8,131	3,388	-4,744
in services (millions \$)	9,428	12,719	3,292
in goods and services (% of GDP)	71.3	65.4	-5.9

Main Trading Partners

Import: Greece (15%), Italy (12%), United Kingdom (8%), Germany (7%), China (6%)
Export: Greece (8%), Liberia (7%), United Kingdom (7%), Libya (6%), Marshall Islands (6%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	..
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.5
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	100.9
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	88.5
Mean years of schooling:	12.2
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	5.8
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.55

Water

Water resources (km ³):	0.8
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	240
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	..
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	6.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	70

Security

Total armed forces (000):	16
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	2.0

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.887
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	33

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	31.4
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	34.0
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	7.0

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	7.3
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	6.4

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	38.6
Marine (% of territorial waters):	8.6

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	139.6
Households with computer (per 100):	78.1
Internet users (per 100):	90.8

EGYPT

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

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

Nation's Future Party	316	Reform and Development Party	9
Republican People's Party	50	Egyptian Social Democratic Party	7
The New Wafd Party	26	Egyptian Freedom Party	7
Homeland Defenders	23	Other	23
Modern Egypt Party	11	Independents	124

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Cairo (21.75)* [Greater Cairo including part of the population of Giza and Qalubiyah governorates]		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Alexandria (5.48); Port Said (0.76)		
Area km ² :	1,001,450	Population age <15 (%):	34
Population (millions):	102.3	Population age >64 (%):	5
Population density (hab/km ²):	103	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	3.28
Urban population (%):	43	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	70/75
Average annual population growth rate (%):	1.9	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	17

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	364,023
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	12,823
GDP growth (%):	3.6
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	89.6
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-7.8
External Debt (millions \$):	131,580
Inflation Rate (%):	5.7

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	5,852
Outflows (millions \$):	327

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	3.7
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	4,400

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	29,603
Receipts (in % of GDP):	8.3

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	12.1
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	33.5
Services, value added (% of GDP):	54.4

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	15.4
Unemployment rate (%):	9.2
Youth unemployment rate (%):	23.4

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	20.6
Industry (% of total employment):	26.9
Services (% of total employment):	52.4

Energy

Production (TJ):	3,922,245
Consumption (TJ):	4,027,340
Consumption per capita (GJ):	40.1
Import (% energy used):	3.6

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	72,482	40,102	-32,381
in goods (millions \$)	54,283	25,049	-29,234
in services (millions \$)	18,199	15,053	-3,147
in goods and services (% of GDP)	19.6	10.9	-8.8

Main Trading Partners

Import: China (17%), United States (7%), Germany (6%), Saudi Arabia (6%), Italy (5%)
Export: United Arab Emirates (10%), United States (7%), Saudi Arabia (6%), Turkey (6%), Italy (6%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	76.5/65.5
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.3
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	89.5
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	38.9
Mean years of schooling:	7.4
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	..
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.7

Water

Water resources (km ³):	57.5
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	787
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	79.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	7.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	200

Security

Total armed forces (000):	836
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	1.3

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.707
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	116

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	7.5
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	14.3
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	4.7

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	2.2
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	225.5

Protected areas

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

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	93.2
Households with computer (per 100):	70.2
Internet users (per 100):	71.9

FRANCE			
Official Name:	French Republic		
Form of Government:	Semi-presidential constitutional republic		
Head of State:	Emmanuel Macron		
Head of Government:	Jean Castex		
Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (National Assembly)			
Ensemble (La République En Marche! and allies, liberal)	246	Miscellaneous left	22
New Ecologic and Social People's Union (La France Insoumise and allies, left coalition)	131	Regionalists	10
National Rally (far right)	89	Miscellaneous right	10
Union of the Right and Centre (The Republicans and allies, liberal conservative)	64	Miscellaneous centre	4
		Debout la France	1
		Independent	1
Population			
Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Paris (11.1)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Lyon (1.75); Marseille-Aix-en-Provence (1.62); Lille (1.07); Toulouse (1.05); Bordeaux (0.99)		
Area km ² :	549,087	Population age <15 (%):	18
Population (millions):	67.4	Population age >64 (%):	21
Population density (hab/km ²):	123	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.87
Urban population (%):	81	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	80/86
Average annual population growth rate (%):	0.2	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	3
Economy			
GDP & Debt		Economic Sectors	
GDP (millions \$):	2,621,961	Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	1.8
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	46,213	Industry, value added (% of GDP):	18.4
GDP growth (%):	-7.9	Services, value added (% of GDP):	79.8
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	115.2	Labour market	
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-9.1	Labour participation rate, female (%):	50.6
External Debt (millions \$):	..	Unemployment rate (%):	8.0
Inflation Rate (%):	0.5	Youth unemployment rate (%):	20.2
FDI		Employment in:	
Inflows (millions \$):	17,932	Agriculture (% of total employment):	2.5
Outflows (millions \$):	44,203	Industry (% of total employment):	20.4
International tourism		Services (% of total employment):	77.0
Tourist arrivals (000):	40	Energy	
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	32,600	Production (TJ):	5,492,630
Migrant remittances		Consumption (TJ):	10,152,299
Receipts (millions \$):	24,482	Consumption per capita (GJ):	150.3
Receipts (in % of GDP):	0.9	Import (% energy used):	49.6
Total Trade			
	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	803,895	749,355	-54,540
in goods (millions \$)	572,231	503,777	-68,545
in services (millions \$)	231,664	245,578	13,914
in goods and services (% of GDP)	30.5	28.4	-2.1
Main Trading Partners			
Import: Germany (17%), Belgium (10%), Netherlands (9%), Italy (8%), Spain (8%)			
Export: Germany (14%), Italy (8%), United States (8%), Belgium (7%), Spain (7%)			
Society			
Education		Development	
Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	../.	Human Development Index (value):	0.901
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.9	Human Development Index (position in ranking):	26
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	104.3	Health	
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	68.4	Medical doctors (per 10,000):	32.7
Mean years of schooling:	11.5	Hospital beds (per 10,000):	59.1
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	5.4	Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	11.1
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	2.2	Emissions	
Water		CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	4.4
Water resources (km ³):	211.0	CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	293.9
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	416	Protected areas	
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	11.0	Terrestrial (% of total land area):	28.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	69.0	Marine (% of territorial waters):	49.8
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	12	ICT	
Security		Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	111.5
Total armed forces (000):	304	Households with computer (per 100):	77.5
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	1.9	Internet users (per 100):	83.3

GREECE

Official Name:	Hellenic Republic
Form of Government:	Parliamentary constitutional republic
Head of State:	Katerina Sakellariopoulou
Head of Government:	Kyriakos Mitsotakis

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

New Democracy (ND, conservative)	157	Greek Solution (far right)	10
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	85	European Realistic Disobedience Front (MeRA25, left wing)	7
PASOK - Movement for Change	21	Independents	4
Communist Party of Greece (KKE)	15		

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Athens (3.15)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Thessaloniki (0.82); Patras (0.21); Herakliom (0.22); Larissa (0.17); Volos (0.14)		
Area km ² :	131,960	Population age <15 (%):	14
Population (millions):	10.7	Population age >64 (%):	22
Population density (hab/km ²):	83	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.35
Urban population (%):	80	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	80/85
Average annual population growth rate (%):	-0.1	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	4

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	188,684
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	28,457
GDP growth (%):	-9.0
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	211.9
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-10.8
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	-1.3

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	3,572
Outflows (millions \$):	703

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	7.4
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	4,900

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	611
Receipts (in % of GDP):	0.3

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	4.8
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	17.1
Services, value added (% of GDP):	78.1

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	43.4
Unemployment rate (%):	16.3
Youth unemployment rate (%):	34.9

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	11.6
Industry (% of total employment):	15.3
Services (% of total employment):	73.1

Energy

Production (TJ):	252,180
Consumption (TJ):	924,036
Consumption per capita (GJ):	86.2
Import (% energy used):	87.5

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	71,804	58,956	-12,849
in goods (millions \$)	54,177	33,015	-21,161
in services (millions \$)	17,628	25,940	8,313
in goods and services (% of GDP)	38.0	31.2	-6.8

Main Trading Partners

Import: Germany (12%), Italy (8%), China (8%), Netherlands (6%), Russian Federation (6%)
Export: Italy (11%), Germany (8%), Cyprus (6%), France (6%), Bulgaria (5%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	98.5/97.4
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.1
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	108.1
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	148.5
Mean years of schooling:	10.6
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	3.6
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	1.2

Water

Water resources (km ³):	68.4
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	962
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	80.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	3.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	10

Security

Total armed forces (000):	147
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	4.0

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.888
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	32

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	63.1
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	42.0
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	7.8

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	5.3
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	56.6

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	35.2
Marine (% of territorial waters):	4.5

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	109.5
Households with computer (per 100):	70.5
Internet users (per 100):	78.1

ISRAEL

Official Name:	State of Israel
Form of Government:	Parliamentary democracy
Head of State:	Isaac Herzog
Head of Government:	Naftali Bennett

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

Likud (neo-conservatives)	29	United Torah Judaism (ultraorthodox Ashkenazis)	7
Yesh Atid-Telem (liberalism)	17	Yisrael Beiteinu (far-right ultranationalist)	7
Shas (ultraorthodox Sephardis)	9	Religious Zionist	7
Blue and White	8	Joint List (arab parties)	6
Labor Party	7	Other	23

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Jerusalem (0.96)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Tel Aviv-Jaffa (4.34); Haifa (1.16)		
Area km ² :	22,070	Population age <15 (%):	28
Population (millions):	9.1	Population age >64 (%):	12
Population density (hab/km ²):	410	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	3.09
Urban population (%):	92	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	81/85
Average annual population growth rate (%):	1.9	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	3

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	407,101
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	41,271
GDP growth (%):	-2.2
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	71.7
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-10.8
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	-0.6

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	24,758
Outflows (millions \$):	5,860

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	0.8
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	2,500

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	6,106
Receipts (in % of GDP):	1.5

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	1.2
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	20.6
Services, value added (% of GDP):	78.1

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	58.2
Unemployment rate (%):	4.3
Youth unemployment rate (%):	8.0

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	0.9
Industry (% of total employment):	17.2
Services (% of total employment):	81.9

Energy

Production (TJ):	336,418
Consumption (TJ):	907,921
Consumption per capita (GJ):	100.5
Import (% energy used):	71.8

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	95,871	111,504	15,633
in goods (millions \$)	70,539	58,935	-11,604
in services (millions \$)	25,332	52,569	27,237
in goods and services (% of GDP)	23.5	27.4	3.8

Main Trading Partners
Import: China (16%), United States (14%), Germany (7%), Turkey (6%), Italy (4%)
Export: United States (26%), China (8%), United Kingdom (8%), Netherlands (5%), Germany (3%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	../.
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.5
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	105.0
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	60.3
Mean years of schooling:	13.0
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	6.2
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	4.9

Water

Water resources (km ³):	1.8
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	271
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	51.7
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	4.7
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	645

Security

Total armed forces (000):	178
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	5.2

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.919
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	19

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	36.3
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	29.8
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	7.5

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	6.7
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	60.9

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	24.5
Marine (% of territorial waters):	0.0

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	141.8
Households with computer (per 100):	80.6
Internet users (per 100):	90.1

ITALY

Official Name:	Italian Republic
Form of Government:	Parliamentary constitutional republic
Head of State:	Sergio Mattarella
Head of Government:	Mario Draghi

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Chamber of Deputies)

Northern League (LN, regionalists, populist right)	132	Brothers of Italy (Fdi)	37
Five Star Movement (M5S, populist movement)	105	Italia viva (liberalism)	30
Democratic Party (social democrat)	97	L'Alternativa (populism)	15
Forza Italia- (FI, conservative)	83	Free and Equal (left)	10
Together for the Future (IpF, centrist)	51	Others	70

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Rome (4.29)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Milan (3.15); Naples (2.18); Torino (1.80); Bergamo (0.91); Palermo (0.85)		
Area km ² :	302,340	Population age <15 (%):	13
Population (millions):	59.6	Population age >64 (%):	23
Population density (hab/km ²):	200	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.27
Urban population (%):	71	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	82/86
Average annual population growth rate (%):	-0.3	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	3

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	1,891,057
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	41,279
GDP growth (%):	-8.9
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	155.3
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-9.6
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	-0.1

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	-388
Outflows (millions \$):	10,357

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	25.2
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	19,800

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	9,711
Receipts (in % of GDP):	0.5

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	2.2
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	23.9
Services, value added (% of GDP):	73.9

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	39.8
Unemployment rate (%):	9.2
Youth unemployment rate (%):	29.5

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	3.9
Industry (% of total employment):	25.9
Services (% of total employment):	70.2

Energy

Production (TJ):	1,440,733
Consumption (TJ):	5,236,902
Consumption per capita (GJ):	103.4
Import (% energy used):	82.2

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	484,553	556,941	72,388
in goods (millions \$)	391,522	469,959	63,893
in services (millions \$)	93,031	87,346	-2,206
in goods and services (% of GDP)	27.5	29.5	3.8

Main Trading Partners
Import: Germany (16%), China (9%), France (9%), Netherlands (6%), Spain (5%)
Export: Germany (13%), France (10%), United States (10%), Switzerland (6%), United Kingdom (5%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	99.4/99.0
Net enrolment rate (primary):	96.5
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	101.2
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	66.1
Mean years of schooling:	10.4
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	4.3
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	1.39

Water

Water resources (km ³):	191.3
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	564
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	50.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	23.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	97

Security

Total armed forces (000):	342
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	1.5

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.892
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	29

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	40.3
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	31.4
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	8.7

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	5.1
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	309.3

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	21.5
Marine (% of territorial waters):	9.7

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	128.5
Households with computer (per 100):	66.6
Internet users (per 100):	70.5

JORDAN			
Official Name:	Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan		
Form of Government:	Parliamentary constitutional monarchy		
Head of State:	King Abdullah II		
Head of Government:	Bisher Khasawneh		
Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Chamber of Deputies)			
Independents	118	Jordanian United Front Party	1
Islamic Action Front (Islamists, Muslim Brotherhood)	5	National Loyalty Party	1
Islamic Centre Party (ICP, Islamists)	5		
Population			
Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Amman (2.21)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Zarqa (0.74); Irbid (0.56); Russeifa (0.53)		
Area km ² :	89,320	Population age <15 (%):	33
Population (millions):	10.2	Population age >64 (%):	4
Population density (hab/km ²):	115	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	2.69
Urban population (%):	91	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	73/76
Average annual population growth rate (%):	1.0	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	13
Economy			
GDP & Debt		Economic Sectors	
GDP (millions \$):	43,759	Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	5.7
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	10,354	Industry, value added (% of GDP):	26.4
GDP growth (%):	-1.6	Services, value added (% of GDP):	67.9
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	87,978.0	Labour market	
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-8.6	Labour participation rate, female (%):	13.3
External Debt (millions \$):	38,016	Unemployment rate (%):	19.0
Inflation Rate (%):	0.4	Youth unemployment rate (%):	40.7
FDI		Employment in:	
Inflows (millions \$):	726	Agriculture (% of total employment):	2.5
Outflows (millions \$):	26	Industry (% of total employment):	24.4
International tourism		Services (% of total employment):	
Tourist arrivals (000):	1.1	73.1	
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	1,400	Energy	
Migrant remittances		Production (TJ):	26,343
Receipts (millions \$):	3,901	Consumption (TJ):	386,424
Receipts (in % of GDP):	9.0	Consumption per capita (GJ):	38.3
Total Trade		Import (% energy used):	
		98.0	
		Main Trading Partners	
in goods and services (millions \$)	18,206	Import: China (16%), Saudi Arabia (12%), United States (8%), Germany (4%), United Arab Emirates (4%)	
in goods (millions \$)	15,196	Export: United States (22%), India (11%), Saudi Arabia (10%), Iraq (8%), United Arab Emirates (4%)	
in services (millions \$)	3,010		
in goods and services (% of GDP)	41.7		
Exports	9,964		
Balance	-8,242		
	-7,691		
	-550		
	-18.9		
Society			
Education		Development	
Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	98.6/97.8	Human Development Index (value):	0.729
Net enrolment rate (primary):	79.9	Human Development Index (position in ranking):	102
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	67.8	Health	
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	33.6	Medical doctors (per 10,000):	4.0
Mean years of schooling:	10.5	Hospital beds (per 10,000):	14.7
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	3.0	Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	7.6
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.70	Emissions	
Water		CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	2.3
Water resources (km ³):	0.9	CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	22.8
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	105	Protected areas	
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	53.0	Terrestrial (% of total land area):	4.5
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	3.4	Marine (% of territorial waters):	1.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	136	ICT	
Security		Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	68.5
Total armed forces (000):	116	Households with computer (per 100):	42.9
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	5.0	Internet users (per 100):	..

LEBANON

Official Name:	Lebanese Republic
Form of Government:	Confessionalist parliamentary republic
Head of State:	Michel Aoun
Head of Government:	Najib Mikati

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

Lebanese Forces and allies	18	Ex-Future Movement and allies	8
Free Patriotic Movement and allies (liberal conservative)	17	Progressive Socialist Party and allies	8
17 October parties	17	Kataeb Party and allies	6
Amal (centre right) and allies	15	March 8 Affiliates	4
Hezbollah	15	Others	20

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Beirut (2.43)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Tripoli (0.50); Sidon (0.27); Zahlé (0.30)		
Area km ² :	10,450	Population age <15 (%):	25
Population (millions):	6.8	Population age >64 (%):	8
Population density (hab/km ²):	667	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	2.08
Urban population (%):	89	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	77/81
Average annual population growth rate (%):	-0.4	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	6

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	27,320
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	51,222
GDP growth (%):	-21.5
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	135.0
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-5.8
External Debt (millions \$):	68,865
Inflation Rate (%):	84.9

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	3,067
Outflows (millions \$):	28

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	0.4
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	2,400

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	6,298
Receipts (in % of GDP):	10.7

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	2.6
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	7.5
Services, value added (% of GDP):	89.9

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	20.6
Unemployment rate (%):	13.3
Youth unemployment rate (%):	27.4

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	11.3
Industry (% of total employment):	23.6
Services (% of total employment):	65.1

Energy

Production (TJ):	11,274
Consumption (TJ):	361,508
Consumption per capita (GJ):	52.8
Import (% energy used):	96.9

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	15,563	7,734	-7,829
in goods (millions \$)	9,816	2,728	-7,088
in services (millions \$)	5,746	5,006	-741
in goods and services (% of GDP)	24.5	12.2	-12.3

Main Trading Partners
Import: United Arab Emirates (12%), Turkey (7%), China (7%), Greece (7%), United States (6%)
Export: Switzerland (27%), United Arab Emirates (14%), Saudi Arabia (6%), United States (5%), Qatar (4%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	96.9/93.3
Net enrolment rate (primary):	..
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	..
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	..
Mean years of schooling:	8.7
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	2.6
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	..

Water

Water resources (km ³):	4.5
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	268
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	38.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	49.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	47

Security

Total armed forces (000):	80
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	..

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.744
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	92

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	22.1
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	27.3
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	8.7

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	3.7
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	25.5

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	1.9
Marine (% of territorial waters):	0.2

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	62.8
Households with computer (per 100):	..
Internet users (per 100):	..

LIBYA

Official Name:	State of Libya
Form of Government:	Provisional parliamentary republic
Head of State:	
Head of Government (interim):	Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

Uncertain state due to the collapse of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in 2011. On October 2020, a permanent ceasefire was signed to end the war. In March 2021, a national unity government joining the Second Al-Thani Cabinet of the House of Representatives and the Government of National Accord, was formed, which will hold power until the 2021 Libyan general election is held on 24 December. Libya's Election Commission called for the postponement of the election until 24 January 2022. However, at the last minute, the election was postponed indefinitely and the international community agreed to continue its support and recognition of the interim government headed by Mr Dbeibeh.

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Tripoli (1.17)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Misrata (0.95); Benghazi (0.84)		
Area km ² :	1,759,540	Population age <15 (%):	28
Population (millions):	6.9	Population age >64 (%):	5
Population density (hab/km ²):	4	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	2.21
Urban population (%):	81	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	70/76
Average annual population growth rate (%):	1.4	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	10

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	19,210
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	5,892
GDP growth (%):	-31.3
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	..
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-54.4
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	2.8

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	..
Outflows (millions \$):	205

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	..
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	..

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	..
Receipts (in % of GDP):	..

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	3.9
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	38.5
Services, value added (% of GDP):	57.6

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	33.8
Unemployment rate (%):	20.1
Youth unemployment rate (%):	51.5

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	16.4
Industry (% of total employment):	24.4
Services (% of total employment):	59.2

Energy

Production (TJ):	3,225,045
Consumption (TJ):	915,735
Consumption per capita (GJ):	135.2
Import (% energy used):	-250.7

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	24,495	27,867	3,372
in goods (millions \$)	17,184	27,733	10,549
in services (millions \$)	7,310	134	-7,177
in goods and services (% of GDP)	50.5	57.4	-20.1

Main Trading Partners
Import: China (14%), United Arab Emirates (12%), Turkey (12%), Italy (8%), Greece (5%)
Export: Italy (30%), Turkey (16%), United Arab Emirates (10%), China (8%), Spain (7%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	..
Net enrolment rate (primary):	..
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	..
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	..
Mean years of schooling:	7.6
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	..
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	..

Water

Water resources (km ³):	0.7
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	873
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	83.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	5.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	70

Security

Total armed forces (000):	..
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	..

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.724
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	105

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	20.9
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	32.0
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	6.1

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	6.8
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	45.9

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	0.1
Marine (% of territorial waters):	0.6

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	43.0
Households with computer (per 100):	..
Internet users (per 100):	..

MALTA

Official Name:	Republic of Malta
Form of Government:	Parliamentary republic
Head of State:	George Vella
Head of Government:	Robert Abela

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

Malta Labour Party (MLP, social democracy)	38	Nationalist Party (NP, centre-right)	29
--	----	--------------------------------------	----

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Valleta (0.21)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Birkirkara (0.02); Qormi (0.02)		
Area km ² :	320	Population age <15 (%):	14
Population (millions):	0.5	Population age >64 (%):	21
Population density (hab/km ²):	1,642	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.10
Urban population (%):	95	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	81/84
Average annual population growth rate (%):	4.1	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	6

Economy**GDP & Debt**

GDP (millions \$):	14,905
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	43,618
GDP growth (%):	-7.0
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	53.3
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-9.9
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	0.8

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	3,917
Outflows (millions \$):	7,288

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	0.7
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	400

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	281
Receipts (in % of GDP):	2.0

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	0.5
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	14.0
Services, value added (% of GDP):	85.5

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	53.2
Unemployment rate (%):	4.3
Youth unemployment rate (%):	10.7

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	1.0
Industry (% of total employment):	18.9
Services (% of total employment):	80.1

Energy

Production (TJ):	1,043
Consumption (TJ):	30,445
Consumption per capita (GJ):	60.7
Import (% energy used):	96.6

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	18,196	19,190	994
in goods (millions \$)	4,975	3,340	-1,635
in services (millions \$)	13,221	15,851	2,629
in goods and services (% of GDP)	122.0	128.7	6.7

Main Trading Partners
Import: Italy (13%), Russian Federation (10%), Republic of Korea (9%), China (8%), Singapore (8%)
Export: Germany (10%), France (7%), Italy (7%), China (5%), Singapore (4%)

Society**Education**

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	96.0/93.0
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.5
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	108.0
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	64.9
Mean years of schooling:	11.3
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	4.7
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.57

Water

Water resources (km ³):	0.1
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	146
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	39.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	2.2
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	20

Security

Total armed forces (000):	2
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	0.5

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.895
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	28

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	28.6
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	44.9
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	8.2

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	3.3
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	1.7

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	30.6
Marine (% of territorial waters):	7.4

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	143.4
Households with computer (per 100):	82.9
Internet users (per 100):	86.9

MONTENEGRO			
Official Name:	Montenegro		
Form of Government:	Parliamentary republic		
Head of State:	Milo Đukanović		
Head of Government:	Dritan Abazović		
Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)			
Democratic Party of Socialists (centre-left)	29	Civic Platform "In Black and White" (social liberal)	4
Democratic Front (centre-right)	15	Social Democrats	3
Peace is Our Nation (Democrats, centrist)	10	Bosniak Party (BS)	3
Socialist People's Party of Montenegro	5	Social Democratic Party (social-democracy)	2
Movement for Changes	5	Other	5
Population			
Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Podgorica (0.20)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Nikšić (0,07); Bar (0,04); Bijelo Polje (0,04)		
Area km ² :	13,810	Population age <15 (%):	18
Population (millions):	0.6	Population age >64 (%):	16
Population density (hab/km ²):	46	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.75
Urban population (%):	68	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	75/79
Average annual population growth rate (%):	-0.1	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	2
Economy			
GDP & Debt		Economic Sectors	
GDP (millions \$):	4,777	Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	8.2
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	19,282	Industry, value added (% of GDP):	19.2
GDP growth (%):	-15.3	Services, value added (% of GDP):	72.7
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	107.3	Labour market	
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-10.9	Labour participation rate, female (%):	46.4
External Debt (millions \$):	9,723	Unemployment rate (%):	17.9
Inflation Rate (%):	-0.2	Youth unemployment rate (%):	36.4
FDI		Employment in:	
Inflows (millions \$):	529	Agriculture (% of total employment):	7.1
Outflows (millions \$):	-5	Industry (% of total employment):	19.4
International tourism		Services (% of total employment):	
Tourist arrivals (000):	0.4	73.4	
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	200	Energy	
Migrant remittances		Production (TJ):	30,789
Receipts (millions \$):	601	Consumption (TJ):	45,590
Receipts (in % of GDP):	12.1	Consumption per capita (GJ):	73.3
		Import (% energy used):	33.7
Total Trade			
	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	2,897	1,197	-1,700
in goods (millions \$)	2,338	428	-1,910
in services (millions \$)	559	769	210
in goods and services (% of GDP)	60.5	25.0	-35.5
Main Trading Partners			
Import: Serbia (20%), China (10%), Germany (10%), Italy (6%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (6%)			
Export: Serbia (28%), Slovenia (10%), Hungary (6%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (6%), China (6%)			
Society			
Education		Development	
Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	99.5/98.3	Human Development Index (value):	0.829
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.9	Human Development Index (position in ranking):	48
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	90.4	Health	
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	55.5	Medical doctors (per 10,000):	28.7
Mean years of schooling:	11.6	Hospital beds (per 10,000):	38.6
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	..	Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	8.3
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.36	Emissions	
Water		CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	4.2
Water resources (km ³):	..	CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	2.6
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	256	Protected areas	
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	1.1	Terrestrial (% of total land area):	13.8
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	39.0	Marine (% of territorial waters):	0.1
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	..	ICT	
Security		Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	172.0
Total armed forces (000):	12	Households with computer (per 100):	61.1
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	1.7	Internet users (per 100):	77.6

MOROCCO

Official Name:	Kingdom of Morocco
Form of Government:	Parliamentary constitutional monarchy
Head of State:	King Mohammed VI
Head of Government:	Aziz Akhannouch

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

National Rally of Independents (RNI, centre-right, liberal)	102	Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS, communist)	22
Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM, liberal)	87	Constitutional Union (UC, centrist)	19
Istiqlal Party (PI, Centre-right, nationalism)	80	Justice and Development Party (PJD, Islamist)	13
Socialist Union of People's Forces (USFP)	34	Democratic and Social Movement (royalist)	5
Popular Movement (MP, conservative)	28	Others	5

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Rabat (1.93)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Casablanca (3.84); Tanger (1.28); Fes (1.27); Marrakech (1.03); Agadir (0.96)		
Area km ² :	446,550	Population age <15 (%):	27
Population (millions):	36.9	Population age >64 (%):	8
Population density (hab/km ²):	83	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	2.38
Urban population (%):	64	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	76/78
Average annual population growth rate (%):	1.2	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	16

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	114,724
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	7,688
GDP growth (%):	-5.1
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	76.4
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-7.6
External Debt (millions \$):	65,683
Inflation Rate (%):	0.7

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	1,763
Outflows (millions \$):	492

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	2.8
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	3,800

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	7,419
Receipts (in % of GDP):	6.5

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	13.2
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	29.5
Services, value added (% of GDP):	57.3

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	21.7
Unemployment rate (%):	11.5
Youth unemployment rate (%):	26.6

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	33.3
Industry (% of total employment):	23.1
Services (% of total employment):	43.7

Energy

Production (TJ):	94,109
Consumption (TJ):	931,713
Consumption per capita (GJ):	25.5
Import (% energy used):	92.4

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	46,259	37,422	-8,836
in goods (millions \$)	39,171	23,567	-15,603
in services (millions \$)	7,088	13,855	6,767
in goods and services (% of GDP)	40.3	32.6	-7.7

Main Trading Partners
Import: Spain (16%), France (12%), China (11%), United States (7%), Saudi Arabia (7%)
Export: Spain (28%), France (22%), Italy (5%), United States (4%), Netherlands (4%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	83.3/64.6
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.6
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	82.5
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	40.6
Mean years of schooling:	5.6
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	..
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	..

Water

Water resources (km ³):	29.0
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	290
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	88.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	2.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	7

Security

Total armed forces (000):	246
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	4.2

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.686
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	121

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	7.3
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	10.0
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	5.3

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	1.8
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	65.9

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	2.2
Marine (% of territorial waters):	0.7

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	133.9
Households with computer (per 100):	64.2
Internet users (per 100):	84.1

NORTH MACEDONIA

Official Name:	Republic of North Macedonia
Form of Government:	Parliamentary republic
Head of State:	Stevo Pendarovski
Head of Government:	Dimitar Kovačevski

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Assembly of the Republic)

We Can (Social Democratic Union Coalition (SDSM) (social democracy)	44	Alliance for The Albanians	8
Renewal (Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity Coalition (VMRO-DPMNE) (conservatism)	44	Alternative (Albanian)	4
Democratic Union for Integration (BDI/DUI) (Albanian minority interests)	15	BESA Movement (centre right, Albanian)	2
		The Left (socialist)	2
		Democratic Party of Albanians (PDS/DPA, Albanian)	1

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Skopje (0.61)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Kumanovo (0.11); Bitola (0.09); Prilep (0.07)		
Area km ² :	25,710	Population age <15 (%):	16
Population (millions):	2.1	Population age >64 (%):	15
Population density (hab/km ²):	82	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.49
Urban population (%):	59	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	74/78
Average annual population growth rate (%):	-0.2	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	5

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	12,138
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	16,610
GDP growth (%):	-5.2
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	51.9
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-8.2
External Debt (millions \$):	10,607
Inflation Rate (%):	1.2

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	274
Outflows (millions \$):	39

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	0.1
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	300

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	413
Receipts (in % of GDP):	3.3

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	10.8
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	21.6
Services, value added (% of GDP):	67.6

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	41.8
Unemployment rate (%):	17.2
Youth unemployment rate (%):	36.9

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	13.9
Industry (% of total employment):	31.1
Services (% of total employment):	55.0

Energy

Production (TJ):	47,857
Consumption (TJ):	284,525
Consumption per capita (GJ):	88.8
Import (% energy used):	84.3

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	8,748	7,148	-1,600
in goods (millions \$)	7594	5502	-2,092
in services (millions \$)	1,154	1,646	492
in goods and services (% of GDP)	71.3	58.3	-13.0

Main Trading Partners
Import: United Kingdom (16%), Germany (11%), Serbia (8%), China (7%), Greece (6%)
Export: Germany (45%), Serbia (6%), Bulgaria (4%), Bulgaria (4%), Greece (3%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	99.1/97.6
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.3
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	80.0
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	43.1
Mean years of schooling:	9.8
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	..
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.36

Water

Water resources (km ³):	6.4
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	413
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	38.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	26.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	..

Security

Total armed forces (000):	16
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	1.5

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.774
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	82

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	28.7
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	42.8
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	7.3

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	3.8
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	80.0

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	12.5
Marine (% of territorial waters):	..

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	89.4
Households with computer (per 100):	69.5
Internet users (per 100):	81.4

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Name (UN use):	Occupied Palestinian Territories
Form of Government:	De jure parliamentary democracy operating de facto as a semi-presidential system
Head of State:	Mahmoud Abbas
Head of Government:	Mahammad Shtayyeh

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Palestinian legislative council has been unable to meet and govern since 2007)

Hamas (Islamists)	74	Palestinian National Initiative (social democracy)	2
Fatah (nationalists, socialists)	45	Third Way (centrist)	2
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP, nationalists, Marxists)	3	Others	2
		Independents	4

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Al Quds (East Jerusalem) (0.30); Ramallah (0.04) [administrative centre]		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Gaza City (0.76); Khan Yunis (0.26); Jabalia (0.25); Rafah (0.23); Hebron (0.22)		
Area km ² :	6,020	Population age <15 (%):	38
Population (millions):	4.8	Population age >64 (%):	3
Population density (hab/km ²):	798	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	3.56
Urban population (%):	77	Life expectancy at birth, Men/Women (years):	73/76
Average annual population growth rate (%):	2.5	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	14

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	15,532
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	5,366
GDP growth (%):	-11.5
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	47.3
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-7.7
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	-0.8

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	52
Outflows (millions \$):	61

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	0.1
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	..

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	2,650
Receipts (in % of GDP):	17.7

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	8.3
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	22.0
Services, value added (% of GDP):	69.6

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	16.2
Unemployment rate (%):	25.9
Youth unemployment rate (%):	42.0

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	6.0
Industry (% of total employment):	30.4
Services (% of total employment):	63.6

Energy

Production (TJ):	..
Consumption (TJ):	..
Consumption per capita (GJ):	..
Import (% energy used):	..

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	7,869	2,379	-5,489
in goods (millions \$)	6,375	1,765	-4,611
in services (millions \$)	1,493	614	-879
in goods and services (% of GDP)	50.6	15.3	35.3

Main Trading Partners

Import: Israel (64%), Turkey (7%), China (5%), Jordan (3%), Germany (2%)
Export: Israel (78%), Jordan (7%), United Arab Emirates (3%), Turkey (2%), United States (2%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate, Men / Women (%):	98.8/96.2
Net enrolment rate (primary):	95.3
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	91.0
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	43.1
Mean years of schooling:	9.2
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	5.3
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.50

Water

Water resources (km ³):	0.8
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	80
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	45.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	8.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	4

Security

Total armed forces (000):	..
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	..

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.708
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	115

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	..
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	..
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	..

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	..
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	..

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	8.4
Marine (% of territorial waters):	..

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	83.8
Households with computer (per 100):	33.2
Internet users (per 100):	70.6

PORTUGAL

Official Name:	Portuguese Republic
Form of Government:	Semi-presidential constitutional republic
Head of State:	Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa
Head of Government:	Antonio Luis Santos da Costa

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Assembly of the Republic)

Socialist Party (PS)	120	Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)	6
Social Democratic Party (PSD)	77	Left Bloc (BE, socialism / left wing)	5
CHEGA (right wing)	12	People-Animals-Nature	1
Liberal Initiative (IL, liberalism)	8	LIVRE (Eco-socialism)	1

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Lisbon (2.99)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Porto (1.32); Braga (0.19); Guimaraes (0.16)		
Area km ² :	92,226	Population age <15 (%):	13
Population (millions):	10.3	Population age >64 (%):	23
Population density (hab/km ²):	112	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.42
Urban population (%):	66	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	79/85
Average annual population growth rate (%):	0.2	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	3

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	228,356
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	33,754
GDP growth (%):	-8.4
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	135.2
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-5.8
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	-0.1

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	6,324
Outflows (millions \$):	2,288

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	6.5
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	8,800

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	4,327
Receipts (in % of GDP):	1.9

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	2.4
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	22.2
Services, value added (% of GDP):	75.4

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	53.6
Unemployment rate (%):	6.8
Youth unemployment rate (%):	22.6

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	5.5
Industry (% of total employment):	24.7
Services (% of total employment):	69.8

Energy

Production (TJ):	246,181
Consumption (TJ):	911,454
Consumption per capita (GJ):	88.8
Import (% energy used):	84.3

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	89,333	85,144	-4,190
in goods (millions \$)	73,589	59,574	-14,016
in services (millions \$)	15,744	25,570	9,826
in goods and services (% of GDP)	39.1	37.3	-1.8

Main Trading Partners

Import: Spain (33%), Germany (13%), France (7%), Netherlands (6%), Italy (5%)
Export: Spain (25%), France (14%), Germany (12%), United Kingdom (6%), United States (5%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	97.4/95.1
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.6
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	120.8
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	67.9
Mean years of schooling:	9.3
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	4.7
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	1.40

Water

Water resources (km ³):	77.4
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	585
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	57.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	30.5
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	1

Security

Total armed forces (000):	52
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	2.1

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.864
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	38

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	54.8
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	34.5
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	9.5

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	4.1
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	42.4

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	22.9
Marine (% of territorial waters):	16.8

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	116.3
Households with computer (per 100):	71.5
Internet users (per 100):	78.3

SERBIA

Official Name:	Republic of Serbia
Form of Government:	Parliamentary republic
Head of State:	Aleksandar Vučić
Head of Government:	Ana Brnabić

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

Aleksandar Vučić - Together We Can Do Everything (SNS led Coalition)	120	Dveri-POKS (Serbian nationalism)	10
United for the Victory of Serbia (centre)	38	Serbian Party Oathkeepers (Ultrnationalism)	10
Ivica Dačić - Prime Minister of Serbia (SPS led coalition)	32	Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (Hungarian minority)	5
National Democratic Alternative (conservatism)	15	Justice and Reconciliation Party (Bosniak minority)	5
We Must (green coalition)	13	Others	4

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Belgrade (1.40)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Novi Sad (0.36); Nis (0.26); Kragujevac (0.18); Subotica (0.14)		
Area km ² :	88,360	Population age <15 (%):	15
Population (millions):	6.9	Population age >64 (%):	19
Population density (hab/km ²):	79	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.52
Urban population (%):	56	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	74/79
Average annual population growth rate (%):	-0.5	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	5

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	53,335
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	19,190
GDP growth (%):	-0.9
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	57.9
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-7.2
External Debt (millions \$):	38,467
Inflation Rate (%):	1.6

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	3,830
Outflows (millions \$):	192

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	0.4
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	1,200

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	5,305
Receipts (in % of GDP):	8.8

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	7.8
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	30.4
Services, value added (% of GDP):	61.8

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	46.5
Unemployment rate (%):	9.0
Youth unemployment rate (%):	26.0

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	15.6
Industry (% of total employment):	27.4
Services (% of total employment):	57.0

Energy

Production (TJ):	427,928
Consumption (TJ):	640,289
Consumption per capita (GJ):	92.1
Import (% energy used):	25.9

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	30,833	26,558	-4,276
in goods (millions \$)	24,320	18,362	-5,958
in services (millions \$)	6,513	8,195	1,683
in goods and services (% of GDP)	50.5	43.5	7.0

Main Trading Partners
Import: Germany (14%), China (12%), Italy (8%), Russian Federation (6%), Hungary (5%)
Export: Germany (13%), Italy (8%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (7%), Romania (7%), Hungary (5%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	99.9/99.1
Net enrolment rate (primary):	97.1
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	92.2
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	68.1
Mean years of schooling:	11.2
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	3.6
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.92

Water

Water resources (km ³):	162.2
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	631
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	13.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	75.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	..

Security

Total armed forces (000):	32
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	2.1

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.806
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	64

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	31.1
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	56.1
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	8.7

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	6.5
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	45.1

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	7.6
Marine (% of territorial waters):	..

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	120.2
Households with computer (per 100):	74.3
Internet users (per 100):	78.4

SLOVENIA

Official Name:	Republic of Slovenia
Form of Government:	Parliamentary constitutional republic
Head of State:	Borut Pahor
Head of Government:	Robert Golob

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats)

Freedom Movement (GS, green liberal)	41	Social Democrats (SD)	7
Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, conservatism)	27	The Left	5
New Slovenia - Christian People's Party (NSi)	8	Italian and Hungarian national minorities	2

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Ljubljana (0.29)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Maribor (0.10); Celje (0.05); Kranj (0.04)		
Area km ² :	20,480	Population age <15 (%):	15
Population (millions):	2.1	Population age >64 (%):	20
Population density (hab/km ²):	103	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.60
Urban population (%):	55	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	79/84
Average annual population growth rate (%):	0.7	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	2

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	53,547
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	39,378
GDP growth (%):	-4.2
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	79.8
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-7.8
External Debt (millions \$):	..
Inflation Rate (%):	1.6

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	529
Outflows (millions \$):	555

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	1.2
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	1,400

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	558
Receipts (in % of GDP):	1.1

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	2.4
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	33.2
Services, value added (% of GDP):	64.4

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	53.2
Unemployment rate (%):	5.0
Youth unemployment rate (%):	14.3

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	4.3
Industry (% of total employment):	34.1
Services (% of total employment):	61.6

Energy

Production (TJ):	145,282
Consumption (TJ):	284,525
Consumption per capita (GJ):	136.1
Import (% energy used):	53.1

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	36,752	41,722	4,970
in goods (millions \$)	31,170	33,873	2,703
in services (millions \$)	5,582	7,848	2,267
in goods and services (% of GDP)	68.2	77.9	9.3

Main Trading Partners

Import: Germany (12%), Switzerland (11%), Italy (9%), Austria (7%), China (6%)
Export: Germany (15%), Switzerland (10%), Italy (8%), Croatia (7%), Austria (5%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	.../..
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.9
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	113.0
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	77.9
Mean years of schooling:	12.7
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	4.9
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	1.95

Water

Water resources (km ³):	31.9
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	463
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	0.3
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	82.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	..

Security

Total armed forces (000):	7
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	1.2

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.917
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	22

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	32.8
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	44.3
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	8.5

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	6.3
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	13.1

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	40.4
Marine (% of territorial waters):	2.3

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	122.7
Households with computer (per 100):	79.5
Internet users (per 100):	86.6

SPAIN

Official Name:	Kingdom of Spain
Form of Government:	Parliamentary constitutional monarchy
Head of State:	King Felipe VI
Head of Government:	Pedro Sánchez

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (Congress of Deputies)

Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE, social democrat)	120	Citizens	9
People's Party (PP, conservative)	88	Basque Nationalist Party (Christian democratic nationalist)	6
Vox (far right)	52	EH-Bildu (far left, basque nationalist)	5
United We Can and allies (left wing)	33	Junts per Cat (independentist regional)	4
Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC, independentist regional)	12	Others	20

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Madrid (6.71)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Barcelona (5.65); Valencia (0.84); Zaragoza (0.73); Seville (0.70)		
Area km ² :	505,957	Population age <15 (%):	14
Population (millions):	47.4	Population age >64 (%):	20
Population density (hab/km ²):	95	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	1.24
Urban population (%):	81	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	81/86
Average annual population growth rate (%):	0.5	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	2.7

Economy

GDP & Debt		Economic Sectors	
GDP (millions \$):	1,280,459	Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	3.4
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	38,244	Industry, value added (% of GDP):	22.3
GDP growth (%):	-10.8	Services, value added (% of GDP):	74.2
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	120.0	Labour market	
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-11.0	Labour participation rate, female (%):	51.6
External Debt (millions \$):	..	Unemployment rate (%):	15.5
Inflation Rate (%):	-0.3	Youth unemployment rate (%):	38.5
FDI		Employment in:	
Inflows (millions \$):	8,928	Agriculture (% of total employment):	4.0
Outflows (millions \$):	21,422	Industry (% of total employment):	20.4
International tourism		Services (% of total employment):	75.5
Tourist arrivals (000):	18.9	Energy	
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	18,500	Production (TJ):	1,424,885
Migrant remittances		Consumption (TJ):	5,082,973
Receipts (millions \$):	8,509	Consumption per capita (GJ):	108.0
Receipts (in % of GDP):	0.7	Import (% energy used):	82.8

Total Trade				Main Trading Partners	
	Imports	Exports	Balance		
in goods and services (millions \$)	373,058	392,146	19,087	Import: Germany (12%), China (10%), France (10%), Italy (6%), United States (5%)	
in goods (millions \$)	312,556	302,169	-10,387	Export: France (15%), Germany (11%), Italy (8%), Portugal (7%), United Kingdom (6%)	
in services (millions \$)	60,502	89,976	29,474		
in goods and services (% of GDP)	50.6	15.3	1.5		

Society

Education		Development	
Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	99.0/98.2	Human Development Index (value):	0.904
Net enrolment rate (primary):	97.2	Human Development Index (position in ranking):	25
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	125.9	Health	
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	92.9	Medical doctors (per 10,000):	44.4
Mean years of schooling:	10.3	Hospital beds (per 10,000):	29.7
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	4.2	Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	9.1
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	1.24	Emissions	
Water		CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	4.9
Water resources (km ³):	111.5	CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	230.9
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	669	Protected areas	
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	65.0	Terrestrial (% of total land area):	28.1
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	19.0	Marine (% of territorial waters):	12.8
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	364	ICT	
Security		Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	119.0
Total armed forces (000):	199	Households with computer (per 100):	81.4
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	1.4	Internet users (per 100):	93.2

SYRIA*			
Official Name:	Syrian Arab Republic		
Form of Government:	Dominant-party semi-presidential state		
Head of State:	Bashar al-Assad		
Head of Government:	Hussein Arnous		
Political parties represented in the current Parliament (seats) (People's Council of Syria)			
National Progressive Front (NFP, coalition led by the Baath Party)	183	Independents	67
Population			
Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Damascus (2.50)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Aleppo (2.00); Homs (1.36); Hamah (0.94); Latakia (0.67)		
Area km ² :	185,180	Population age <15 (%):	31
Population (millions):	17.5	Population age >64 (%):	5
Population density (hab/km ²):	95	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	2.77
Urban population (%):	56	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	69/78
Average annual population growth rate (%):	2.5	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	18
Economy			
GDP & Debt		Economic Sectors	
GDP (millions \$):	..	Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	20.6
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	..	Industry, value added (% of GDP):	30.1
GDP growth (%):	..	Services, value added (% of GDP):	49.3
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	..	Labour market	
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	..	Labour participation rate, female (%):	15.4
External Debt (millions \$):	4,763	Unemployment rate (%):	10.3
Inflation Rate (%):	..	Youth unemployment rate (%):	22.3
FDI		Employment in:	
Inflows (millions \$):	..	Agriculture (% of total employment):	10.1
Outflows (millions \$):	..	Industry (% of total employment):	23.2
International tourism		Services (% of total employment):	
Tourist arrivals (000):	..	66.7	
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	..	Energy	
Migrant remittances		Production (TJ):	
Receipts (millions \$):	1,053	Consumption (TJ):	
Receipts (in % of GDP):	5.6	Consumption per capita (GJ):	
		Import (% energy used):	
		185,792	
		388,094	
		22.7	
		56.2	
Total Trade			
Imports	Exports	Balance	
in goods and services (millions \$)	..	..	..
in goods (millions \$)	6,640	2,260	-4,380
in services (millions \$)	..	..	..
in goods and services (% of GDP)	..	..	..
Main Trading Partners			
Import: China (18%), Ukraine (14%), Russian Federation (11%), Argentina (6%), Egypt (6%)			
Export: Iraq (55%), Lebanon (8%), Turkey (7%), Saudi Arabia (7%), Algeria (5%)			
Society			
Education		Development	
Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	../.	Human Development Index (value):	0.567
Net enrolment rate (primary):	72.4	Human Development Index (position in ranking):	151
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	..	Health	
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	43.0	Medical doctors (per 10,000):	12.9
Mean years of schooling:	5.1	Hospital beds (per 10,000):	14.0
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	..	Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	..
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	..	Emissions	
Water		CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	
Water resources (km ³):	16.8	CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	989	23.6	
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	88.0	Protected areas	
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	4.0	Terrestrial (% of total land area):	
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	..	Marine (% of territorial waters):	
Security		0.7	
		0.2	
		ICT	
Total armed forces (000):	269	Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	..	Households with computer (per 100):	
		Internet users (per 100):	
		95.2	
		..	
		..	

* Considering the situation in the country, estimates should be used with caution as they are not based on solid evidence.

TUNISIA

Official Name:	Republic of Tunisia
Form of Government:	Semi-Presidential Republic
Head of State:	Kais Saied
Head of Government:	Najla Bouden

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (National Constituent Assembly) On 30 March 2022 President Saied ordered the formal dissolution of the Assembly.

Ennahda (Islamist)	52	People's Movement (Secularism, Socialism)	15
Heart of Tunisia (NT) (Secularism, centre)	38	Tahya Tounes (Secularism, liberalism)	14
Democratic Current (Pan-Arabism)	22	Machrouu Tounes (Nationalism, centre)	4
Dignity Coalition	19	Errahma	2
Free Destourian Party (Secularism, right wing)	17	Others	34

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Tunis (2.44)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Sfax (0.64); Sousse (0.67); Kairouan (0.57)		
Area km ² :	163,610	Population age <15 (%):	24
Population (millions):	11.8	Population age >64 (%):	9
Population density (hab/km ²):	76	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	2.17
Urban population (%):	70	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	75/79
Average annual population growth rate (%):	1.1	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	14.3

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	42,502
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	10,742
GDP growth (%):	-9.2
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	82.9
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-9.1
External Debt (millions \$):	41,038
Inflation Rate (%):	5.6

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	652
Outflows (millions \$):	43

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	2.0
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	900

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	2,100
Receipts (in % of GDP):	5.4

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	12.4
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	22.9
Services, value added (% of GDP):	64.7

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	25.5
Unemployment rate (%):	16.6
Youth unemployment rate (%):	38.1

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	13.8
Industry (% of total employment):	33.5
Services (% of total employment):	52.7

Energy

Production (TJ):	212,208
Consumption (TJ):	471,647
Consumption per capita (GJ):	40.3
Import (% energy used):	57.9

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	19,660	16,038	-3,622
in goods (millions \$)	17,293	13,763	-3,530
in services (millions \$)	2,367	2,275	-92
in goods and services (% of GDP)	50.1	40.9	-9.2

Main Trading Partners
Import: France (16%), Italy (14%), China (9%), Germany (7%), Algeria (6%)
Export: France (29%), Italy (15%), Germany (12%), Libya (6%), Spain (5%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	.../...
Net enrolment rate (primary):	99.2
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	..
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	32.8
Mean years of schooling:	7.2
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	7.3
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	0.60

Water

Water resources (km ³):	4.6
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	332
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	76.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	1.2
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	43

Security

Total armed forces (000):	48
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	2.8

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.740
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	95

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	13.0
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	21.8
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	7.0

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	2.2
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	26.2

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	7.9
Marine (% of territorial waters):	1.0

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	125.7
Households with computer (per 100):	52.1
Internet users (per 100):	66.7

TURKEY

Official Name:	Republic of Turkey
Form of Government:	Parliamentary republic
Head of State:	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Head of Government:	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Political parties represented in the current Parliament (Grand National Assembly)

Justice and Development Party (AKP, islamism, conservatism)	286	Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, Turkish nationalism)	47
Republican People's Party (CHP, social democracy, laicism)	135	İYİ Party (centrist, Turkish nationalist)	37
Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP, democratic socialism, anti-capitalism)	56	Independents	6
		Others	14
		Vacants	19

Population

Capital (urban agglomeration population in millions):	Ankara (5.31)		
Main urban agglomerations (population in millions):	Istanbul (15.63); Izmir (3.05); Bursa (2.05); Adana (1.81); Gaziantep (1.77); Konya (1.38)		
Area km ² :	785,350	Population age <15 (%):	24
Population (millions):	84.3	Population age >64 (%):	9
Population density (hab/km ²):	110	Total fertility rate (births per woman):	2.06
Urban population (%):	77	Life expectancy at birth. Men/Women (years):	75/81
Average annual population growth rate (%):	1.1	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 born alive):	8.1

Economy

GDP & Debt

GDP (millions \$):	719,919
GDP per capita (\$, PPP):	30,449
GDP growth (%):	1.8
Public Debt (in % of GDP):	39.5
Public Deficit (in % of GDP):	-5.1
External Debt (millions \$):	435,889
Inflation Rate (%):	12.3

FDI

Inflows (millions \$):	7,880
Outflows (millions \$):	3,240

International tourism

Tourist arrivals (000):	15.9
Tourism receipts (millions \$):	10,200

Migrant remittances

Receipts (millions \$):	795
Receipts (in % of GDP):	0.1

Economic Sectors

Agriculture, value added (% of GDP):	7.5
Industry, value added (% of GDP):	31.5
Services, value added (% of GDP):	61.0

Labour market

Labour participation rate, female (%):	31.0
Unemployment rate (%):	13.1
Youth unemployment rate (%):	24.5

Employment in:

Agriculture (% of total employment):	18.1
Industry (% of total employment):	25.3
Services (% of total employment):	56.6

Energy

Production (TJ):	1,913,332
Consumption (TJ):	6,133,507
Consumption per capita (GJ):	74.1
Import (% energy used):	72.2

Total Trade	Imports	Exports	Balance
in goods and services (millions \$)	232,003	203,277	-28,725
in goods (millions \$)	206,282	168,402	-37,879
in services (millions \$)	25,721	34,875	9,154
in goods and services (% of GDP)	32.2	28.2	-4.0

Main Trading Partners
Import: China (11%), Germany (10%), Russian Federation (8%), United States (5%), Italy (4%)
Export: Germany (9%), United Kingdom (7%), United States (6%), Iraq (5%), Italy (5%)

Society

Education

Adult literacy rate. Men / Women (%):	99.1/94.4
Net enrolment rate (primary):	95.2
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	104.1
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	115.0
Mean years of schooling:	8.1
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP):	4.3
R&D expenditure (% of GDP):	1.00

Water

Water resources (km ³):	211.6
Water withdrawal (m ³ per capita):	721
Water withdrawal by sector (% agriculture):	87.0
Water withdrawal by sector (% industry):	5.0
Desalinated water production (millions m ³):	9

Security

Total armed forces (000):	512
Military expenditure (% of GDP):	2.1

Development

Human Development Index (value):	0.820
Human Development Index (position in ranking):	54

Health

Medical doctors (per 10,000):	19.3
Hospital beds (per 10,000):	28.5
Total Health Expenditure (% of GDP):	4.3

Emissions

CO ₂ Emissions (mt per capita):	4.4
CO ₂ Emissions, total (millions mt):	366.4

Protected areas

Terrestrial (% of total land area):	7.0
Marine (% of territorial waters):	1.8

ICT

Mobile subscriptions (per 100):	97.4
Households with computer (per 100):	52.1
Internet users (per 100):	77.7

Complexity and Tensions in the Maghreb

Jorge Dezcallar

Ambassador of Spain

Morocco is a country of the utmost importance for Spain, for obvious historical and geographical reasons. It is also important for strategic reasons, as the countries are located on either side of such a sensitive area as the Strait of Gibraltar, and because we have enormous political, economic and security interests in Morocco. I could go on.

Throughout history, the Strait has united us at times and separated us at others. It united us in the times of Carthage, Rome, the Goths and the Arabs. But it has also separated us since the last European Neanderthals, who, taking refuge in Gibraltar, could not cross it, any more than those young people today in Tangiers, who would give anything to be able to board a ferry bound for Algeciras, imagining Eldorado. Today the Strait of Gibraltar marks a different border from those we have with Portugal or France because it separates two cultures and two economies. The culture of the north is heir to Rome and Christianity, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, while that of the south has Muslim, Arab and Berber roots, with very different stances on issues as important then and now as religious and gender issues. Spain's per capita income is \$25,400 and Morocco's is \$2,718 (2020 data). Therefore, travelling from one country to the other is not only a change of geography, but also a real journey through time.

This means that we have different perceptions that give rise to many misunderstandings among us, and we need to be self-critical. Our view of Morocco is tinged with prejudice. We need only look at our textbooks, studied by García Morente, which present the Reconquest as an 800-year struggle against "the Other" when both parties were just as Spanish. This

image of the Maghrebis in Spain has been studied by Mohamed Chakor and Eloy García Corrales and is even reflected in comic books such as *El Guerrero del Antifaz* by Manuel Gago, or *El Capitán Trueno*, from a few years ago, full of racist comments.

These prejudices, a product of the past, are a consequence of and at the same time reinforce a centuries-old distrust of a diffuse but real danger from the south that can be explained by the Barbary pirates of the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish-Moroccan War, narrated with enormous success by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, the Rif War, the Tragic Week in Barcelona, the participation of Moroccan troops in our Civil War (and the subsequent Moorish Guard), the Green March on the Sahara, the Perejil incident or, more recently, the same problems for us that were created through the massive storming of Ceuta in May 2021 or the frequent rushing of the border fences around Ceuta and Melilla, not to mention the sharp increase in the number of immigrant boats heading for the Canary Islands in the first months of 2022.

However, the same or more could be said of Morocco, which suffered the coastal raids of the Order of Malta's galleys, the conquest of strongholds on its coasts by the Castilians and Portuguese, the brutalities of the Rif War, the Protectorate regime, or our position on Ceuta and Melilla and Western Sahara, which in the Moroccans' opinion prevents the territorial integrity of their country from being achieved. Many mistakenly believe that it is in our interest to keep the Western Sahara issue alive in order to delay Morocco's claim to Ceuta and Melilla. Moreover, the Moroccans see many contradictions in our policy, because according to them, we claim to want a strong and stable Morocco but prevent them from attaining their territorial integrity; we claim to be their defenders in the EU but hinder the arrival of their fruit and vegetables; we want a privileged relationship

but do not let their youth cross the Strait; we claim to want their friendship but we publicly humiliated them in Perejil and until Pedro Sánchez's about-turn, we did not support their position on Western Sahara; we claim to be interested in them but our media pay them no attention, schoolchildren ignore everything about Al-Andalus or *The Ring of the Dove*, and Arabic is hardly taught at Spanish universities....

All this makes our bilateral relationship anything but easy. It is a passionate relationship, tinged with strong emotional and not very rational elements that give it a saw-toothed profile, so that one day things seem to be going very well and the next we face an unexpected crisis... often provoked by Moroccan domestic political issues to which we are quite oblivious. In the last twenty years of the 20th century, we achieved a certain stability thanks to the "Cushion of Interests" Doctrine fostered by the Santa Cruz Palace. With it, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought to escape the vicious cycle of conflicting pressures from Algeria and Morocco, to pursue a global policy based on a development of economic relations and cooperation that would mean that provoking a crisis would end up being "very costly." Thanks to this policy, we have become Morocco's leading trade partner and one of its main investors. And that worked quite well until the Perejil crisis, in a context of previous misunderstanding between a young and ill-advised Mohammed VI and a José María Aznar with little bargaining power. The left came down hard on him, but in my opinion Aznar did what he had to do on that occasion on an islet that was of no importance to us in order to avoid greater problems in the short/medium term that would have been much more difficult to solve in other, more sensitive places.

By early 2022 the relationship had again soured. The blame lay with the Abraham Accords that US diplomacy concocted to help Israel break the Palestinians' de facto veto right over their relations with Arab countries, and which led to the Hebrew State's regional isolation. By virtue of this, Washington offered some Arab countries what they wanted or needed in exchange for establishing diplomatic relations with the State of Israel. And the gift it gave Morocco was to recognize its sovereignty over the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara, a territory that Morocco occupied after the Green March and the subsequent defeat of the Polisario Front, though it had not gotten the international community to rec-

ognize the legality of its presence there, protected by a well-armed defensive wall. UN doctrine affirms that Western Sahara is a non-self-governing territory and as such is should be undergoing decolonization, and although there is less and less talk of a referendum (due to the difficulties involved and Morocco's opposition), the UN continues to demand an agreement between the parties that would put an end to the dispute. Rabat offered an autonomy regime in 2007, while the Polisario Front (backed by Algeria) continues to demand a referendum on self-determination leading to the territory's independence. The disagreements are many and centre not only on the question of the referendum and its possible voters, but also on who "the parties" are, as Morocco considers the Polisario Front to be a puppet of Algeria and demands to deal with the latter on the issue.

The fact is that US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara has emboldened Morocco, which wants Spain to follow in its footsteps

Donald Trump's gift has stirred up a hornet's nest that had always been there but which had calmed down over time and especially since the impotence of the Polisario Front (PF) led it to declare a unilateral ceasefire in 1991. The PF broke this truce in late 2020 after accusing Morocco of violating it beforehand, and throughout 2021 there has been a string of incidents that have resulted in a number of deaths. The fact is that US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, contravening international law and United Nations doctrine, which Joe Biden has not rectified nor seems likely to, has emboldened Morocco, which wants Spain to follow in its footsteps and was irritated that we did not. And we did not do so, apart from compelling legal reasons, because we should not: because the Sahara issue is a matter of principle for us, true, but also of foreign and domestic policy at the same time. Spain's withdrawal from the Sahara left a deep mark on the right because they believe that the honour of our armed forces was at stake, and on the left because they believe that we aban-

doned the Sahrawis to Morocco. And this is even further complicated by the influence that the Polisario Front maintains, albeit waning, in sectors of Spanish public opinion, and by divisions within the PSOE-Podemos coalition government, which do not see the problem in exactly the same light.

The fact is that Morocco's frustration at not being able to change our position has translated since the beginning of 2021 into a series of clearly unfriendly gestures: it began trying to economically asphyxiate Ceuta and Melilla some time before, then it suspended the High Level Meeting (HLM) that was to be held in February 2021 and which has not yet taken place; and Rabat, irritated because Spain had taken Brahim Ghali, leader of the Polisario Front, in for medical treatment at a clinic in Logroño (with the naivety on the part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of thinking that if he came under another name Morocco would not find out), raised the bar of retaliation by pushing 10,000 human beings, Moroccans, including many women and minors (some of whom died) towards Ceuta, in an unacceptable show of pressure that has backfired, as it projected a terrible image of the country to the world. Talleyrand would say that it was worse than a crime; it was a mistake that also lent Spain the solidarity of the European Union as a whole. And Rabat adopted other measures as well, such as closing the Strait of Gibraltar to Moroccan immigrants in Europe wishing to visit their country of origin, who have been forced to travel from France or Portugal; cancelling flights because it claimed that the measures against Covid in Spain were not effective; building a fish farm in the waters of the Chafarinas; granting an Israeli company permission to explore for oil in undelimited waters between the Sahara and the Canary Islands; and letting a growing number of migrant boats depart for the archipelago, mostly from Dakhla ... Very unfriendly gestures, to which Spain initially responded with ineffectual meekness. First, it offered Morocco the head of Foreign Minister Arantxa González Laya, who was responsible for the Brahim Ghali mess, and then went so far as to involve King Felipe VI, who sent affectionate messages encouraging the two countries to "walk together," along the lines of what Mohammed VI said in August 2021, which has not been followed up. None of this was of any use.

Morocco asks Spain for "more clarity," as if it were not enough that in recent public statements, we no longer

spoke of demanding a referendum on self-determination and insisted on a fair, lasting and mutually acceptable solution for the parties, within the framework of the United Nations. The new Moroccan Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch used the 46th anniversary of the Green March to say that "there is no room for vague, ambivalent positions" on Western Sahara.

And the same hardening could be observed in relation to Ceuta and Melilla. Rabat had already closed the customs offices of Ceuta (in 2018) and Melilla (in 2019) in an obvious attempt to suffocate them economically, to make them cost a lot of money and be a problem for Spain. Then, in December 2020, the then Prime Minister Othmani stated that "there will come a day when we will address the issue of Ceuta and Melilla, Moroccan territories like Western Sahara," and more recently, Morocco has changed the "Border" sign that still stood next to the Melilla border crossing and replaced it with "Bab" (gate). It is quite a statement of intent. It is clear that they have their minds made up and things are going to get worse.

In theory, Spain should not expect Morocco to change its mind on Western Sahara and Ceuta and Melilla, because it will not succeed, but neither should Rabat expect us to change our minds on both issues. The smart thing to do would be to learn to live with the differences, which Morocco apparently does not wish to do. And until that happens, Spain will be wrong to continue placating Morocco with small gestures because it will perceive them as weakness (which it already thinks of the coalition government led by Pedro Sánchez) and will encourage it to up the ante. Morocco must be treated with all the respect it deserves as a neighbour and a country in which we have multiple interests. But also with a great deal of firmness, and that is what I believe we are lacking. I will later return to this matter, which has changed radically with the sudden, surprising turn that President Sánchez has taken on the Western Sahara dispute.

To complicate matters further, the Abraham Accords have been a bombshell that has also contributed to further destabilizing an already complicated region, because in the Maghreb there is a struggle for hegemony between Morocco and Algeria in which Western Sahara is an essential piece of the puzzle. It is not so much the cause of this conflict as its consequence. Relations between Algeria and Morocco were only good before Algeria's independence, when Morocco, which had just achieved its own in-

dependence in 1956, helped it in its anti-colonial struggle. Rabat hoped that after expelling the French, the Algerians would return the piece of desert that Paris had snatched from them with a line on the map when it thought Algeria would forever be a French department. When Algiers refused to give it back, the Sand War (1963) began, which Morocco lost but never forgot. The distance between them grew as Morocco opted for the West (Hassan II went so far as to express a utopian desire for NATO membership) and Algeria for Soviet Russia and Third World causes. In 1994 there was a terrorist attack on the Atlas Hasni Hotel in Marrakech (in which Spanish tourists were killed) and when Rabat blamed the Algerian secret services, Algiers reacted by closing the border between the two countries, preventing the vaunted Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) from being anything more than a mere entelechy on paper. And the border has remained closed until now, when Donald Trump has stirred up the hornet's nest.

Morocco's recognition of the State of Israel came as a shock in Algiers. Even more so when a visit to Rabat by the Hebrew Defence Minister led to the signing of security agreements that Algiers interpreted as a direct threat, leading it to break off diplomatic relations with Morocco and ban its planes from flying overhead, citing confusing accusations of promoting independence in Kabylia, spying with sophisticated Israeli surveillance equipment and even setting fire to its forests. The Algerian regime is weak, President Tebboune does not have the prestige that Bouteflika once had, and demonstrations continue against a system incapable of carrying out the political and economic reforms the country needs. Morocco knows this and is pressuring it to abandon the Western Sahara cause while both rearm, Algeria through Russia (as always) and now also Iran, and Morocco via the US, Israel and Turkey, while the Polisario Front, the big loser along with the Palestinians of the Abraham Accords, has broken the unilateral truce it had declared in 1991 without major consequences. The difference in forces is too great, and Tindouf is well aware of it.

This confrontation affects us not only because of the instability it could bring to the Maghreb region, with potential refugee flows if things get really bad, but also because it could threaten our imports of Algerian gas, which we need to produce 17% of the electricity we consume at a time of record prices in Europe as a result of the invasion of Ukraine and the

decline in Russian exports. Russian gas accounts for only 3% of our consumption, but we import almost 50% from Algeria, which reaches us via two pipelines: the Medgaz (40%), also known as Duran-Farrell, which runs from Haasi R'Mel to Almería via the Alboran Sea, and 60% via the Maghreb Europe Gas Pipeline (MEG), which ends in Algeciras after 450 km of transit through Moroccan territory. Between the two pipelines, they have a capacity to transport 16.7 billion m³ per year, although in 2020 we bought only 9 billion m³ because we have diversified purchases with other countries such as Nigeria and the US. And now Algeria has decided to stop exporting gas to us through the MEG, which was the result of an agreement between Spain, Algeria and Morocco. With this measure, Algiers wishes to prevent its neighbour from obtaining, at below-market prices, the gas that meets 45% of its domestic needs in the north of the country and supplies the generation of 12% of its electricity today thanks to its Tahaddart and Ain Beni Mathar power stations. It also wants to deprive it of the money it receives from the rights for gas transit through its territory, which range from 50 to 200 million dollars, depending on the year.

In order not to harm us in its dispute with Morocco, Algeria offered to increase its Medgaz transport capacity from 8 to 10 billion m³ in January 2022. But with the MEG out of service, Algeria would find it difficult to increase its exports beyond the 10 billion m³ per year in case of an emergency, and, moreover, its export capacity has almost reached its limit. There is no need for alarm because we have alternative sources for the gas we need, as we have the best European infrastructure of stations that regasify the liquefied gas arriving by ship, but with the current price of the electricity bill, the last thing we need are surprises and overpricing, since maritime transport and the regasification process increase the final price. Spain's concern was evident in the hasty visit to Algeria by our Minister of Foreign Affairs, accompanied by the presidents of Enagás and Naturgy, as soon as it learned of the Algerian decision.

In another gesture by Spain towards Rabat in an attempt to improve the strained bilateral atmosphere and in view of Algeria's understandable refusal to allow us, hypothetically at least, to re-export part of the gas we import from Algeria to Morocco, Madrid has offered to reverse the flow of the inactive MEG pipeline to send Morocco the gas the latter country buys

on the international market and which arrives by ship at our liquefied natural gas terminals to be regasified in our country before being put into the MEG. In this way, it is helping to resolve the serious damage caused by the Algerian decision while it hastily buys a floating regasification plant that it wants to locate in Casablanca. The agreement currently being negotiated between Madrid and Rabat will last for five years, according to Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development. Algeria is aware of the project and has not commented on it. This news coincided with President Sánchez's visit to the United Arab Emirates, where he welcomed the agreement, saying that "we have always considered Morocco a strategic ally in many fields, such as immigration, economic development and security. We look forward to strengthening this bilateral collaboration." Another nicety to try (unsuccessfully) to bring back the Moroccan ambassador, Karima Benyaich, who left Madrid in the midst of the crisis after the irregular entry of 10,000 people into Ceuta in May 2021. Rabat remained angry.

And as all bad situations can grow even worse, Morocco is watching closely to see what Spain does in relation to the recent decision of the European General Court to annul the EU-Morocco Fisheries and Trade Agreements because they cover products from Western Sahara, over which the international community does not recognize Moroccan sovereignty. This ruling is politically charged and constitutes an undoubted victory for the Polisario Front. It can be appealed before the EU Court of Justice, which already ruled in this regard when, after annulling in 2015 a trade agreement signed in 2012, it rectified it in 2016 to allow its application, but made it clear that Morocco could not export products of Sahrawi origin as its own. Given the importance of trade relations between the EU and Morocco (35 billion euros with a surplus of 5 billion for Europe), it is foreseeable that the Council will appeal, which Spain encourages it to do, and that when the appeal is admitted for processing, the CJEU itself will suspend the application of this ruling as a precautionary measure until it issues a definitive ruling... which could take the couple of years that remain of both agreements' period of validity. The truth is that many things will undoubtedly happen between Morocco and Spain – both countries could even end up disappearing, just as they did not exist two thousand

years ago. But barring a seismic disaster of unimaginable proportions, the Strait of Gibraltar will remain where it has always been for a long time, and those who then inhabit its northern and southern shores will undoubtedly fare better if the other also does well. King Hassan II had his issues, but no one can deny that he was a very intelligent man, and I once heard him say that, just as one should not spit upwards, for obvious reasons, it is not wise to insult the future. Because we will share it. And I couldn't agree more. That is why those who claim that a troubled Morocco is in Spain's interest irritate me. This is false. What Spain wants is an economically developed, politically democratic and socially stable Morocco and it wants to contribute to these objectives... as long as they do not make it impossible for us by asking us for what they should know we cannot give... unless the President of the government decides to give it to them on his own, which is precisely what has happened.

Countries do not have friends but interests, and those interests can change over time, and it is also clear that it is in Spain's interest to get along with Morocco. The question is whether at any price

Countries do not have friends but interests, and those interests can change over time, and it is also clear that it is in Spain's interest to get along with Morocco. The question is whether at any price. On Friday 18 March 2022, we Spaniards learned from a communiqué from the Moroccan Royal Palace that Spain has changed the position it has held on Western Sahara for the past 47 years. It has done so to support the Moroccan Autonomy Plan, which we now qualify as "the most serious, realistic and credible" with a superlative that takes us even further than Germany. I do not know the reason for these adjectives because the referendum or the agreement between the parties called for by the UN is also serious, and for autonomy to be "credible," it would have to be accepted by the Polisario Front, which is not the case. I can, however, accept the "realistic"

part, because a referendum on self-determination involves technical difficulties that are not easily surmountable and, moreover, Morocco will never allow it; and, on the other hand, the parties have been at each other's throats for 47 years without a glimmer of an agreement in sight. The other alternative is outright annexation, as Israel has done in East Jerusalem or Russia in Crimea.

Foreign policy must be based on consensus, otherwise it is weakened, lacks stability and contradicts the existence of permanent state interests

The “Moroccanness” of Western Sahara is something that no one in Morocco disputes; it is a national cause, and they think that offering a referendum is already too much. It goes without saying that supporting the autonomy offered by King Mohammed VI in 2007 seems to me to be a legitimate political option if our interests so advise. But by doing things the right way and being aware that we are departing from international legality and from our own position on Western Sahara, which we have maintained since we left it to its own devices in 1975. And this must be explained very well, because Spain has responsibilities in Western Sahara that France and the United States do not, with whose position the government tries to justify its own. I repeat that the government must have good reasons for acting as it has, and there are the last fifteen months of tension with Morocco. I do not dispute that. But now Spain is, in fact, aligning itself with Donald Trump's position without considering that Trump did not care about Western Sahara and international legality because what he wanted was for Morocco to diplomatically recognize the State of Israel. It will be said that we will now normalize our relations with Morocco, and that is true, but our relations with Algeria will also become very complicated. It will be difficult not to lose out. The government has published a prim and proper statement that makes no mention of Western Sahara and says that the normalization of relations with Morocco, which is always desirable, will guarantee the “stability, sovereignty and territorial in-

tegrity of our two countries.” It seems somewhat naïve, just as it was naïve to believe that the Moroccans would not find out about Brahim Ghali's visit to Spain, and it was also naïve just now to think that there would be no reaction from Algeria.

Morocco and Algeria are engaged in a struggle for supremacy in the Maghreb, and getting in the middle of it is tricky because no one believes that Algiers would let a change that breaks our neutrality and places us on Morocco's side go unchallenged. It should not be forgotten that Algeria is an important gas supplier in a very complicated context of war in Europe. Here we have two versions, the Spanish one, which says without further details that Algiers was warned, and the Algerian one, which denies it. The entire Algerian press published a very harsh commentary attributed to “a diplomatic source” which states that “at no time and at no level were the Algerian authorities informed of this vile agreement concluded with the Moroccan occupying power at the expense of the Saharawi people. This second historic betrayal of the Saharawi cause seriously undermines Spain's reputation and credibility as a member of the international community” and highlights its “outright submission to Morocco” by abandoning its obligations as an “administering power” and as a “member of the Group of Friends of Western Sahara in the United Nations.” It is very strong, but it makes two things clear: if Algeria was warned, as Madrid claims, it must be concluded that it did not like the Spanish decision at all; and if it was not warned, it is a serious diplomatic mistake. Algeria's displeasure has been made clear by calling its ambassador in Madrid for consultations, not allowing Iberia to increase the frequency of its flights with Algeria and informing that it will raise the price it charges for the gas it sends us, with the CEO of Sonatrach stressing that this price rise will not be applied to other countries, as Mario Draghi well knows, given that he rushed to Algiers to increase his gas purchases in the serious context created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Polisario Front has also expressed its anger, stating that Spain “defends international law in Europe and denies it in Western Sahara” and announcing that it is cutting off all dialogue with the Spanish government. At the same time, Rabat applauds and has returned its ambassador to Madrid. Foreign policy should not be a matter of party but of state, and a political change of this magnitude is a particularly delicate matter, because – I repeat – it

is both a matter of domestic and international policy, and it requires the support of the whole government and not just part of it, and of the opposition as well, if possible, in order to avoid radical policy shifts in future. It also requires explaining to public opinion the reasons for the decision to abandon international legality, which continues to maintain that Western Sahara is a non-self-governing territory that should be undergoing a process of decolonization through a referendum under international control or, at the very least, an agreement between the parties. And of which Spain is formally still the administering power. Here there has been none of this, neither respect for international legality, nor domestic consensus. And this is serious because foreign policy must be based on consensus, otherwise it is weakened, lacks stability and contradicts the existence of permanent state interests. It can be changed when these interests do so – and perhaps the Western Sahara dispute makes it advisable to do so – but following the established guidelines. And here there has been no consensus, but rather resounding disagreements that have been highlighted in the non-legislative proposal adopted in Congress, which has made the PSOE's distressing solitude on this issue clear, as it has been criticized by its governmental partners in United We Can (UP) and also by the parties that supported the investiture, not to mention the Popular Party (PP).

This weakens us as a country and leaves Pedro Sánchez's trip to Rabat in tatters because it inspires mistrust when he goes without the backing of Congress. What might happen if one day Vice-President Yolanda Díaz or Mr. Núñez Feijoo governs? Will they maintain this change or return to the position we have held for the last 47 years? I prefer not to speculate. Serious countries do not do these things. Moreover, President Sánchez has exceeded his powers because, according to article 69 of the Constitution, setting foreign policy is the responsibility of the government and not its president, whose functions are those of a prime minister, since Spain is not a presidential republic but a parliamentary monarchy. And neither the government nor the coalition partner nor the opposition were informed. None of them. Neither were the parties that supported Sánchez's investiture with a PSOE programme that spoke of self-determination. They feel deceived, which is why the political class has reacted with indignation and the citizenry with surprise and unease.

They neither understand nor agree. And not because the idea of autonomy proposed by Morocco is bad; on the contrary. It could be a good idea for resolving the dispute because it is halfway between the independence sought by the Polisario Front and the annexation of Crimea that many Moroccans want. Because I am convinced that Morocco will never hold a referendum and, moreover, no one will impose one on it. And because I also believe that there will never be an independent Western Sahara opposite the Canary Islands in a particularly unstable part of the world, the Sahel, where problems increase with each passing day. The only drawback of the autonomy proposal lies in the small detail that one of the parties does not accept it and it therefore falls outside UN legality, which, let us not forget, requires a referendum or, at least, an agreement between the parties, which have always been Morocco and the Polisario Front.

The only drawback of the autonomy proposal lies in the small detail that one of the parties does not accept it and it therefore falls outside UN legality

The atmosphere with Morocco will now improve (while it is seriously worsening with Algeria) and it is likely that at least for some time Rabat will better control the many small boats leaving Dakhla for the Canaries, or the storming of the border fences of Ceuta and Melilla, and that it will loosen the economic siege on our cities. All of this is positive, as will be refraining from unilateral actions in the waters of Chafarinas or in the undelimited maritime zone between Morocco and the Canary Islands, and the restoration of normal communications between the two countries. All of this will be very good. What I find hard to accept is that we reward Morocco for not doing what it shouldn't do in the first place. Because the impression given by Mr Sánchez's change of position is that he has yielded to pressure from Morocco, and giving an image of weakness (or being weak outright) is a sure-fire recipe for future problems. I would like to be wrong.

The EU's Strategic Compass: How to Translate It into Capabilities?

Sven Biscop¹

Lecturer, Ghent University

Director of the Europe in the World programme

Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations,
Brussels

By launching a war against Ukraine, right on the borders of the European Union, Russia has unleashed the strongest push to strengthen Europe's defence since the end of the Cold War. Only its initial 2014 invasion of Ukraine came close to having such an effect. NATO has activated its defence plans and deployed forces on the borders with Russia. Just about every state in Europe has announced increased defence spending. And the EU has finalized its Strategic Compass, its first ever defence strategy, with a much increased sense of urgency and purpose. The role of the EU in linking up national announcements and NATO targets is crucial, in fact, in that it provides a framework to align the efforts of the EU Member States and ensures that the EU's own indispensable targets are incorporated.

Additional resources will generate a lot more output if states cooperate and create synergies and effects of scale. The beauty of the EU tools for defence, in particular Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund (EDF), is that there are no limits on the types of capabilities that can be developed. EU Member States are perfectly free to use them to collectively generate capabilities required for territorial defence and deterrence within the NATO framework, in a way that

is much more cost effective than if they were to do so by themselves.

While deterrence and defence on Europe's eastern flank absorb all attention, the southern flank must not be forgotten. A Rapid Deployment Capacity, one of the priorities of the Strategic Compass,² remains necessary to prevent security crises in the south from threatening EU interests, and to counter Russia, which is very much present there as well. Seen from Moscow's perspective, eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean are one large theatre in which to thwart Europe's projects.

European leaders must consider how to put EU tools to use in both the short and the long term: establishing new capabilities more or less immediately, with arms and equipment procured off the shelf, including the Rapid Deployment Capacity; and investing in next generation platforms for future capabilities, operationalizing the priorities set by the *Compass*.

The Short Term: Filling the Gaps in Europe's Arsenal

The *Strategic Compass* mostly looks at investment in next generation capabilities over the current decade and beyond, but the EU has a key role to play in short-term capability efforts.

First of all, the EU can provide political impetus by setting its ambitions at a high level. EU Member States that are NATO allies could agree, for example, that, regardless of contributions from other allies, they must always have the capacity to provide the

¹ Prof. Dr. Sven Biscop is also the author of *Grand Strategy in 10 Words – A Guide to Great Power Politics in the 21st Century* Bristol University Press, 2021.

² EEAS, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, EU (2022)*. www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf

three heavy brigades that make up the land component of the NATO Response Force. Similarly, they could agree that, if necessary, they must be able to offer a framework nation for each ad hoc battlegroup³ deployed on the territory of an ally on the eastern flank. In addition to this, they could agree to always being ready and able to deploy a battlegroup to Finland and Sweden as well – EU Member States that, for now, are not NATO allies – and strengthen defence and deterrence there if requested.

By launching a war against Ukraine, right on the borders of the European Union, Russia has unleashed the strongest push to strengthen Europe's defence since the end of the Cold War

Second, in the EU framework, Member States can create synergies and effects of scale by coordinating their additional defence efforts. Subsets of EU Member States can anchor existing and additional national capabilities in permanent multinational formations, co-owned by those states that contribute to them.

There are ample opportunities for such “Europeanization” in many areas; for example:

- **Stocks:** All European countries have to replenish stocks of arms, ammunition, and other supplies. EU Member States that use the same equipment could easily create an accounting system for the pooled management of stocks, so that those with urgent operational needs can have recourse to the stocks of fellow Member States.
- **Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD):** Countries that, like Germany, are considering enhancing their air defences, can anchor their national capabilities (both existing and new, off-the-shelf systems) in a common Air Defence Command, and permanently integrate logistics, maintenance, and training, and organize common exer-

cises. In addition to air defence, however, Europeans ought also to enhance their own offensive missile capabilities; here too, off-the-shelf systems are available.

- **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs):** Armed drones have quickly become a fixed feature of any battlefield. As most EU Member States have only just entered this field, or are about to, this is a chance to integrate it from the start. National units can be set up as building blocks of a common Drone Command with, once again, integrated logistics, maintenance and training, and common exercises.
- **Cyber:** As hybrid actions against the EU can only be expected to increase, EU Member States ought to create their own offensive cyber capabilities. In this area too, as countries are largely starting from scratch, a common Cyber Command would be the logical step, consisting of national building blocks with integrated logistics, maintenance and training, and common exercises.

Such initiatives could easily become PESCO projects, contributing to the real purpose of PESCO: creating a full-spectrum, comprehensive force package.

Also in the Short Term: The EU Rapid Deployment Capacity

The Rapid Deployment Capacity is what strategic autonomy is all about: autonomous crisis management operations outside Europe. The *Compass* states that it “will consist of substantially modified EU Battlegroups and of pre-identified Member States’ military forces and capabilities.”

The main modification seems to be that Battlegroups will be on standby for a year rather than a semester. The *Compass* also stresses the strategic enablers needed to deploy them, but these were already part of the Battlegroup concept, of course – Member States just had difficulty providing them. The main problems with the Battlegroups remain, therefore: a Union of 27 has a standby force that at any one time

³ In a NATO context, a battlegroup is an ad hoc formation made up of units from various allies, such as those initially deployed in the Baltic states and Poland, and now also in other eastern European states. Not to be confused with the EU Battlegroup, a rotational standby force for operations outside Europe.

is made up of a handful of Member States, and it is that handful that in a crisis decides whether or not to deploy what remains of *their* troops – not the 27. Moreover, a Battlegroup based on a single combat battalion can only intervene in a meaningful way in very few specific scenarios. And the Battlegroups are temporary formations, so there is little or no accumulation of experience.

The *Strategic Compass* mostly looks at investment in next generation capabilities over the current decade and beyond, but the EU has a key role to play in short-term capability efforts

The Battlegroups were not killed off⁴ because many Member States insisted on retaining them. Let those who advocated for them continue to tinker with them, while others, if they want a real Rapid Deployment Capacity, focus on pre-identified national forces.

The aim of the Rapid Deployment Capacity is to intervene at brigade level: 5,000 troops. What is needed, therefore, is for a set of Member States to each identify a national brigade capable of expeditionary operations, and to permanently assign them to a corps headquarters – the existing Eurocorps HQ would be eminently suitable. These brigades should organize regular manoeuvres together, as a corps. Over time, doctrine and equipment can be harmonized between brigades; combat support and combat service support can be organized at corps level through a combination of pooling and division of labour; and common enablers can be built around the corps.

Thus a pool of interoperable expeditionary brigades will emerge, which will not be on standby, but rather have a high degree of readiness, from which a tailored force can be generated for a specific operation. The more Member States that commit a brigade to the scheme, the more likely that a willing coalition will be ready to act in a given crisis. There is obvi-

ously no unnecessary overlap with the NATO Response Force, which requires heavier brigades for territorial defence.

A similar scheme can be easily applied to naval and air forces, by the way, which the *Compass* rightly highlights. The national building blocks would then be frigates and squadrons.

The Long Term: Next Generation Platforms

The EU is very good at producing lists: The High-Impact Capability Goals of the EU Military Staff, the Capability Development Plan of the European Defence Agency, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the EDF, and now the *Compass* all produce their own set of priorities. These lists largely, but never entirely, overlap. Member States readily sign up to such lists, with the full intention of not stopping the other 26 from acting upon them – but not necessarily of doing so themselves.

The March 2022 European Council, building on the informal meeting in Versailles earlier that month, asked for yet another list, with a rather surprising defence industrial focus, tasking the Commission and the European Defence Agency (EDA) with the development of an analysis of “the defence investment gaps and the proposals for any further initiative necessary to strengthen the European defence industrial and technological base.”

The EU can position itself as the indispensable clearing house of Europe's defence, offering the forum and the instruments for the states of Europe to pool their defence efforts

What is necessary now is for Member States to finally take their pick from all these lists and decide not only in which industries and technologies, but also in which capabilities they will invest. For *Compass* priorities such as a next generation main battle

⁴ BISCOP, Sven; “Kill the Battlegroups.” *Europe in the World*, Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, November 2021. www.egmontinstitute.be/kill-the-battlegroups/.

tank or combat air system to take off, for example, a sufficient number of Member States must now finally commit to them, allocate money and announce how many tanks, aircraft or drones they eventually envisage procuring, and in order to constitute which capability. The focus should not only be on conventional “hardware,” of course, but also on areas such as space and cyber, as the *Compass* rightly points out. One often hears the argument that defence projects take a long time to come to fruition – often decades – and that is correct. If no Member States sign up to some of these projects *now*, though, they will forever remain in the distant future. But if they do, the EU can position itself as the indispensable clearing house of Europe’s defence, offering the forum and the instruments for the states of Europe to pool their defence efforts. Without such pooling, Europeans will not be able to deploy, let alone sustain, significant forces on their southern flank. Nor will they be able to meet key NATO targets in a cost-effective way, if at all.

Conclusion: From Cooperation to Integration

The armed forces of the EU Member States don’t lack mass – they lack integration. The result of the current fragmentation – in terms of planning, procurement and manoeuvres – is that there are huge gaps in Europe’s arsenals, while many of the capabilities that do exist are at a low state of readiness. It

would be an absolute loss if the momentum that now exists to strengthen Europe’s defence is not put to use to strengthen integration. The way Europeans spend their defence budgets, across 27 nearly totally separate armed forces, is simply wasteful. Adding more money without changing the way it is spent, will inevitably mean that a lot of the extra money will be wasted as well, or at least yield less capability than it could if spent together.

It would be an absolute loss if the momentum that now exists to strengthen Europe’s defence is not put to use to strengthen integration

One would have expected EU Member States to have advanced further than they have. The *Strategic Compass* has been two years in the making: why did Member States wait until now to discuss who was actually going to act on which of its priorities? Everything is still possible, though. Throughout the drafting process, the mantra was that after the adoption of the *Compass*, there would be no need for an implementation plan or other document – the *Compass* itself would be directly implemented. Let Member States please prove that now.

The French Presidential Election 2022: Irreconcilable Clash between World Views and Mediterranean Perspectives?

Jean-François Daguzan

Vice-President

Institut Choiseul

Research Fellow

Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS)

A presidential election is a mirror of the worldviews within a country. In principle, it reflects the candidates' thinking and, sometimes, their non-thinking. From 1965 (first election of the President of the Republic by direct universal suffrage) to 2017 (Emmanuel Macron's first electoral win), the French vision of international relations and defence was based on classic positions: On the far right, an anti-communist and anti-Atlanticist position based on a narrow sovereignty. In the centre, an Atlanticist and European vision. On the left, socialists defending a Europeanism with a touch of anti-Atlanticism – but not too much – combined with a vision of solidarity and anti-colonialism vis-à-vis the Third World; the communists, globally aligned with Moscow; and finally, the far left, in its variants, at once anti-capitalist, anti-Stalinist, internationalist and Third-Worldist. In the middle, Gaullism defended a strong anti-Atlanticism under De Gaulle, eventually moderated, accompanied by a marked pro-Arab, pro-African approach and a rapprochement with Maoist China. National independence was the watchword of the moment, along with the somewhat obsessive term of France's "rank" among nations (clearly one of the very first).¹ The governing left generally endorsed this model (with nuclear power).² The presence of communist ministers with François Mitterrand in 1981, or Jacques

Chirac's opposition to the United States during the Iraq War in 2003 did not change the substance. Of course, no one in France (or elsewhere) gets elected on foreign policy, but the vision of the different candidates provides a good idea of their respective ideological positions.

The arrival of Emmanuel Macron in office consecrated the collapse of the traditional parties. In two elections, those who had ruled France since 1958 – the Republicans (LR) and the Socialist Party (PS) – were crushed.

In this year of 2022, marked by the return of war to Europe, it is useful to study the world view of the French political elite. For a long time, France enjoyed an aura that allowed it to influence world affairs more than others. Does this claimed position still make sense and for whom?

Two Presidents before Macron: Between Attempted Rupture and Continuity

Nicolas Sarkozy: Atlanticism and the Mediterranean, "Mother of Battles"

Nicolas Sarkozy's foreign policy was characterized by a rapprochement with the United States to compensate for the period of "glaciation" created by the opposition to the Iraq war under Jacques Chirac. But Sarkozy's real "revolution" was to focus his mandate on the Mediterranean as the new centre of the world. In his Toulon speech of 7 February 2007, the candidate laid the foundations for a "Mediterranean Union."³ In principle, it was intended to replace the traditional

¹ See VAÏSSE, Maurice, *La Grandeur, Politique étrangère du Général De Gaulle (1958-1969)*, Fayard, Paris, 1998.

² See BOZO, Frédéric, *La politique étrangère de la France depuis 1945*, Champs histoire, Paris, 2012.

³ Complete text at www.vie-publique.fr/discours/165425-declaration-de-m-nicolas-sarkozy-ministre-de-linterieur-et-de-lamena.

“Arab policy of France.” “Here we will win everything or lose everything,” dramatized President Sarkozy in his speech in Tangier on 23 October 2007. Unrealistic in its conception and accompanied by diplomatic errors, the ambitious proposal of the beginning gave birth to a mouse.⁴ Finally, Sarkozy, who did not take the measure of the “Arab Spring,” engaged without foresight in a war in Libya leading to chaos there and in the Sahel. His only great success in foreign policy was to mobilize the European Union’s concerted response to the 2008 financial crisis, a movement he led together with Angela Merkel.

Sarkozy, who did not take the measure of the “Arab Spring,” engaged without foresight in a war in Libya leading to chaos there and in the Sahel

François Hollande: Terrorism as a Horizon

The Socialist candidate was very classical in his proposals: support major global governance around the G20; support a World Environment Organization; help developing countries through multilateralism; reform the UN; put an end to “FrançAfrique;”⁵ relaunch the concept of *Francophonie*, or the French-speaking world; withdraw forces from Afghanistan; refocus NATO on security; support peace and the recognition of a Palestinian state; and fight against terrorism (points 57 to 60).⁶ All the foreign policy issues were there, but not one was fleshed out. A minimum commitment accompanied the Mediterranean: “to develop links with the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean on the basis of an economic,

democratic and cultural project” (pt. 58.1). The terrorist attacks and the expansion of Daesh made a deeper mark than the entire Hollande quinquennium. The war in Mali, the intervention in Iraq and then in Syria as well, extended to the all-out fight against terrorism, were the consequences.

Emmanuel Macron 2017: Europe! What Kind of Europe?

Candidate Macron’s 2017 manifesto only spoke of Europe.⁷ In his campaign programme of the time, the Mediterranean was not present but Turkey was: “The Maghreb and Africa are our preferential partners. Our responsibilities require us to multiply the channels of dialogue with other partners. With Russia, Turkey or the countries of the Middle East and the Gulf (...). And it also stated that: “(...) Our country must regain its place in the Middle East, in particular to assist in the resolution of the Syrian crisis. It will remain committed in Lebanon.”⁸

Throughout his five-year term, the Head of State’s Mediterranean thinking was difficult to decipher. As on the national level, Macron sought to go beyond institutional frameworks to address the people. He also warned of latent threats (Turkey, Russia and, to a certain extent, China).

In 2019, the Élysée attempted to revive the process through a “Summit of the Two Shores.” Blocked in the East, France once again focused on the Western Mediterranean, drawing inspiration from the current 5+5 dialogue but in a more inclusive manner.⁹ This conference, conceived around consensual civil themes developed by 100 designated personalities, only met with a polite echo in the South and East.

On 13 July 2020, before the Armed Forces, the President of the Republic put forth the idea of a proactive Mediterranean policy:

⁴ DAGUZAN, Jean-François, “Les échecs des politiques méditerranéennes de l’Europe, trente ans d’occasions manquées”, *Politique étrangère*, 2016/4 (winter), p. 16 (www.cairn.info/revue-politique-etrangere-2016-4-page-11.htm).

⁵ Term often used to qualify the unhealthy relations between Francophone African countries and their former colonizer. Ex: VERSCHAVE, François-Xavier, *Françafrique, le plus long scandale de la République*, Stock, Paris, 2003.

⁶ François Hollande: “Élection présidentielle 22 avril 2012. Le changement c’est maintenant. Mes 60 engagements pour la France.” (www.ps29.org/IMG/pdf/Projet_FH2012.pdf).

⁷ Emmanuel Macron’s electoral manifesto site: “Emmanuel Macron président. PROGRAMME. *En marche!* Élection présidentielle – 23 avril et 7 mai 2017.” (www.aefinfo.fr/assets/img/modules/comparateur/docs/6/Programme-Emmanuel-Macron.pdf).

⁸ “Le programme d’Emmanuel Macron concernant l’international,” *EM!* (<https://en-marche.fr/emmanuel-macron/le-programme/international>).

⁹ Emmanuel Macron, Conference of the ambassadors to Paris on 27 August 2018, (www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/civil-society/summit-of-the-two-shores-mediterranean-forum-23-and-24-june-2019-62888/).

“The Mediterranean theatre is another priority for us (...). Moreover, it is a crucial issue for Europe today and tomorrow because this common sea is a bridge between Europe and areas of tension that are constantly intensifying. [...] This is why I call for the development of a genuine European policy for the Mediterranean.” (...) “The Mediterranean area will be the challenge for the coming years” (...) “The Mediterranean cannot build a lasting peace without us, we cannot accept that our future be built by other powers.”¹⁰ In this speech, on the one hand, the Turkish (but also Russian) question was underlying; on the other hand, Europe, and no longer an empirical entity, became the driving force of recovery.

The President stated at the Lugano Forum that the Mediterranean was in crisis. This crisis was expressed in four areas: religious (rise of violent radical extremism), demographic (illegal migration), energy (fight for off-shore), and political (ambition for new powers). In response, Emmanuel Macron proposed a new approach: the “reinvention of multilateralism.”¹¹

Despite the energy deployed, Emmanuel Macron’s efforts have failed so far: neither multilateral attempts, nor the individual dossiers (Libya, Lebanon, Sahel, Indo-Pacific, etc.) have met with success.¹²

Incumbent Macron, Return Match: The Mediterranean Engulfed by Europe and War

The Mediterranean, which was not very present in 2017, was entirely absent in 2022. The war in Ukraine crushed all reflection and the threat(s) became the central element of discourse: “Democracy is never acquired. It remains the target of terrorist groups and is attacked by authoritarian states and ideologies. A new page in our history is opening, with major crises, be they military, health-related, ecological or technological.”

The essential response – apart from strengthening French military capabilities – was once again Europe: “Ensure Europe’s power. Ensure its energy autonomy, (...). Ensure its technological autonomy, (...). Ensure its strategic autonomy, by defining a common doctrine, considerably strengthening the capabilities of European armies and coordinating them.”

The Mediterranean, which was not very present in 2017, was entirely absent in 2022. The war in Ukraine became the central element of discourse

Emmanuel Macron won the presidential election with 58.55% of the votes.

The Unsuccessful Candidates: Convergences and Divergences

Marine Le Pen: Measured Anti-Atlanticism and Anti-Europeanism

The National Rally (RN) candidate, who reached the second round and lost, with 41.45% of the votes, was not very vocal on international relations.

A few lines were devoted to defence (budget increase). She joined the candidate of La France Insoumise (LFI) in proposing to “strengthen our sovereignty and independence” (point 20).¹³ These proposals contrast with those of 2017, when Marine Le Pen defended a quasi-exit from the EU and certainly from the Euro – a “Frexit” to respond to the British “Brexit.” This radicalism partly cost her victory.

The RN candidate was hampered by her former pro-Russian positions. The RN had defended the

¹⁰ Complete text at: (www.vie-publique.fr/discours/275608-emmanuel-macron-13072020-politique-de-defense).

¹¹ Address delivered by Macron at the Middle East Mediterranean MEM Forum of Lugano, 22 August 2020 (www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/08/29/notre-mediterranee-gronde-ecoutez-le-message-du-president-emmanuel-macron-au-forum-moyen-orient-mediterranee-de-lugano).

¹² See, for instance, CHESNOT, Christian & MALBRUNOT, Georges. *Le grand déclassement*, Michel Lafon, Paris, 2022.

¹³ See Marine Le Pen’s electoral manifesto site (<https://mlafrance.fr/programme>).

idea of a strategic rapprochement with Russia. The war in Ukraine forced her to make a painful revision of her position.¹⁴

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (21.95%): Anti-Capitalism, Anti-Atlanticism and Non-Alignment.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon's "presidential" text showed a real interest in global geopolitics.

The foreign and defence policies of the France Unbowed (La France Insoumise, LFI) candidate were the opposite of those of Emmanuel Macron. Mélenchon called for a strong independence. He rejected the North Atlantic Alliance and "alignment with the United States" and advocated unilateral departure from NATO. He condemned the idea of a European defence.

The war in Ukraine did little to change the former candidate. Though he vilified Vladimir Putin (previously a preferential interlocutor), he rejected NATO with the same vigour: "NATO is a trouble-making machine, an instrument of the declining American empire. But I distinguish this subject from Ukraine, because the responsibility for the war rests on Putin's shoulders."¹⁵ Multilateralism would be the renewed tool of international relations (no intervention without a UN mandate) and cooperation.

For the Mediterranean, Mélenchon put forward concrete proposals:

"The countries of the small Mediterranean Basin (...) are natural partners for cooperation since we share a fragile ecosystem. The Mediterranean area constitutes a priority zone for international action. We cannot resign ourselves to seeing the Mediterranean Sea become a cemetery for migrants (...)."

He advocated:

- A common structure for combating pollution and managing the ecosystem of the Mediterranean Sea;
- A Mediterranean television channel;
- A network of Mediterranean universities as well as one of Mediterranean vocational education centres;
- A Mediterranean civil security organization;
- The extension of ecological standards to the Mediterranean.

Éric Zemmour (7.07%): Obsessed with defending French "civilization" and national independence

Éric Zemmour (Reconquête) stressed foreign policy (points 131 to 181).¹⁶ There was also the fear of migratory submersion and drowning in a European bureaucratic fishbowl. If Zemmour championed a certain Europe, it was that of a multilateralism of nations. Finally, like De Gaulle in 1965, he proposed exiting NATO's integrated military command. His detailed proposals on defence are explained by the presence of high-ranking military officials in his circle.

His manifesto was oriented towards "reclaiming identity and sovereignty." Like Mélenchon and Le Pen, dialogue with Russia was a strong point of his foreign policy. Zemmour condemned the invasion of Ukraine but with shared responsibilities: "If Putin is guilty, the West is responsible!"¹⁷ On the other hand, he stood out for his declared defence of Eastern Christians. He ignored the Mediterranean and his gaze on Africa was coercive: "Refound our relationship with Africa in order to preserve our influence there while putting an end to colonial repentance and supporting States that control migratory flows. Compel countries of origin to take back their nationals" (point 161).

¹⁴ "I don't hide the fact that, to a certain extent, I admire Vladimir Putin. (...) We must develop relations with Moscow, we share many common interests, both on a civilisational and strategic level." (interview in the Russian newspaper Kommersant, 13 October 2011); and "I absolutely do not believe that there was an illegal annexation of Crimea" (interview on BFMTV, 3 January 2017). By Romain GEOFFROY and Maxime VAUDANO, *Le Monde*, 20 April 2022, (www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2022/04/20/quels-sont-les-liens-de-marine-le-pen-avec-la-russie-de-vladimir-poutine_6122903_4355770.html).

¹⁵ Mélenchon interview carried out by Corinne Laurent, Antoine Oberdorff and Denis Peiron for the newspaper *La Croix*, 23 March 2022 (www.la-croix.com/France/Jean-Luc-Melenchon-guerre-Ukraine-pas-dautre-coupable-Vladimir-Poutine-2022-03-23-1201206538).

¹⁶ See Zemmour's manifesto at (<https://programme.ericzemmour.fr/>).

¹⁷ See article by Marylou MAGAL, *L'Express*, 2 March 2022 (www.lexpress.fr/actualite/si-poutine-est-coupable-l-occident-est-responsable-eric-zemmour-face-a-ses-contradictions_2168972.html).

Valérie Pécresse (4.78%): Europe and Control of Immigration

The Republican (LR) candidate made a “bare minimum” effort. Her manifesto was based on a strong Europe of defence but backed by NATO. This policy would have to be accompanied by a renegotiation of the Schengen agreements and the reinforcement of Frontex in the struggle against immigration. Finally, it closed the door to Turkey’s accession to the EU.

Anne Hidalgo (1.74%): Immigration Accepted but Controlled, Calm International Relations

The Socialist Party (PS) candidate wished to “ensure respect for the territorial integrity of Member States in the face of the ‘brutalization’ of international relations – particularly relating to Russia – as well as the rise to power of non-democratic actors.” Immigration was accepted: “I will guarantee a dignified reception in all circumstances for asylum seekers (...). I will fight against the deadly, irregular channels of illegal immigration”(point 68).

Mrs Hidalgo (point 58) proposed addressing “the disorder of the world.” “Europe is now clearly the instrument of our sovereignty. The health crisis has demonstrated this.”¹⁸

Yannick Jadot (4.63%): Ecological Reorientation but Also Continuity

The candidate of Europe Ecology – The Greens (EELV) was positioned, of course, under the banner of ecological change. International relations, Europe and the link with Africa needed to be revisited by moving away from market or post-colonial logics and creating real partnerships. Dialogue with Russia (“despite its aggressive policy”) and with Turkey (“finding a *modus vivendi*”), but also with China (“finding a fair balance”) were elements of a policy of appeasement.

Insofar as defence, Jadot did not oppose a rupture but called for an ecological “reorientation.” He did not question the transatlantic link and advocated a strengthening of European defence.¹⁹

On 24 February 2022, he condemned the invasion of Ukraine in no uncertain terms.

Jadot also put forth a Mediterranean vision: “We must get out of post-colonial logics by developing respectful and cooperative dialogue (...) in order to promote peace, the reduction of inequalities, the ecological transition and the protection of common goods. For this, we will favour the 5+5 format.”

Fabien Roussel (2.28%): Relaxed Communism but True to the Fundamentals

The candidate of the French Communist Party (PCF) held an appeased and inclusive vision.²⁰ He was attempting to limit the PCF’s slow “descent into hell” since 1981.

Roussel, faithful to the PCF’s anti-European tradition, proposed a “Europe of choice” to advance social or industrial projects (the “Vaccine Airbus,” pt. 161). He called for the withdrawal and eventual dissolution of NATO (pt. 167), replaced by a major European conference including Russia “with a view to signing a treaty of cooperation and collective security.”

Roussel advocated a “total and multilateral denuclearization process” (pt. 166). The UN would be the ideal place to bring to fruition resolutions that have never been implemented (Palestine, Western Sahara, lifting the embargo on Cuba, etc., pt. 172)

In terms of defence, “the armed forces shall disengage from the Sahel.” A “national and popular” defence should accompany a policy “freed from the vestiges of colonialism” (pts. 176-177).

He condemned the invasion of Ukraine – Putin is “a right-wing guy!”²¹ but demanded a special status for the Donbass and Crimea and warned not to “wage war on the Russian people.”²²

¹⁸ See Hidalgo’s manifesto (https://assets.nationbuilder.com/2022avechidalgo/pages/208/attachments/original/1645795527/Anne_Hidalgo_Programme_officiel_en_A4_l%C3%A9ger.pdf?1645795527).

¹⁹ Complete text of Jadot’s proposals at (www.jadot2022.fr/programme#programme_liste).

²⁰ See Roussel’s manifesto (www.fabienroussel2022.fr/le_programme).

²¹ Statement made by Roussel when interviewed by Patrick Cohen on INA-Politique, 20 March 2022 (www.gala.fr/l_actu/news_de_stars/poutine-na-rien-a-voir-avec-nous-cest-un-gars-de-droite-la-colere-froide-de-fabien-roussel_489701).

²² Statements by Roussel on the CNewschannel (www.cnews.fr/monde/2022-03-28/fabien-roussel-il-faut-accorder-un-statut-special-la-crimee-et-au-donbass-1197780).

The Trotskyists: Two Versions of Anti-Capitalist Internationalism

France is undoubtedly one of the rare countries that can field two Trotskyist candidates in a presidential election.²³ These rival siblings-in-arms put forth two visions that were at once similar and different.

Nathalie Artaud (0.56%), candidate of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), considered the main evil to be capitalist society, which hides behind a screen – the State – that allows it to fool the oppressed working class and enrich itself through wars and the exploitation of the poorest. “The world capitalist order still – more than ever – consists of a few large industrial and financial groups (...). To reject barbarism (...) we must fight against the society that engenders it, fight for the overthrow of capitalism (...).

Dictatorial regimes (...) have given way to multiple warlords. These militias, Islamist or otherwise, are a direct product of imperialist domination (...). Borders are the bosses’ weapon for dividing the workers.”²⁴

The war in Ukraine will shape French foreign policy for a long time. The French President wants to be the agent of the transformation of Europe. The Mediterranean and the Sahel risk being relegated to the background

Philippe Poutou (0.76%), candidate of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA),²⁵ also positioned him-

self in a “borderless” dimension. He claimed to be resolutely “anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and internationalist.” The right to migration and asylum was repeated as well as his support for all liberation struggles. Poutou defended the autonomy and/or independence of peoples or ethnic groups, including Catalonia.

Finally, he proposed cancelling the debt of poor countries and ceasing to plunder the wealth of the Third World.²⁶

Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (2.06%): Declared “Gaullism,” Assumed Radicalism

This perennial candidate called himself a “Gaullist.” He rejected European treaties and proposed a new one creating “a community of free nations.” He also advocated leaving NATO’s integrated command. France must be totally independent.

Total war must also be waged against Islamic terrorism and, as with Éric Zemmour, the protection of Eastern Christians must be ensured. Dupont-Aignan also advocated a “strengthened partnership for Africa.” Finally, he defended strengthening anti-migration measures and abolishing *jus soli* (the “right of the soil”), which automatically confers French nationality to any child born on the territory.

Jean Lassalle (3.13%): The Synthesis of the “Antis”

As a non-conformist, formerly centrist candidate, Lassalle advocated a singular vision of foreign policy and defence. He called for a full exit from NATO, the withdrawal of French armies involved in conflicts and the revision of treaties with former colonies.²⁷

In January 2017, together with others, Jean Lassalle went to meet Bashar el Assad in Damascus.²⁸ The deeper meaning of his thought on international matters remains opaque.

²³ There are actually even three. We can cite the Internationalist Communist Organisation (OCI) or “Lambertists,” today the Independent Workers’ Party (POI). Many Socialist Party leaders or former members started with the OCI, such as former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin or Jean-Luc Mélenchon. See CAMPINCHI, Philippe, *Les Lambertistes, un courant trotskiste français*, Balland, Paris, 2000.

²⁴ See Artaud’s manifesto at (www.nathalie-arthaud.info/programme).

²⁵ Formerly the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR).

²⁶ See Poutou’s manifesto at (<https://poutou2022.org/programme>).

²⁷ See Lassalle’s manifesto at (<https://jl2022.fr/>).

²⁸ FAURE, Odile. “Jean Lassalle a échappé de peu à des tirs d’obus en Syrie.” *Sud Ouest*, 9 January 2017 (www.sudouest.fr/politique/jean-lassalle/jean-lassalle-a-echappe-de-peu-a-des-tirs-d-obus-en-syrie-3445477.php).

Conclusion: Ruptures or Constants?

What lessons can be drawn from these ephemeral but instructive manifestos? On a purely national level, we have witnessed the disastrous results of the traditional parties (The Republicans and the Socialist Party). The latter, together with the centrists and the ecologists, defended a vision centred on the European Union.

Today, only Emmanuel Macron, who won the election, presents himself as resolutely European. But can we summarize the re-elected President's thinking on international matters? Europe? Yes. Liberalism? No doubt, but tempered by his dirigiste and exclusive vision of power. Because of the war in Ukraine, NATO, "brain-dead" according to him two years ago, is once again becoming a major vector of European security in his eyes.²⁹ This war will shape French foreign policy for a long time. The French president wants to be the agent of the transformation of Europe. The Mediterranean and the Sahel risk being relegated to the background (even if the confrontation with Moscow also continues in this area). In contrast to the President, the parties, from the National Rally (RN) to the Trotskyists, not to mention Reconquête and La France Insoumise (France Unbowed, LFI), have a more or less marked anti-European vision. The socialists and ecologists, who joined LFI for the legislative elections under the label New Ecological and Social People's Union (NUPES), endorsed the radical vision of the Insoumise (revision of European treaties and disobedience à la carte...). These positions are not necessarily original or new.³⁰ The Gaullist model (mistrust of the Americans, partial withdrawal from NATO, Europe under control, strong

national independence, dialogue with Moscow) is generally that of many candidates (RN, Reconquête, Dupont-Aignan, Fabien Roussel and even LFI). It is on immigration that the differences are the sharpest and where the left and the right really stand out. The internationalist tradition of the Trotskyist movements also remains present beyond their camp.

Liberalism has never had much appeal in this country.³¹ "By tradition," noted Jack Hayward, "the French right is anything but liberal."³² As for the communists at large, they are still in favour of a command economy. Revolutionary utopia remains alive. The "mobilizing myth of Europe" of which Hayward spoke in the same article no longer works.³³ Part of the youth seeks to invent new ones. Mélenchon's lyricism fascinates sectors of the French population. The leader of LFI takes up the old socialist-communist recipes (price freezes, nationalizations, "bringing the European Union to heel," non-alignment and cooperation with "sister countries"), but rejuvenates them. In reality, the extreme right and left are united in a radical critique of the centrist Macronian bloc.

Behind the grand phrases of the electoral manifestos, the impoverishment of French foreign thought on international relations is glaringly apparent. Most of the candidates treated the issue as an obligatory but secondary one, without taking into account reality. The obsession with immigration for a good part of them confirms this feeling. It reduces the country to a narrow defence of its own territory, in the face of which the Other/Foreigner is perceived as a threat or, at the very least, a risk. France's ability to project itself into the world (culturally, diplomatically, and in terms of values), despite the President's activism, seems very far away...

²⁹ See *The Economist* interview and the article based on it: "Le président français Emmanuel Macron juge l'OTAN en état de mort cérébrale," *Le Figaro*, 7 November 2019 (www.lefigaro.fr/international/le-president-francais-emmanuel-macron-juge-l-otan-en-etat-de-mort-cerebrale-20191107).

³⁰ See *Nouvelle histoire de la France contemporaine* (20 volumes, particularly Jean-Pierre RIOU, Serge BERNSTEIN and Serge BECKER), volumes 16-20, Seuil, Points-Histoire Collection, Paris, 1975 to 2001 and, Dominique CHAGNOLLAUD (Dir.), *La vie politique en France*, Seuil, Points-Histoire Collection, Paris, 1993.

³¹ A figure as exceptional as Raymond Aron, for example, despite the power of his writings, was politically marginalised.

³² HALL, Peter A., HAYWARD, Jack and MACHIN, Howard. *L'évolution de la vie politique française*, PUF, Paris, 1992, p. 41.

³³ Op. cit., p. 47.

Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Brink of Collapse

Soeren Keil

Academic Head

International Research and Consultancy Centre
Institute of Federalism, University of Fribourg

Bosnia and Herzegovina¹ is once again in the news in Europe, the US and worldwide.² Not only have the horrible scenes of destruction, violence and refugees from Ukraine reminded many of similar images from 30 years ago, but Russia's intervention in Ukraine has highlighted tensions in other European countries as well. In Bosnia, these tensions have been developing over a period of time, leading to the current double crisis that is seriously threatening to not only paralyse the State and further limit its slow progress towards membership of the European Union (EU), but to undo the achievements of the peace agreement from 1995, which ended three and a half years of bloodshed with more than 100,000 victims.

As war is returning to Europe, we are all reminded that the effects of the last conflict, the break-up of Yugoslavia, are still very visible, and politically relevant for the EU, its Member States and for peace and security in the Mediterranean.

Bosnia's Complex Structure

Bosnia's conflict was fought over the future of the country – while the majority of Bosniaks, together

with Bosnian Croats supported Bosnia's independence from Yugoslavia, Bosnian Serbs rejected it and argued for a continuation of Bosnia's membership of Yugoslavia. When, after a referendum and a parliamentary vote, Bosnia became independent in April 1992, Bosnian Serb military and paramilitary troops used force in order to achieve their aims: conquering as much territory as possible, ethnically cleansing it and ensuring that it would remain in a union or as part of Serbia. The conflict ended following NATO's intervention and a peace agreement was signed in Dayton, Ohio at the end of 1995. As part of the peace deal, Bosnia remained a united country, though one with a heavily decentralized political system, which combined ethnically homogenous territories with a high degree of autonomous decision-making with strict power-sharing rules in all institutions of Bosnia's central State. The loose federation was meant to hold the country together and lay the foundations for cooperation and consensus amongst the elites, an aim as yet not achieved.³

Instead, the complex state structure resulted in numerous negative developments. First, Bosnia is known for its slow, ineffective and problematic decision-making process. Party leaders, rather than democratically elected parliamentary or government officials, are the main negotiators, and they rarely reach agreements without external pressure and intervention. Second, ethnically homogenous territories have allowed political parties to capture economic, social and political institutions in the

¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina is the official name of the country. I will also use Bosnia or BiH (the official short form) in this paper. This is always referring to the whole country and follows standard academic practice.

² See for example: VULLIAMY, Ed: "Ukraine matters, but so did Bosnia 30 years ago. Where was the outcry then?" in: *The Guardian*, 3 April 2022, available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/apr/03/ukraine-matters-so-did-bosnia-30-years-ago-where-was-outcry-then

³ For a wider discussion of the political system of Bosnia after the war, see: Soeren KEIL: *Multinational Federalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Farnham: Ashgate 2013.

territory in which their group forms a majority. This specific form of state capture has further limited the willingness of leading elites to reach compromises and make the system more efficient and effective, because it would de facto mean that they would have to give up power, influence, economic benefits and societal control in their respective territories.⁴

The specific form of state capture has further limited the willingness of leading elites to reach compromises and make the system more efficient and effective

These ongoing challenges have resulted in a high degree of foreign intervention through the Office of the High Representative (OHR), which oversees the civilian implementation of the peace process. Different High Representatives have imposed important legislation, such as a military reform, changes to the entity constitutions and laws on currency, state symbols and citizenship. At the same time, the OHR has dismissed hundreds of officials, including leading political figures for obstructing the implementation of the peace agreement. While the OHR has become a “toothless tiger” after 2005, when it stopped intervening and remained mainly to monitor the situation, its actions for the first years after the peace agreement have set it on a confrontation course with most Bosnian elites, but particularly those from the Bosnian Serb entity called “Republika Srpska,” who have long described OHR actions as illegal, against the peace agreement and specifically anti-Serb. This decade-long conflict also lies at the heart of Bosnia's current political crisis.

Bosnia's Dual Crisis

In July 2021, shortly before departing from the Office of High Representative, Valentin Inzko imposed a law which criminalized the denial of genocide and war crimes that had been confirmed by a Court in Bosnia or an International Court. This law clearly targeted Bosnian Serb elites, who had, in recent years, not only denied the horrors of Bosnia's conflict in the 1990s but have also openly celebrated convicted war criminals such as Ratko Mladic, the former leader of the Bosnian Serb military. Whilst most agreed with the intention of the law, it came at a time of heightened tensions in Bosnia – Milorad Dodik, leader of the largest political party in Republika Srpska and member of Bosnia's tripartite State Presidency, had for several years demanded the closure of the OHR and threatened to undo many of its decisions. He actively revoked OHR-imposed rulings related to media freedom, the rule of law and judicial independence and threatened to unpack further laws in the area of security – thereby openly provoking the threat of a new conflict by warning that Bosnia's integrated multi-ethnic military could be disintegrated, and that Republika Srpska would work towards establishing its own security services, including military forces.

The Bosnian Serb entity has long described OHR actions as illegal, against the peace agreement and specifically anti-Serb. This decade-long conflict also lies at the heart of Bosnia's current political crisis

As a result of the OHR's decision on the denial of genocide, Dodik and his allies in the Republika

⁴ KAPIDŽIĆ, Damir. “Subnational Competitive Authoritarianism and Power-Sharing in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” *Southeast European And Black Sea Studies*, n.20, 81-102, Spring 2020.

Srpska boycotted all state institutions, de facto rendering them dysfunctional as agreement from all major groups is required in order to pass any decision. Moreover, Dodik found allies amongst Bosnian Croat elites, who supported his agenda of sabotaging the current system, because they have been at loggerheads with their Bosniak counterparts over a new electoral law in the run-up to the regional and national elections in October 2022. Bosnian Croat elites have been complaining for a long time that they are the junior partner in the second entity, the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH). Whilst the Federation consists of 10 cantons, three with a Croat majority, Bosniaks are the overwhelming majority of the population and Croat elites have argued that they are discriminated against, because there are no specific rules for a Croat electoral district in national elections. As a result, Zeljko Komsic, a moderate politician from a centre-left non-nationalist party, has won the Croat seat in the tripartite State Presidency in 2006, 2010 and 2018. It is generally assumed that he is mainly supported by Bosniak, rather than Croat voters, alienating and frustrating the leaders of the main Croat ethnic political parties over the last 15 years. These leaders published proposals for electoral reform in early 2022 with the aim to push both Bosniak leaders and international representatives to prevent another term in office for Komsic, and ensure that only Bosnian Croats could vote for the Croat member of the Bosnian Presidency. This proposal, however, has been met with criticism from Bosniak leaders, who see it as a further stepping stone towards the total ethnic separation of the political system in Bosnia, while some members of the international community have welcomed the suggestion as a first attempt to find a constructive solution.⁵ Until today, however, no solution has been found, consequently, Croat elites have joined their Serb counterparts

in limiting their engagement in central institutions and threatening to boycott the October 2022 elections or blocking any budget needed in order to conduct the elections.⁶

Conclusion: Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Brink of Collapse

There is a real worry that the elections in October 2022 in Bosnia might not take place, or might be boycotted by several leading parties. Dodik and some of his allies in the Republika Srpska have already argued that failure to conduct the elections would de facto mean that Bosnian institutions would have lost legitimacy and stopped functioning, which he would use as an excuse to declare the independence of the Republika Srpska. He enjoys continued support from Russia, with Russia's Foreign Minister visiting him in late 2021 to demonstrate his country's support for Dodik and his leadership. Likewise, the Bosnian Croat leadership enjoys substantial support from the President and the government of Croatia, with Croatia's President even implying that the country could veto any future NATO enlargement towards Finland and Sweden if an electoral reform for Bosnia is not agreed upon.⁷

Croat elites have argued that they are discriminated against, because there are no specific rules for a Croat electoral district in national elections

The new High Representative, Christian Schmidt (Valentin Inzko's successor) was appointed, despite

⁵ Both the EU Representative in Bosnia Johann Sattler and the new US Special Envoy Matthew Palmer have called for dialogue amongst Bosnian leaders to find a solution and have commented on the Croat proposal as a good basis for discussions.

⁶ On the dual crisis in Bosnia see: INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP: "Grappling with Bosnia's Dual Crises." *Q and A Europe and Central Asia*, 9, November 2021, available at: www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/balkans/bosnia-and-herzegovina/grappling-bosnias-dual-crises.

⁷ DTT-NET News: "Croatia's President very serious with weird veto threat to Finland's NATO entry over rights of Croats in Bosnia." *DTT-NET News online* 3 May 2022, available at: www.dtt-net.com/en/news/4607/15/Croatia-s-President-very-serious-with-weird-veto-threat-to-Finland-s-NATO-entry-over-rights-of-Croats-in-Bosnia/#::~:~:text=Croatia%E2%80%99s%20President%20very%20serious%20with%20weird%20veto%20threat,NATO%20entry%20over%20rights%20of%20Croats%20in%20Bosnia.

resistance from Russia (and China), which have proposed the closure of the OHR. Hence, he does not enjoy the same legitimacy as his predecessors and it remains to be seen if he can revive an office whose existence many observers have questioned, following its failure to deal with the ongoing political tensions in the country after 2006. Nominally, Schmidt still holds the power to dismiss Bosnian officials and impose new laws, but practically all new initiatives from his office would face substantial resistance from the Republika Srpska and from Bosnian Croat elites as well. He would further risk paralysing already fragile institutions and deepening the existing crises. While the US has appointed a new envoy to deal specifically with electoral reform, the Biden Administration does not see Bosnia as a priority and does not want to interfere in what they consider to be a European problem.

This leaves Bosnia in a particularly vulnerable position. The country remains ethnically divided, with its political elites continuously unwilling and unable to find compromises and move the country closer to EU membership. What is more, the ongoing political crises and threats from Serb and Croat elites threaten the fragile institutional arrangements and could even undo the biggest success of post-war Bosnia – the preservation of peace. It remains to be seen if international actors, most importantly the EU and its Member States, are willing to engage more directly and more forcefully with Bosnia, and confront those elites that are responsible for the current crises.

Whilst Dodik has been sanctioned by the US and the UK, some European leaders have prevented similar actions by the EU. Ukraine teaches us that war in Europe is not impossible in the 21st century. Bosnians knew that already, as their last conflict took place a mere 30 years ago. The peace agreement did not start a transition process to functional democracy, but it did ensure that violence did not break out again and the country remained peaceful. This major achievement is seriously at risk, if the elections in October 2022 are not conducted in an orderly fashion, and if, ultimately, the system is not reformed in such a way that the different groups can live together peacefully, are represented and work together in institutions that are based on the consent of all major actors. How to achieve this, and what role outsiders (especially the EU) should play in the process, is a key question – one which might have a strong influence on whether Bosnia will remain united and at peace, or if it will fall apart, giving way to another outbreak of violence.

The peace agreement did not start a transition process to functional democracy, but it did ensure that violence did not break out again and the country remained peaceful. This major achievement is seriously at risk

Western Balkans. From the Berlin Process to the Open Balkan Initiative. Prospects for the Accession Process

Ferenc Németh

Research Fellow

Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest

Regional cooperation is one of the cornerstones of the EU's enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans. If the countries of the region – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia – wish to become full-fledged Member States, they must strive for strengthened cooperation.

Apart from being a prerequisite for EU accession, the advantages of regional cooperation are numerous. Enhanced political ties can build trust that may be used to resolve open issues and contribute to reconciliation, while stronger economic cooperation could lead to growth and development by attracting foreign direct investments. Above all, the main beneficiaries of such cooperation mechanisms are the citizens: regional initiatives can increase people-to-people connectivity and possibly reduce the negative impacts of emigration (brain drain).

Although there have been numerous high-level and sectoral mechanisms aimed at fostering and/or creating closer ties among the Western Balkan states, EU membership does not seem to be getting any closer. Nevertheless, the added-value of such platforms – the Berlin Process or the Open Balkan initiative – must be acknowledged. In the light of these mechanisms, can regional cooperation have a positive impact on the region's EU bid? This analysis argues that even though the prospects of becoming EU Member States are not that promising, strengthened regional cooperation – with regional owner-

ship and external support – could still be highly beneficial for the Western Balkans prior to accession.

When There Is No Integration, Turn to Regional Cooperation

The Berlin Process and the Open Balkan initiative both came in times when the prospects of EU accession for the Western Balkans suffered major blows. To maintain a European perspective in the region and show readiness for further integration, regional cooperation seemed to be a convenient tool to incentivize aspiring Member States.

The infamous declaration by Jean-Claude Juncker that there would not be a new round of enlargement under his five-year term as President of the European Commission left the Western Balkans disillusioned.¹ At that time, in 2014, the EU was still in recovery phase from the financial crises, and the Brexit referendum was just around the corner, too. This was indeed the first time that *enlargement fatigue* had been so openly expressed by a high-ranking EU official. On the other hand, the Western Balkans around this time also experienced challenges, such as rising undemocratic patterns, decreasing political eagerness to diligently go through with reforms and unresolved bilateral issues.

Similarly to the period from which the Berlin Process arose in 2014, the region once again experienced constant rejections further down the line, culminating in yet another infamous act – the French *Non*. France, among others, blocked the accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in 2019 and, by doing so, it set a nega-

¹ "The Juncker Commission: A strong and experienced team standing for change." Press Release. European Commission, 10 September 2014. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_14_984

tive example to the Western Balkans.² The case of North Macedonia clearly showed that even if a candidate country made significant concessions in the hope of EU accession (ie. resolving the name dispute), there are still no guarantees that a Member State will not take advantage of its veto power. As another example, what would motivate Belgrade and Pristina to normalize their relations if the prospects of EU accession are clearly overshadowed by the lack of unanimity among EU countries? The French veto thus significantly decreased the EU's leverage and credibility over local politicians and citizens to implement internal reforms, engage in dialogue and, if necessary, make painful concessions over EU accession.

The aftermath of Juncker's statement over EU enlargement and, five years later, the reluctance of France to greenlight further integration for two candidate countries resulted in the establishment of yet another regional mechanism. The Berlin Process and the Open Balkan can therefore be perceived as initiatives aimed at incentivizing the Western Balkans by strengthened political and economic cooperation among aspiring Member States.

Different yet Similar

The Berlin Process, under the auspices of former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, started as a series of high-level, regular meetings between leaders of the Western Balkans and a few pro-enlargement EU countries. Over the years, it became not only the flagship initiative, but the most prominent driving force behind enlargement, with the aim of fostering regional cooperation and sectoral integration. The greatest achievement of the Berlin Process is undoubtedly the Connectivity Agenda; its strong focus on physical, digital and people-to-people connectivity. It also facilitated – with the involvement of civil society – the EU integration process of the

Western Balkans without creating new mechanisms, institutions or funding schemes, but keeping in mind the final objective of the enlargement process: EU membership.³

The French veto thus significantly decreased the EU's leverage and credibility over local politicians and citizens to implement internal reforms

The Berlin Process also provided a fertile ground for enhanced economic cooperation. The Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (REA), with the support of the EU and the Western Balkans, acknowledged in the Sofia Declaration (2018), aims to establish a barrier-free region in which the flow of people, goods, services and capital could be exercised. Building on the REA's goals and strong economic focus, the Sofia Summit (2020) introduced the Common Regional Market (CRM) initiative. With the primary objective of creating a regional market within the Western Balkans with all the aspiring Member States on board, and in accordance with EU laws and regulations, it can be considered as the natural evolution – and the legacy – of the Berlin Process.

A year prior to the idea of the CRM, leaders of Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia announced their vision to establish a regional cooperation mechanism, informally known back then as *Mini-Schengen*. Officially named the Open Balkan initiative, it builds on the ideas of the REA and CRM by keeping their strong economic focus and desire to have the four freedoms established in the Western Balkans.⁴ The Open Balkan's novelty derives from its regional ownership; although it borrows many aspects from planned or existing, EU-supervised mecha-

² MARUSIC, Sinisa Jakov. "France Sinks EU Hopes of North Macedonia, Albania." *Balkan Insight*, 18 October 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/10/18/france-sinks-eu-hopes-of-north-macedonia-albania/>

³ MARCIARCO, Florent. "The EU and the Western Balkans after the Berlin Process. Reflecting on the EU Enlargement in Times of Uncertainty." Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2017. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/13948.pdf>

⁴ "Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans. Regional Economic Area, the 'Mini-Schengen' and the Common Regional Market." *Policy Report*. Balkans Policy Research Group, 2021. https://balkansgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Regional-Cooperation-in-the-Western-Balkans_Regional-Economic-Area-the-mini_schengen-and-the-Common-Regional-Market-WEB-4.pdf

nisms, it has been solely driven by local actors right from its inception.

Unlike regional cooperation mechanisms that came out of the Berlin Process, the Open Balkan initiative received mixed reactions, especially from countries that are reluctant to take part in it – BiH and Kosovo in particular. These criticisms include the fear of having a Belgrade-dominated political and economic sphere (just like in Yugoslavia) as well as the potential influx of malign third-actor influences (Russia and China). Thus, the biggest weakness of the initiative comes from its inability to incorporate all six countries of the Western Balkans, while not being able to leave political burdens and baggage behind.

The common Regional Market does seem to be a more reliable option for regional cooperation, albeit one that is missing the strong hand of the Open Balkan initiative – regional ownership

The above-mentioned mechanisms, however, all share the same objective: to have the four freedoms established as a guarantee for economic development and FDI inflow. In addition, they perceive EU membership as the final, non-negotiable goal. As for the differences, unlike the Open Balkan initiative, the CRM encompasses all six Western Balkan states and was conceived in a more transparent manner. In this regard, the CRM does seem to be a more reliable option for regional cooperation, albeit one that is missing the strong hand of the Open Balkan initiative – regional ownership. Which one should the Western Balkans opt for then?

One Mechanism above All

Despite some differences, the CRM and the Open Balkan initiative essentially represent the same ideas and objectives. Hence, it is not rational to have them simultaneously operating as somewhat competing mechanisms. The Western Balkans only needs one initiative that would be able to integrate all the ad-

vantages into one, long-lasting and result-oriented platform.

A regional cooperation platform must be in possession of various features:

- Test of time: to be resilient to changing governments and political elites and not to get hijacked by politicians (political volatilities) or unexpected crises;
- Inclusivity: must incorporate all six Western Balkan states as committed and equal partners and involve citizens (civil society) too;
- Vision: feasible objectives with a well-defined roadmap on how to achieve them; full EU membership must remain the ultimate objective;
- Regional ownership with EU approval: having external support while keeping full control and responsibility over the mechanism must also be a prerequisite.

The EU is unable to focus on multiple issues, and the armed conflict in its direct neighbourhood is a considerable distraction of its attention from the Western Balkans

Keeping in mind these four recommendations, the region (and the EU too) could avoid duplications and competing platforms – especially if we consider the lack of human resources available. A unified regional cooperation mechanism would likely be more efficient in bringing the awaited results – but could it accelerate the EU integration process?

Can Regional Cooperation Speed up Accession?

There is no feasible evidence to support the claim that regional cooperation contributes to speedier EU accession. Although there is an overarching consensus among EU Member States that it is still the backbone of EU enlargement, the lack of regional cooperation has never caused stalemates in the Western Balkans' accession processes. In oth-

er words, problems with regional cooperation were never a reason for halting the enlargement process. The enlargement process has been slow – and many times, stuck for good – for multiple reasons; the EU and the Western Balkans are both to be blamed for that. The EU has been burdened by its own internal and external problems (migration crisis, Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic), while enlargement fatigue still serves as a good excuse to not put the focus on further enlargement. Meanwhile, democratic backsliding and state capture, and unresolved bilateral issues make it difficult to implement reforms and move the Western Balkans towards EU accession.

The prospect of EU accession of the Western Balkans remains in the hands of the capitals, no matter how good the region excels in regional cooperation

Although the war in Ukraine has sent shockwaves through the EU and beyond, and created new dynamics in the European continent, it seems unlikely that it would speed up the Western Balkans' accession process. The EU is unable to focus on multiple

issues, and the armed conflict in its direct neighbourhood is a considerable distraction of its attention from the Western Balkans.

The greatest challenge, however, remains unanimity in the enlargement policy. Member States have frequently exercised their right to veto, citing various reasons, spanning from rule-of-law deficiencies to disputes over history, language and identity.⁵ At this stage, it is unimaginable that all 27 Member States would agree on giving up their veto powers on foreign policy matters (including enlargement). Hence, the prospect of EU accession of the Western Balkans remains in the hands of the capitals, no matter how good the region excels in regional cooperation.

Even if strengthened regional cooperation does not bring the Western Balkans closer to EU membership, the countries of the region must realize the positive added-value and possible spillover effects of their enhanced partnership. It should be kept in mind, of course, that there must not be an alternative to being full-fledged EU Member States, even if they deepen their political, economic and societal cooperation. An intensified regional cooperation could be a move in the right direction, even in times when there is talk about selective integration and ideas about a European Political Community.⁶ Regional cooperation must be understood as a tool that is not only needed for EU accession, but for the development of the Western Balkans as a region.

⁵ FOUÉRE, Erwan. "History and identity should not blight the EU's enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans." *CEPS Policy Insights*, Centre for European Policy Studies, 2021. www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PI2021-08_EUs-enlargement-policy-towards-the-Western-Balkans.pdf

⁶ IVKOVIĆ, Aleksandar. "Macron's European Political Community: What would it mean for the Western Balkans?" *European Western Balkans*, 16 May 2022. <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2022/05/16/macrons-european-political-community-what-would-it-mean-for-the-western-balkans/>

Geographical Overview | **Western Balkans**

North Macedonia. After Greece, Bulgaria Appears. North Macedonia's Obstacle Course to Enter the EU

Dr Yorgos Christidis

Associate Professor

Department of Balkan, Slavonic and Oriental Studies

University of Macedonia

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) during its almost 45-year period of existence had enabled the consolidation of an ethnic Macedonian identity with all the necessary attributes (language, official history, etc.). When North Macedonia declared its independence from SFRY in September 1991 (under its then constitutional name “Republic of Macedonia”) its official narrative concerning its identity was openly challenged by Greece and Bulgaria, with the former’s opposition complicating not only North Macedonia’s efforts to gain international recognition but also undermining its Euro-Atlantic ambitions.

The Name Dispute with Greece and Its Resolution: The Prespa Agreement

The signing of the Prespa Agreement in June 2018 by the then Prime Ministers of Greece, Alexis Tsipras, and North Macedonia, Zoran Zaev, had signalled the conclusion of a long diplomatic dispute between the two countries that had lasted almost three decades. It had begun following the declaration of independence by the Republic of Macedonia, in September 1991, when Greece moved diplomatically to block its recognition, arguing that its state ideology, including its name, was irredentist by nature, threatening its territorial integrity and its cultural heritage over *Μακεδονία* (the Greek region of geographic Macedonia). The “name dispute,” as it became widely known, continued for the next 27 years,

although bilateral relations between North Macedonia and Greece went through various phases: a severe embargo imposed by Athens on North Macedonia between February 1994 and September 1995; a normalization of relations, following the signing of the so-called Interim Agreement of New York in September 1995, which, however, kept the “name dispute” alive; a remarkable development of bilateral economic relations during the second half of the '90s that lasted until 2008, which saw Greece becoming one of the top trade and investment partners of North Macedonia; a deterioration of political relations from April 2008 – and NATO’s Summit in Bucharest, when North Macedonia failed to secure an invitation to join the Alliance due to Greece’s objections – until the middle of 2015, as the government of Nikola Gruevski implemented the “politics of antiquization” of the Macedonian identity, antagonizing Athens and Sofia; and even a series of Confidence Building Measures signed between the two countries, in the summer of 2015, that restored a measure of cooperation between them at the height of a major refugee crisis affecting the region and the EU. For North Macedonia, the Prespa Agreement was a painful compromise. The government of Zoran Zaev abandoned Skopje’s established policy on the “name dispute,” according to which the Republic of Macedonia was ready to compromise on its name only for its bilateral relations with Greece. Instead it accepted Athens position (as had been officially formed by the Greek government in 2007), i.e., that any agreement should include a composite name, that would include the term “Macedonia,” but should also be of an *erga omnes nature*, i.e. having universal application, for both internal and external use. In exchange, the agreement secured Greece’s recognition of the Macedonian language – with the stipulation that it be a language that belongs to the “group of South

Slavic languages” – and the written understanding that the terms “Macedonia and Macedonian refer to a different historical context and cultural legacy” to the two parties to the agreement – with the clarification that Ancient Macedonia is part “of the Hellenic civilization, history, culture and heritage... from antiquity to present day” (Art 7 of the Treaty).

Since the declaration of independence of the Republic of Macedonia in September 1991, political elites in Sofia have been struggling to formulate a coherent policy vis-à-vis Skopje

Furthermore, Athens committed to supporting the Euro-Atlantic integration of North Macedonia, something that was of cardinal importance for Zoran Zaev’s government. The “removal of the Greek veto” rallied behind the agreement of the ethnic Albanian community, securing its ratification in parliament on 5 July 2018. Following the ratification of the Prespa Agreement, also by the Greek Parliament, an accession protocol between North Macedonia and NATO was quickly signed, opening the way for the former to join the Alliance: on 27 March 2020 North Macedonia became the newest member of NATO. North Macedonia’s EU accession process however remained stalled.

Bulgaria Blocks North Macedonia’s EU Accession Process

North Macedonia’s hopes for setting off on its long-awaited EU accession process (the country had applied to join the EU back in March 2004), following the ratification of the Prespa Agreement, were quickly dashed. In October 2019, France and the Netherlands blocked the opening of negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania, despite the positive recommendations of the European Commission and a similar resolution by the European Parliament. And, soon after, to the surprise of many unfamiliar with the history of Bulgaria-North Macedonia rela-

tions, Sofia adopted a hard position on the issue, twice blocking the beginning of North Macedonia’s EU accession process. How had it come to this? Since the declaration of independence of the Republic of Macedonia in September 1991, political elites in Sofia have been struggling to formulate a coherent policy vis-à-vis Skopje. Bulgaria became the first country to recognize the Republic of Macedonia in January 1992; a decision that was, however, accompanied by the “clarification” that Bulgaria “does not recognize the Macedonian nation and language.” Post-1992 relations between Sofia and Skopje continued to be far from problem free, with the so-called “language dispute” not technically addressed until 1999. Even worse from Bulgaria’s point of view, the mediocre progress in bilateral relations since early 1992 was the fault of the “ungrateful Macedonians who were continuing with their anti-Bulgarian policies, in issues such as official historiography or the treatment of those declaring themselves ethnic Bulgarians” (Christidis, 2020).

The signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation between Bulgaria and North Macedonia in August 2017 also failed to meet Bulgarian expectations. There was little progress in boosting bilateral relations (for example in advancing infrastructural connectivity between the two countries), while the work of a commission of (mainly) history experts, which had been established to examine “educational and historical issues,” failed to reach an agreement on the identity of important historical figures (like the revolutionary Gotse Delchev). For Bulgarian parties, and in particular VMRO, which saw itself as the “defender of Bulgaria’s heritage in Macedonia,” the lack of concrete results on the work of the commission of historians was “insulting” and “proof of Skopje’s lack of good faith.” In the process, VMRO not only demanded a toughening of Sofia’s policies vis-à-vis Skopje, but also managed to impose its line on the Bulgarian government (Christidis, 2020).

On 9 October 2019, the Bulgarian government adopted the so-called Framework Position, where it is stated that Sofia “will not allow EU integration to be accompanied by the European legitimization of a state-sponsored, anti-Bulgarian ideology” (Christidis, 2019). The adoption of the document, which was also approved by the Bulgarian Parliament, constituted a turning point in Bulgarian policy: Sofia

Sofia “bound itself” into a tough diplomatic position, reminiscent of the Greek policy vis-à-vis North Macedonia, where dominant perceptions of history-identity and a feeling of diplomatic superiority produced a diplomatic position that no government dared to openly challenge, let alone abandon

“bound itself” into a tough diplomatic position, reminiscent of the Greek policy vis-à-vis North Macedonia, where dominant perceptions of history-identity and a feeling of diplomatic superiority produced a diplomatic position that no government dared to openly challenge, let alone abandon. The new Bulgarian position brought about not only successive “vetoes” by Sofia at the beginning of the EU accession process of North Macedonia (in November 2020 and October 2021), but also unavoidably had a negative effect on bilateral relations: any advocate of closer relations with Bulgaria in North Macedonia was put in an untenable position domestically, as it was hard to justify what in North Macedonia was seen as a full-blown challenge to Macedonian identity and history. Any “feel-good” factor that had remained following the August 2017 agreement quickly disappeared, and bilateral relations backtracked to the pre-August 2017 era.

A New Government in Sofia, a New Way Forward?

With the formation of the new Bulgarian government, led by Kiril Petkov, on 12 December 2021, expectations were raised for a way out from the impasse in Bulgaria-North Macedonia relations that would simultaneously unblock North Macedonia’s path to the EU path. The new Bulgarian Prime Minister, although not challenging the official Bulgarian position, as adopted by the October 2019 Framework Position, underlined that he favoured “a more business-like approach to relations with North Macedonia,” seeking “to broaden dialogue and use economic cooperation

to improve relations” (Barigazzi & Bayer, 2022), by establishing new working commissions on issues like infrastructure, European integration, culture and the economy – in addition to the commission working on the history that had been so counterproductive for bilateral relations. Thus, on 18 January 2022, one day after Dimitar Kovačevski was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of North Macedonia, Petkov paid an official visit to Skopje. The two Prime Ministers agreed on a “new approach” towards bilateral relations, committing themselves to introducing “a new dynamism in bilateral relations,” and establishing additional working groups on various aspects of bilateral relations, like infrastructural and transport links (Петров, 2022).

Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine and the New Urgency to Start the EU Accession Process

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, on 24 February 2022, added a new “geopolitical urgency” to the search for an agreement between Sofia and Skopje, which would allow the unblocking of North Macedonia’s EU accession process, together with that of Albania. On 14 March the EU High Commissioner Josep Borrel stated in Skopje that “the EU should launch negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania as soon as possible to strengthen security in the Western Balkans” (Dimitrievska, 2022). A couple of weeks later, on 28 March, the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz expressed his concerns about the “slow pace of Western Balkan countries’ EU accession processes,” adding that Albania and North Macedonia’s accession to the EU needed to start “as soon as possible because any delay will make the Western Balkans vulnerable to outside influence” (Maru-

The new Bulgarian Prime Minister, although not challenging the official Bulgarian position, as adopted by the October 2019 Framework Position, underlined that he favoured “a more business-like approach to relations with North Macedonia”

sic, 2022). By the end of March, Petkov had announced that the bilateral history commission was “making progress,” while political dialogue between the two governments was also “going well,” adding that “we still have a few milestones to reach before a breakthrough is possible, including on the Bulgarian demand for greater protection of minority rights of Bulgarians in North Macedonia, as well as on the exact formulation of the EU accession negotiating framework for North Macedonia” (Marusic, 2022). There is clearly a new diplomatic momentum, generating hopes for a formula that would allow North Macedonia’s accession talks to begin by the end of the French Presidency; a development that would not only provide a significant boost to Bulgaria-North Macedonia relations, but would greatly benefit the stability of the Western Balkans.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, on 24 February 2022, added a new “geopolitical urgency” to the search for an agreement between Sofia and Skopje, which would allow the unblocking of North Macedonia’s EU accession process, together with that of Albania

Any such formula, however, will need to gain the approval of the four coalition partners in Petkov’s government in order to get through the Bulgarian Parliament. An increasingly challenging prospect for Bulgaria’s dynamic Prime Minister, given the growing strains his coalition government is facing. (Георгиев, 2022).

Bibliographical References

- BARIGAZZI, Jacopo and BAYER, Lili. “Bulgarian MP bets on business skills to boost vaccination rates.” *Politico*, 20 December 2021, www.politico.eu/article/bulgaria-pm-kirik-petkov-business-skills-boost-coronavirus-vaccination-rates/
- CHRISTIDIS, Yorgos. “Bulgaria sets tough conditions on North Macedonia’s accession path.” *ELIAMEP Policy Brief No. 59*, 2019.
- CHRISTIDIS, Yorgos. “Historical disputes threaten North Macedonia – Bulgaria rapprochement.” op-ed, *European Western Balkans*, 14 May 2020, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/05/14/worrying-developments-on-bulgarian-north-macedonian-relations/>
- DIMITRIEVSKA, Valentina. “Borrel says EU committed to launching accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia.” *bneintellinews*, April 2022, p. 32, <https://online.flipbuilder.com/myab/qxas/mobile/index.html#p=32>
- MARUSIC, Sinica Jakov. “Bulgarian PM Optimistic About Resolving North Macedonia Dispute.” *BIRN*, 29 March 2022, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/03/29/bulgarian-pm-optimistic-about-resolving-north-macedonia-dispute/>
- Георгиев, Андриян. “Ива Митева: Трудно ще продължим да управляваме заедно, може данапуснем коалицията заради Северна Македония.” *dnevni.bg*, 9 April 2022, www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2022/04/09/4334379_iva_miteva_trudno_shte_produljim_da_upravliavame/?ref=home_mainStory
- Петров, Ангел. “Лично аз и Димитър ще реагираме” – Петков за Ковачевски и новия подход към Скопие.” *dnevni.bg*, 18 January 2022, www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2022/01/18/4304062_lichno_az_i_dimitur_shte_reagirame_-_petkov_za/?ref=home_mainStory

Geographical Overview | **MPCs. Maghreb**

The Palace's Domestic and Foreign Policy Success and the Search for Stability

Alfonso Casani HerranzDepartment of Political Science and
Public Administration
University Complutense of Madrid

Has the year 2022 been a back to basics for Morocco? After a decade of counter-reforms, 2021 seemed to be the pinnacle of the “end of the cycle of opportunity,” which began with the so-called Arab Spring (Casani y Tomé, 2021). The triple elections (local, regional and national) that took place in September 2021 and the formation of a coalition government made up of pro-Palace parties, as well as the drastic crackdown on human rights that has taken place for most of the last decade, confirmed the centrality of the Palace in the management of political affairs, and the progressive weakness of the opposition to promote changes. At the same time, the growing acceptance of Morocco's resolution plan for the Western Sahara conflict shows the success of the country's diplomatic tactics and has contributed to strengthening the Palace's position in the political arena.

The 2021 Elections and the Translation of the Palace's Will

8 September 2021 witnessed an exceptional triple election, held at both local, regional and national level. Its results showed the foreseeable victory of the National Rally of Independents (RNI), led by Aziz Akhannouch, the second richest man in the country and a figure very close to the King, already present in the two previous governments, but it also showed the severe electoral decline of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD).

Despite the elections being preceded by several electoral reforms, arguably to prevent the PJD's electoral victory, such as the abolition of the electoral threshold and the modification of the seat distribution model, the magnitude of the PJD's loss was difficult to foresee. The party went from leading the government with 126 seats in parliament to being unable to form a parliamentary group of its own, with only 13 seats. Different reasons seem to justify the PJD's results, including its inability to meet reform expectations, generated by the party itself, its failure to implement a moralization project, the difficulties it had reacting to the Covid-19 crisis, or the alienation of its followers following the normalization of relations with Israel in December 2020 (Allal, 2021).

Coming in second and third position were the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) and the Istiqlal Party, both of which are seen as close to the Palace. The formation of a coalition government by the three first parties (RNI, PAM and Istiqlal), led by Akhannouch, reflects the Palace's commitment to stability, in a context of hardship characterized by the still ongoing pandemic crisis and the need to boost the country's economic recovery.

Ahead lies Morocco's goals to promote a *new social contract*, which focuses on three axes, the extension of healthcare coverage, economic recovery and public sector reform, and to implement the ambitious *Awrach* programme, aimed at creating 250,000 jobs between 2022 and 2023. The search for stability was additionally reinforced by the promotion of the “New Development Model” prior to the celebration of the elections, which *de facto* established the main political guidelines the future government should develop, and the involvement of all political parties under a “National Pact for Development.” The need for this common political stance

was once again stressed by King Mohammed VI in his speech to the Parliament on the occasion of the opening of the first session of the legislature.¹

Risks and Challenges to the New Government

This commitment to stability, however, comes at a risk. The current imbalance between forces in the Parliament shows the virtual disappearance of any opposition or feasible alternative to the government. Whereas the political parties have traditionally acted as a political shield to the King, absorbing criticism within the country, as well as any political failing, while legitimating the position of the monarch, the current concentration of pro-Palace political forces in the government and the absence of alternatives considerably reduces the regime's capacity to absorb social unrest.

The current concentration of pro-Palace political forces in the government and the absence of alternatives considerably reduces the regime's capacity to absorb social unrest

A second dilemma is the conflict of interest that arises from the position of Akhannouch as head of government, and his own personal economic interests as one of the country's leading businessmen. A case in point is the current fuel price hike and Akhannouch's interests as CEO of the *Akwa Group*, a conglomerate primarily involved in the oil and gas industry. But beyond this, Akhannouch's case is an example of the overlapping political and economic interests in Morocco's political system. Both points were made clear during the popular boycott organized in 2018 against the rising prices, which targeted three companies strongly linked with the economic and political elite, including *Af-*

riquia gas stations, part of Akhannouch's business conglomerate.

As for the opposition, the electoral results attest to the fragmentation of the left, their organizational problems and their difficulties in mobilizing the Moroccan electorate (Cox, 2021). Meanwhile, the anti-establishment opposition faces an increasingly constrained scenario, marred by restrictions on freedom of expression, and the repression of leading human rights activists, as well as the restrictions on mobility imposed by the state of alarm, which is still in place. In this sense, the current health crisis opened the door to a further securitization of the country and to increasing pressure on dissenting voices.

Despite this, structural problems, such as rising food and commodity prices and high unemployment figures, which have been more acute since the beginning of the pandemic, continue to be a source of social discontent and open up the possibility of greater protests in the future. The demonstrations against the imposition of health restrictions, such as the vaccine pass, or the deterioration in the quality of life, under the new Akhannouch government, attest to these challenges.

The Success of a Harder Foreign Policy

We might draw a parallel between the democratic backsliding experienced in domestic politics and the assertive stance and conflict-prone foreign policy developed in recent years, which stresses the central position of the King and a harder stance in the management of political affairs. The assertive foreign policy adopted by Morocco has been characterized by a political – but not economic – distancing from the European Union (Fernández-Molina, 2019), a re-orientation of its interests towards other regions, mainly Africa, and a greater tendency towards conflict to achieve its goals.

Western Sahara has been one of Morocco's main foreign policy axes. In a context marked by the breakdown of the ceasefire with the Polisario Front in November 2020 and, especially, by the US diplomatic recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the region later that year, Morocco has adopted a more

¹ www.maroc.ma/fr/discours-royaux/sm-le-roi-adresse-un-discours-au-parlement-loccasion-de-louverture-de-la-1ere

proactive strategy for asserting its sovereignty over Western Sahara, intensifying its pressure on European diplomatic positions.

The current health crisis opened the door to a further securitization of the country and to increasing pressure on dissenting voices

This strategy has resulted in several diplomatic conflicts, leading to the breaking of relations with Germany, in March 2021, and Spain, in May 2021, for almost a year. At the heart of this decision was the perceived informal support to Western Sahara of both Germany and Spain (expressed in Germany's questioning of the US unilateral recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the region, and the hospitalization of Polisario Front leader, Brahim Gali, in Spain).

This new foreign policy approach was stressed in King Mohammed VI's speech on the anniversary of the Green March on 6 November 2021, when he warned European countries of Morocco's decision not to "engage with them in any economic or commercial approach that would exclude the Moroccan Sahara."² This statement also came in response to the Court of Justice of the EU's decision to cancel the agriculture and fishing agreements with Morocco, ruling against the possibility of including the Western Sahara region in the agreements.

The mounting tensions were eased following both Germany and Spain's support for the Western Sahara autonomy proposal, supported by Morocco since 2007 (more explicit in the case of Spain, which defended Morocco's proposal as "the most serious, realistic and credible" initiative). The Netherlands' recent announcement, in May 2022, of its support to Morocco's resolution plan for the region shows a shift in European positions towards the conflict.

An Increase in Tensions with Algeria

In parallel, and with the issue of Western Sahara clearly in the background, 2021 has also been marked by a deterioration in relations with Algeria. Diplomatic relations were severed after Morocco's permanent representative to the UN alluded to the Kabylia region's desire for self-determination from Algeria in July 2021. Since then, tensions have increased, with a ban on the use of Algerian airspace by Moroccan military and civilian aircraft and, most notably, the decision not to renew the Maghreb-Europe Gas Pipeline contract. In the current context of the war between Russia and Ukraine and the rise in fuel prices, this decision will have major economic consequences for Morocco. An example of the strategy changes this will imply is the recent announcement that Spain will export liquefied natural gas to the country, to compensate for Morocco's decrease in gas imports from Algeria.

Morocco has adopted a more proactive strategy for asserting its sovereignty over Western Sahara, intensifying its pressure on European diplomatic positions

Conflictual relations with Algeria, however, have a more complex and structural nature, framed in Algeria's traditional support to the Polisario Front in Western Sahara, and, more broadly, in the competition between both countries to assert their influence on the region. From this perspective, the breakdown in their relations can be traced back to the recognition of Western Sahara by the United States, as well as Morocco's strategy of Africanization and Algeria's own internal political weakness. The latter refers to the changing relations between Morocco and Algeria depending on the perceived weakness of the other country (Hernando de Larramendi, 2019).

² www.maroc.ma/fr/discours-royaux/sm-le-roi-adresse-un-discours-la-nation-loccasion-du-46eme-anniversaire-de-la-marche

Conclusions

To return to the initial question, the political regime's situation certainly reflects the closing of a decade of opportunities for change and the recovery of the monarchy's lost ground, further reinforced by its diplomatic successes regarding Western Sahara. The current balance on Morocco shows a monarchy increasingly involved in public affairs, which has overcome the already-limited restrictions imposed by the 2011 Constitution, and has bended the political opposition, establishing a coalition government made up of pro-Palace parties.

In this same vein, the diplomatic results achieved by Morocco seem to confirm the success of its harder foreign policy strategy, contributing to stressing the Palace's centrality and the political role it plays.

The diplomatic results achieved by Morocco seem to confirm the success of its harder foreign policy strategy, contributing to stressing the Palace's centrality and the political role it plays

The commitment to stability shown by the Palace's decisions, however, entails its own risks; should the government fail to overcome the current health and

economic challenges, the regime may run out of political alternatives to overturn the situation.

References

- ALLAL, Abderrahmane. "Party of Ashes: an attempt to explain PJD's results in the September 8, 2021 elections." *Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis*. 07/03/2022. <https://mipa.institute/8983>
- CASANI, Alfonso and TOMÉ-ALONSO, Beatriz. "Marruecos y el cambio de ciclo: en busca de un nuevo pacto social y de nuevas legitimidades." in *Fundación Alternativas*, n.º 114/2021. www.fundacionalternativas.org/observatorio-de-politica-exterior-opex/documentos/documentos-de-trabajo/marruecos-y-el-cambio-de-ciclo-en-busca-de-un-nuevo-pacto-social-y-de-nuevas-legitimidades
- COX, Christopher. "Further into the Wilderness: The Never-ending Plight of the Left in Morocco." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 24/11/2021. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/85855>
- FERNÁNDEZ-MOLINA, Irene. "¿Está Marruecos desvinculándose de la Unión Europea?" *Informe África. Dinámicas transfronterizas en un contexto globalizado*. Madrid: Fundación Alternativas, 2019.
- HERNANDO DE LARRAMENDI, Miguel. "Doomed regionalism in a redrawn Maghreb? The changing shape of the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco in the post-2011 era." in *The Journal of North African Studies*, nº 24: 506-531, 2019. Doi:10.1080/13629387.2018.1454657

Geographical Overview | **MPCs. Maghreb**

“No Freedom – No Development,” Algeria’s New Deal

Tin Hinane El-Kadi

Co-founder

Institute for Social Science Research
on Algeria (ISSRA)

Over three years after the start of the popular uprising that came to be known as the Hirk, the regime’s counter-revolutionary plan appears to have gained the upper hand. The Algerian regime, or *Le Pouvoir* (the power) – an opaque network of primarily military but also political and economic elites – has once again proven its tenacity. Despite millions of Algerians decrying its rule and a deteriorating economic situation, the regime has astutely leveraged manoeuvres to maintain its grip on power. Yet, the emerging political reality is wobbly and fierce contestation both from within and outside the system persists, making the country virtually ungovernable.

Rebuilding a Fragile Civilian Facade

Holding snap elections to reshape institutions from the presidency to local councils has been the cornerstone of the regime’s restoration strategy. According to the official narrative, this process would sanitize institutions from corruption and mismanagement and usher in a “new Algeria” healed from the wounds of the past. The first step in the regime’s roadmap consisted of organizing the much-contested presidential elections of December 2019, which

brought to power Abdelmadjid Tebboun, Algeria’s former Prime Minister and *protégé* of the army’s late chief of staff, general Ahmed Gaid Saleh. The elections recorded the lowest turnout in Algeria’s independent history for a presidential election, with just 39% of the electoral body participating.¹ This was followed by the revision of the Constitution, an initiative hailed by *Le Pouvoir* and its supporters as one that would meet the Hirk’s democratic aspirations. Yet, according to several constitutionalists, the new text further entrenched the President’s power, giving him control over the judiciary and the legislative. Only 13.7% out of the country’s 24.47 million registered voters, voted in favour of the new constitution.² With very few prerogatives attributed to the Parliament and a repressive context, Algerians also overwhelmingly shunned the ballots in the June 2021 legislative elections. Turnout was just 30.2 per cent, the lowest in 20 years for legislative elections.³ Major opposition parties had refused to participate, including the Rally for Culture and Democracy (Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie, RCD), the Workers’ Party (Parti des travailleurs, PT), and the Socialist Forces Front (Front des forces socialistes, FFS).

The long-time incumbent, the National Liberation Front (Front de liberation national, FLN), which played a significant role during Bouteflika’s two decades in power, won the most seats with 105 of the 407 seats, followed by independent candidates with 78 seats. Later, independent candidates would vow allegiance to President Tebboune. Algeria’s largest

¹ “Abdelmadjid Tebboune declared winner of Algeria election.” *Financial Times*, 13/12/19. www.ft.com/content/d3a4f292-1da3-11ea-97df-cc63de1d73f4

² “Le Conseil constitutionnel proclame les résultats définitifs et officiels du scrutin.” *APS*, 12/11/20 www.aps.dz/algerie/112733-le-conseil-constitutionnel-proclame-les-resultats-definitifs-et-officiels-du-scrutin

³ “Législatives en Algérie : les électeurs boudent une nouvelle fois les urnes.” *France 24*, 13/06/21. www.france24.com/fr/afrique/20210613-19%C3%A9gislatives-en-alg%C3%A9rie-les-%C3%A9lecteurs-boudent-une-nouvelle-fois-les-urnes

Islamist party, the Movement of Society for Peace (Hamas, MSP), came third with 64 seats, while the pro-system Democratic National Rally (Rassemblement national démocratique, RND) ranked as the country's fourth biggest political force. The municipal and provincial council elections in November 2021 marked the last episode in a series of widely boycotted elections.

Elections were seen by many as nothing more than cosmetic reforms aimed at extending the life of an autocratic political system

The regime's propaganda, portraying its roadmap as the only path forward for change, has failed to convince Algerians who have expressed their rejection by a massive boycott of four consecutive elections. These elections were seen by many as nothing more than cosmetic reforms aimed at extending the life of an autocratic political system. In a context marked by an abysmal lack of state-citizen trust and the absence of accountability mechanisms, the boycott became a powerful act of defiance for Algerians.

Nonetheless, the embarrassing turnout did not stop the regime from holding all planned polls. Authoritarian regimes organize elections for a myriad of reasons, including the need to feed clientelist networks, rally new supporters, showcase the opposition's weakness and maintain a form of institutional legality internationally. In this sense, elections are more about putting on a show that helps strengthen the system than enacting mechanisms for representation and accountability.

That being said, against the backdrop of a shrinking social base, repression has become one of the rare

cards available to the regime. The Hirak's weekly demonstrations, which were brought to a halt after the Covid-19 pandemic, resumed weekly in February 2021 for its second anniversary, until they were violently banned by security forces ahead of the legislative elections. In May 2021, a law was passed officially criminalizing the Hirak, accusing it of being infiltrated by terrorist organizations, such as the Islamist-leaning Rachad organization and its leaders and the Mouvement for the Autonomy of Kabylie (Le mouvement pour l'autonomie de la Kabylie, MAK).⁴ Several pro-Hirak activists, journalists and social media influencers were jailed or persecuted for alleged affiliations to these organizations. With all the fanfare over the army's success in crushing terrorist groups during the civil war, the regime brought out the terrorist threat from the drawers two decades later to ensure its survival.

At the same time, the few existing spaces of freedom have been disappearing. Authorities intensified censorship on the independent press using a variety of means, from banning newspapers and imprisoning journalists to blocking all potential financial streams. In April 2022, "Liberté," one of Algeria's leading independent media, printed its last issue three decades after its launch.⁵ Opposition parties and organizations also faced a repressive crackdown. In January 2022, the Algerian Council of State ordered the suspension of the Socialist Workers' Party (Parti socialiste des travailleurs, PST), forcing it to cease all its activities.⁶

Earlier, authorities dissolved the Youth Action Rally (Rassemblement actions jeunesse, RAJ), a well-known civil society organization.⁷ Furthermore, Fethi Gheras, the leader of the Democratic and Social Movement (MDS), was jailed for nine months for his political stance.⁸ To be able to retain power, the regime has arguably restricted political and press freedoms to pre-1988 levels when Algeria had a single-party system.

⁴ "L'Algérie classe comme « organisations terroristes » deux mouvements basés à l'étranger." *Arabnews*, 19/05/21 www.arabnews.fr/node/94951/monde-arabe

⁵ "Médias: Liberté s'éteint, Rebrab s'explique." *24hdz* 14/04/22 www.24hdz.com/medias-liberte-seteint-rebrab-sexplique/.

⁶ "Les activités du PST gelées et son siège fermé." *Liberté*, 20/01/22. www.liberte-algerie.com/actualite/les-activites-du-pst-gelées-et-son-siege-ferme-371962

⁷ "Algérie : une ONG-phare du mouvement prodémocratie dissoute par la justice." *Le Monde*, 13/10/21 www.lemonde.fr/afrrique/article/2021/10/13/algérie-une-ong-phare-du-mouvement-prodémocratie-dissoute-par-la-justice_6098203_3212.html

⁸ "Fethi Gheras enfin libre ! retour sur un procès émouvant." *Radio M*, 22/03/22 <https://radio-m.net/fethi-gheras-enfin-libre-retour-sur-un-proces-émouvant/>

A Deteriorating Socioeconomic Environment

Mounting repression took place in the context of rapidly deteriorating socioeconomic conditions. The Covid-19 pandemic hit the Algerian economy hard, with lockdown measures and the fall in hydrocarbon prices resulting in a contraction of real GDP growth estimated at around 5.5% in 2020.⁹ Even though the economy experienced some recent recovery, at the start of 2022, GDP had remained below its pre-pandemic level. Foreign reserves – estimated at 200 billion USD before the 2014 drop in oil prices – dwindled to 41.5 billion in March 2022.

If high unemployment rates are a long-standing issue in the country, the pandemic further aggravated the issue with the temporary or permanent loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs. These jobs are mainly in sectors, such as services and construction – largely concentrated in the informal economy. Algerians also witnessed soaring prices, making inflation the big economic theme of the past few months. The Bank of Algeria announced in December 2021 that national inflation rates had reached 9.2%,¹⁰ but many experts have expressed scepticism towards this number, claiming that it is an underestimation. The decrease in the dinar's value, the government's excessive use of quantitative easing, shortages of supply and increased domestic demand all contributed to rising living costs. Moreover, long periods of drought negatively impacted agricultural production, leading the price of basic foodstuff to reach new heights.

In light of the growing poverty and political repression, many Algerians have been taking the potentially deadly journey of crossing the Mediterranean. The summer of 2021 has been the darkest summer for Algerian *Harragas*. According to data from Spanish authorities, 9,664 Algerians reached the Spanish coast between January and October 2021.¹¹ That is 20% more than in 2020, notes the same source.

While some manage to reach Europe safely, many lose their lives on the journey. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicated that at least 309 Algerian migrants, including 13 children, lost their lives in the Mediterranean in 2021.¹²

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the consequent increase in hydrocarbon prices is, however, good news in the short term for Algeria, as hydrocarbons represent 95% of the country's exports. Algeria's external and fiscal balances are improving with the Saharan Blend selling at over 100 USD and soaring gas prices. The upsurge in OPEC+ quotas, and new contracts to reduce dependency on Russian energy, such as the one signed with Italy,¹³ will also boost hydrocarbon investments. Yet, long years without major investments in the sector and the suspension of the Maghreb-Europe Gas Pipeline, following tensions with Morocco, limits the potential gains Algeria could enjoy from the ongoing hike in energy prices.

Large private investments, both domestic and foreign, have virtually frozen in what capital holders see as a highly uncertain environment

Turning our sight to the non-hydrocarbon sector, the outlook is grimmer. Algeria's economy remains stubbornly dependent on oil and gas. The private sector, which can drive diversification efforts and create some of the jobs needed for the millions of unemployed Algerians, has been further muted since the *Hirak*. The spectacular rise and fall of notorious oligarchs during the Bouteflika era and the unfolding of numerous corruption scandals that led to the imprisonment of dozens of businessmen, politicians and

⁹ The World Bank, "Algeria's Economic Situation overview." www.worldbank.org/en/country/algeria/overview#1

¹⁰ "Very sharp rise in inflation and fall of the Algerian dinar." *Pipanews*, 23/12/21 <https://pipanews.com/very-sharp-rise-in-inflation-and-fall-of-the-algerian-dinar/>

¹¹ "I live on crumbs: why older Algerians are risking the small boats to Spain." *The Guardian*, 29/04/22 www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/apr/29/algerian-migrants-europe-boats-spain-mediterranean

¹² "The number of Algerian *harraga* arriving in Spain in 2021." *Pipanews*, 28/10/21 <https://pipanews.com/the-number-of-algerian-harraga-arriving-in-spain-in-2021/>

¹³ "Italy signs deal with Algeria to increase gas imports." *Aljazeera*, 11/04/22 www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/11/italy-signs-deal-with-algeria-to-increase-gas-imports

bureaucrats have instilled a climate of terror in business circles.

In its new reconfiguration, the regime instrumentalized its anti-corruption campaign to jail pro-Hirak business leaders with no proven records of corruption or misconduct. As a result, large private investments, both domestic and foreign, have virtually frozen in what capital holders see as a highly uncertain environment. Urgent reforms are needed to regain investors' trust and unlock growth, including authorizing hundreds of pending loans, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and adopting a set of industrial policies that incentivize investment in high value-added sectors. Yet, Algiers' emerging power configuration seems to lack the necessary cohesion, capacity and will to push for meaningful economic reforms.

Institutional Deadlock

The roadmap imposed by the regime against the will of the Hirak has resulted in weak institutions and wobbly consecutive governments, unable to put the country on a reform path. The apparent power competition between various clans within the system further weakens decision-making mechanisms and state capacity. In this sense, the post-Hirak political settlement resembles what Mushtaq Khan describes as a weak settlement, that is, a situation in which power is dispersed between competing factions, while only a narrow social base backs the faction in power. In this context, ruling elites do not have incentives to engage in meaningful reforms and build institutions for broad-based development.

The regime's survival in this type of settlement is contingent on several factors, rendering ambitious policy endeavours risky. Even when such policies are adopted, implementation capacity is weak. Sev-

eral decisions taken by Tebboune and his ministers end up being mere declarations of intent without any notable follow-ups on the ground. The gap between the regime and the people, combined with the seemingly endless power struggles within the regime itself, have left Algeria trapped in a precarious "No freedoms-No development" status quo.

Ultimately, the crucial economic, social and political change Algeria needs calls for the dissolution of flimsy new institutions and the creation of ones based on popular legitimacy

Acknowledging the institutional paralysis in which the country finds itself, in May 2022 Tebboune launched an initiative for dialogue with political parties and national figures. This presidential endeavour officially aims to rally political forces in the country and appease the general climate. So far, opposition parties have refused to join the initiative amidst continuous arrests of Hirak activists and restrictions on basic freedoms. While it is too soon at the time of writing to assess the merits of this initiative, no comprehensive political pact could emerge within the current liberticide environment. Ultimately, the crucial economic, social and political change Algeria needs calls for the dissolution of flimsy new institutions and the creation of ones based on popular legitimacy, that is, building a genuinely democratic system that would redraw the rules of the game to redistribute political power from the military institution to the people.

Geographical Overview | **MPCs. Maghreb**

Tunisia 2021: Anatomy of a Coup Foretold

Bernabé López

Honorary Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies
Autonomous University of Madrid

Tunisia began 2021 assuming the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council, where it was a non-permanent member for the 2020-2021 period. In early January, Tunisian President Kais Saied presided, by videoconference, over the session “Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Challenges of Maintaining Peace and Security in Fragile Contexts.” Although Tunisia’s action during its term on the Security Council focused on the “fragile contexts” of Palestine and Libya, the session title could just as well have referred to the situation Tunisia itself was experiencing at that time, slightly more than a year after the presidential elections that had brought Saied to power with strong popular support. Tunisia’s fragility had been evident since the 2011 revolution that had toppled the Ben Ali dictatorship, but also created uncertainty amongst investors and driven off the tourism that was the country’s main source of livelihood. Establishing the rule of law and “learning democracy” – to paraphrase the title of a book by Khadija Mohsen-Finan about the decade from 2011 to 2021 – was an arduous process in this fragile context consisting of a deteriorating social climate due to a lack of jobs, especially amongst young people, compounded by the emergence of terrorism and the thorny understanding between political forces and powerful divergent interests.

A balance seemed to have been reached with the consensus-based approval of the 2014 Constitution, but the years following its implementation exposed the contradictions inherent to the constitutional system itself, which was strongly parliamentary, in stark

contrast to the rigid presidentialism of the two previous stages since the country’s independence.

Kais Saied reached the presidency in October 2019, in elections that bore witness to the population’s disaffection from the country’s prevailing party system. A constitutional law professor in the Tunisian university system and an outsider in the world of parties, which he targeted in an electoral campaign that focused on the need to reform the Constitution and on criticism of the elites, he won 72.7% of the vote in the second round of the presidential elections, which saw a turnout of just 55%. In his view, the elites had corrupted the system, and he presented himself as the champion of the youth and spokesperson of the people, under the slogan *ash-sha'b yurid* or “the people want.” He has clung to that legitimation in the ballot boxes since starting his term, with an unwavering will to impose a change of system despite his limited powers under the 2014 Constitution.

One year into his presidency, the book *Kais Ier, Président d'un bateau ivre*, by the journalist Nizar Bahloul, editor of the digital newspaper *Business News* founded in 2008, offered a portrait of the man, revealing his lines of action even when Saied himself still played his cards close to the vest. The title, a metaphor from a poem by Rimbaud, alluded to the fragility of Tunisia’s situation as a ship adrift and suggested the presidential enthronement of Kais Saied as someone with the will to endure.

The book exposed some of Saied’s flaws – he is a poor communicator, has difficulty finding people to work with, is obsessed with conspiracies and foreign interference, is a conservative but not an Islamist – but also described him as having a strong character that has allowed him to stand up to the dominant political formation, the Islamist Ennahdha party. This party had imposed itself through its hegemony in Parliament since its legalization at the

constituent moment of 2011, then in the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP) following the adoption of the 2014 Constitution, and even later in the 2019 legislative elections, despite having lost a large share of its voters.

Kais Saied reached the presidency in October 2019, in elections that bore witness to the population's disaffection from the country's prevailing party system

The 2014 Constitution establishes a balance of power centred on three presidencies that must cooperate closely for the system to work: the head of state, based out of Carthage Palace; the prime ministry, which has de facto control of the executive and is headquartered in Kasbah; and the presidency of the ARP, on which the government's stability depends, based in Le Bardo. In practice, however, this balance is shattered and drifts when there is no harmony between them, to the point of impeding the country's progress. Saied's presidency has revealed the worst side of a three-headed system whose leaders have proved incapable of cohabitating.

From the start of his term, the country has been caught up in an ongoing duel between the President and another powerful figure in the public arena, the Islamist leader of Ennahdha, Rached Ghannouchi, who managed to win the presidency of the ARP, establishing an alliance – some say an *unnatural* one – with the second most voted party, Qalb Tounes, led by the businessman Nabil Karoui, who has been accused of corruption and was Saied's opponent in the second round of the presidential elections. The alliance also included the Al Karama Coalition, considered a radical Islamist formation and an offshoot of Ennahdha. This three-party coalition has controlled the Assembly and made and unmade governments at will, in clear confrontation with the President.

Meanwhile, the President has had a conflictive relationship with the two prime ministers, the first, Elyes Fakhfakh (from February to September 2020), selected by Saied himself from a troika appointed by

the different parties in parliament, and the second, Hichem Mechichi (until 25 July 2021), likewise chosen by Saied for his loyalty as Interior Minister in the Fakhfakh government. The actions of both prime ministers – who had to deal with the adverse circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic during their respective terms of office – were conditioned by the will of the ARP, which withdrew its confidence from the former on suspicions of corruption and then installed the latter on 2 September 2020, in a session in which Ennahdha and Qalb Tounes imposed their majority criteria.

From the outset, the Mechichi government bore the stamp of Saied, who sought to impose an apolitical, technocratic character on it, under the name of a “government of competences.” Hence the friction between the presidencies that led the country to an interim government lasting more than half a year, from when Mechichi decided to reshuffle his cabinet in January 2021, changing 11 ministers, which Saied opposed with his veto, until his dismissal on 25 July in a controversial change of tack by the President.

However, beyond these political diatribes, Tunisia's real problem was the economic and social crisis denounced by institutions such as the Central Bank of Tunisia, which warned that external debt had already surpassed 100% of GDP in late September 2020, having more than doubled in the last ten years, exacerbated by the 7.2% contraction in the country's economy in 2020. The country could not pay off its debts or pay its civil servants' salaries unless it took out an 18.5 - billion - dolar dinar loan, Finance Minister Ali Kooli told Parliament in April 2021.

The President took advantage of the absence of a mediating body such as the Constitutional Court to establish himself as the arbiter and judge of the situation

Despite the precariousness of its interim nature, the Mechichi government was aware of the urgency of undertaking reforms such as those demanded by the IMF in the talks initiated in Washington in May to se-

cure credit. These reforms, which included wage bill containment, reduced subsidies for basic necessities, and a public investment programme to relaunch the economy, had to be agreed with the political forces and were difficult to undertake for fear of the social consequences of unpopular measures.

Pursuit of a national dialogue, such as the one the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) had advocated since November 2020, seemed to be the only way out. Such a dialogue had provided the solution to the crisis Tunisia had experienced in 2013, under the leadership of a quartet including the UGTT, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA), the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDG), and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers, who together earned Nobel Prize for their mediation. But in 2021, there were deep divergences over how to approach such a national dialogue. For the President, it should not be done in the traditional way, with political and social forces, but should include the participation of young people, something difficult to achieve and “chimerical,” according to the trade union. Furthermore, in Saied’s view, the dialogue should also exclude groups such as the Free Destourian Party (PDL), Qalb Tounes and Al Karama, accused of colluding with the former regime, corruption or close ties to Islamist terrorism. To hinder a possible national dialogue, Saied made it clear in his speeches throughout the year that such a dialogue would not be possible with anyone of questionable patriotism or who was wanted by the courts.

The President took advantage of the absence of a mediating body such as the Constitutional Court (CC) to establish himself as the arbiter and judge of the situation. Under Article 148, paragraph 5, of the Constitution, the CC should have been created within one year of the date of the first legislative elections. This did not happen due to the failure of the parliamentary groups to reach an agreement: they were unable to achieve the necessary two-thirds (145) of the votes to choose the four members the ARP was to appoint to the 12-member body after eight different attempts. In an effort to remedy this situation, an amendment to the Statute of the CC was passed in the current legislative period, on 25 May 2021, to reduce the number of votes needed to 131 (60%), but the President rejected the amendment on 4 April on the pretext that the

deadline for establishing the CC had passed and it was mandatory to amend the Constitution.

The rapprochement with the army, also seemed to be part of Saied’s strategy to control the situation

By then, in mid-March 2021, the groups in the parliamentary majority began to suspect that the President was planning to seize control of the situation, using the parliamentary finance committee, chaired by a member of the pro-Carthage Democratic Group, to call for the establishment of a state of economic emergency and invoke Article 80 of the Constitution, which would make it possible to declare a state of exception and enable the President to assume emergency powers. Two months later, the accusations of a constitutional coup d’état would make their way into public opinion via pro-Islamist websites such as the Qatar-funded *Middle East Eye*, which reported on the existence of a document by Nadia Akacha, Saied’s chief-of-staff, floating the possibility of invoking the aforementioned Article 80 under the pretext of the pandemic and the country’s financial straits to enable the President to take control of the situation by neutralizing the Prime Minister and President of Parliament and tasking General Khaled Yahyaoui, director of the President’s personal security unit, with overseeing the Ministry of the Interior.

Far from dispelling these rumours, which rocked the political scene, President Saied fuelled them at a 26 May meeting with Mechichi, in his capacity as acting Interior Minister, and the Defence Minister, stating that application of Article 80 was the President’s constitutional prerogative in a situation that had already called for exceptional measures such as those adopted since the outbreak of the pandemic. This meeting, the first with Mechichi since January, enabled Saied to recall his role as Commander-in-Chief of all the armed and security forces, as well as reproach parliament for not lifting the immunity of more than twenty members accused of corruption. The rapprochement with the army, an institution that had always kept its distance from politics in Tunisia, also seemed to be part of Saied’s strategy to con-

trol the situation. The severity of the pandemic in Tunisia offered it the opportunity to play a civilian role, putting much of the campaign to vaccinate the population in its hands.

On 25 July, Republic Day, Saied followed the script that some had predicted, dismissing the Prime Minister, suspending the ARP for 30 days, and lifting the immunity of members of parliament, backed by popular demonstrations in various parts of the country that welcomed the application of Article 80 in the hope that it would deliver solutions to the crisis. The measure was immediately rejected by the Ennahdha party, whilst much of the political class, including the UGTT and the UTICA, maintained a wait-and-see attitude. One month later, Saied extended the exceptional measures, promising to appoint a head of government and publish a roadmap as demanded by various international institutions (the US Senate, the European Commission, G7 ambassadors) that had expressed their concern for the course of events.

On 22 September, the President went even further, issuing Decree 2021-117 on transitional provisions, suspending the powers of the ARP, assuming all legislative, executive and judicial power, suspending the constitution, and tasking himself with drawing up reforms to achieve a “true democratic regime with the people as the source of power” and thus fulfil the objectives of the 17 December 2011 revolution. A few months earlier, in an interview with *France 24*, he had described his direct democracy project as the only way out of the crisis, considering the government, parties and financial lobbies his enemies.

One week later, he appointed Najla Bouden as Prime Minister. Bouden surrounded himself with close associates of Saied. Concern for the Tunisian situation was expressed abroad. The US House of Representatives devoted a session to the Tunisian situation, whilst the European Parliament voted en masse on 21 October in favour of a resolution expressing its deep concern for “the indefinite concentration of powers in the President’s hands.” The IMF contin-

ued to monitor developments closely. In Tunisia, these warnings were denounced as interference both by official circles and the UGTT, which had not yet defined its position with regard to the drift.

Closing the circle Saied again changed the rules of the game, issuing a presidential decree that will allow him to choose three members of the election monitoring authority

Saied did not publish the roadmap until 13 December. It consisted of the suspension of parliament, the holding of an online popular consultation on the reform between 1 January and 20 March 2022, a referendum on a new Constitution on 25 July, to be prepared by a committee which he would appoint, legislative elections on 17 December of the following year, and a criminal conciliation for business people accused of financial crimes.

A few months on, all the unanswered questions remain. The online popular consultation barely affected half a million Tunisians, who voted for a presidential list regime, and insecurity grew in some political circles as a result of arbitrary arrests and the President’s frontal attack on the judiciary, which had spoken out against its loss of independence, culminating in the dissolution of the High Judicial Council on 12 February 2022.

Closing the circle, on 22 April 2022 Saied again changed the rules of the game, issuing a presidential decree that will allow him to choose three members of the election monitoring authority, the ISIE, including its president. The path has been paved for him in the upcoming referendum and legislative elections, which, if nothing happens to prevent them, will take place in 2022.

Geographical Overview | **MPCs. Maghreb**

Libya: The Political Process towards a Fragile Peace

Mary Fitzgerald

Non-resident scholar,
Middle East Institute, Washington DC.

Elections Derailed, a Return to Rival Governments

The appointment of the interim Government of National Unity (GNU) – Libya's first unified executive since 2014 – in early 2021 raised hopes that the country could move beyond seven years of civil conflict. Led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dabaiba, an influential businessman from Misrata, Libya's third largest city, the GNU was given a short mandate. Its primary task was to steer the country towards elections scheduled to take place on 24 December, the anniversary of Libya's independence. It made history with the appointment of the country's first female Foreign Minister and Justice Minister.

However, the UN process that birthed the GNU was forced off track when the planned December ballot failed to take place due to disagreements over the legal framework for the vote. Since then, the GNU has been challenged by another government – the Government of National Stability (GNS) – appointed through a contested vote at the House of Representatives in March 2022.

The stalemate between the two entities – which echoes a previous experience of rival governments at the outset of Libya's civil war – could last well into 2022, if it doesn't tip the country back into armed conflict. Lack of progress in unifying military forces and disarming militias means security volatility persists despite an ongoing ceasefire agreed in October 2020. In such circumstances, political standoff – which in April led to a blockade of oil facilities, causing a dramatic fall in state revenues – risks a return to war.

Economic Progress at Risk

Before the aborted elections and the emergence of a rival government, Libya was experiencing a slow yet steady economic recovery. Following a nine-month blockade of oil fields and terminals by Khalifa Haftar – a commander based in eastern Libya – and his allies in 2020, the hydrocarbon-dependent country sought to overcome one of its worst annual economic performances. Though the National Oil Corporation (NOC) did not meet its goal of increasing crude production to 1.45 million barrels per day by the end of 2021, Libya was projected to record a GDP growth rate of 78.2 percent. The country's fiscal balance was anticipated to record a surplus given the rebound of oil production and exports plus the devaluation of the Libyan dinar which reduced the cost of financing public sector salaries, goods and services using dollar-denominated oil revenues. The current political uncertainty risks setting back the economic and financial progress made last year, particularly as Haftar and his allies have again resorted to using oil blockades to assert themselves. The shutdowns instigated by Haftar's allies in April 2022 led to the halving of Libya's oil production at a time of increased global demand due to the war in Ukraine.

Furthermore, the brittle security situation poses a significant threat to all economic sectors, particularly the oil and gas industry. After years of conflict, key energy infrastructure requires considerable investment. Other critical infrastructure including the Man-Made River, which supplies most of the population with potable water, is also in a state of urgent disrepair, prompting UN agencies to warn of the risk of a complete collapse of water supplies.

The oil and gas sector has been shaken by feuding between NOC chairman Mustafa Sanalla and

the GNU's Oil Minister Mohammed Aoun. The debacle has unsettled international oil companies with a long-standing presence in Libya, given that their working relationship with Sanalla has generally been smooth.

Lack of progress in unifying military forces and disarming militias means security volatility persists despite an ongoing ceasefire agreed in October 2020

The central bank, divided since 2014 as a result of the wider national power struggle, has taken steps to reunify, but tensions remain, particularly regarding the role of Sadiq al-Kabir, the long-serving governor. Disputes over central bank management continue to hamper the implementation of wider economic reforms.

Libya's multiple economic challenges have been further aggravated by Covid-19. The country's healthcare system, already close to collapse before the pandemic, has struggled to deal with coronavirus cases and needs massive investment.

Popular Discontent

Libya has experienced three national elections since Muammar Gaddafi's ousting in 2011. In 2012, its first post-Gaddafi elections for a parliamentary body known as the General National Congress (GNC) saw a high turnout. This, however, plummeted in the ballot to elect a constitutional drafting committee in 2014. Turnout fell further in parliamentary elections later that year – little over 600,000 people cast their vote – contributing to a legitimacy crisis for the new House of Representatives, a highly dysfunctional body which remains in place today. Concerns that Libyans had become disillusioned with democratic politics were assuaged in late 2021 when it emerged that 2.4 million out of 2.8 million registered voters – in a population of just over 6.5 million – had collected their voting cards, signalling their intention to participate in the planned December ballot.

The indefinite postponement of those elections disappointed many, but for now, the GNU's populist approach – among other initiatives, it established a grant for young people struggling to afford marriage – has helped keep a lid on such frustrations. Nonetheless, nationwide anti-corruption rallies in August 2020 serve as a reminder that popular discontent can easily boil over. The grievances that drove those demonstrations remain largely unaddressed and the GNU or whatever government might succeed it may be faced with similar protests if it fails to improve living conditions. Despite the upswing in fiscal balances in late 2021, many households still struggle with food insecurity, poverty and poor public service delivery. Given Libya relies on Ukraine for more than 40 per cent of its wheat stocks, the fallout from the ongoing war has already driven up prices and could lead to more serious food insecurity and possible social unrest.

Haftar as Spoiler

Supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Russia and Egypt, Haftar has been accused since 2014 of seeking to impose himself as military ruler. Suspicions of Haftar's ambitions have been a key driver in the civil conflict that began that year, as have long-standing grievances – which he has exploited – over how the country's oil wealth is disbursed. His unsuccessful attempt to seize Tripoli from the internationally recognized government in April 2019 torpedoed peace efforts and triggered more than a year of fighting, drawing in foreign fighters, including Russian mercenaries, on Haftar's side. Turkish intervention in support of the Tripoli government helped rout Haftar's offensive and also created a new balance of power, with

The brittle security situation poses a significant threat to all economic sectors, particularly the oil and gas industry. After years of conflict, key energy infrastructure requires considerable investment

Turkish forces still present in western Libya. Since March 2022, Haftar has pushed for the GNU to be replaced with its rival, the GNS (the composition of which is heavily tilted in Haftar's favour). His reverting to tactics, including oil blockades, to force the political situation in his favour is a concern given his long record of undermining efforts to forge a political solution to Libya's crisis.

Given Libya relies on Ukraine for more than 40% of its wheat stocks, the fallout from the ongoing war has already driven up prices and could lead to more serious food insecurity and possible social unrest

Challenges Ahead

Since the derailing of its original roadmap at the end of 2021, the UN has focused its efforts on building consensus to hold elections without delay. As a result, members of the House of Representatives and the High State Council – a consultative body established under a previous UN initiative – have formed a committee to agree on a constitutional basis that would lead to elections in 2022, though many believe this timeframe is unlikely. Disagreements include whether presidential elections – a first in mod-

ern Libyan history – should be held. Some believe a presidential system would help streamline decision-making, others argue it could pull the country back into authoritarianism and insist parliamentary elections should be prioritized. The so-called “Greens” – supporters of the former regime who are now more confident than they have been since its collapse in 2011 – are expected to play a key role in any future ballot, with figures including Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam already lining up as candidates.

In the meantime, the stand-off between the Government of National Unity – which continues to insist that it will only transfer power to an elected government – and its rival, the GNS, could deal a serious blow to the prospect of elections anytime soon. Furthermore, the underlying military-political and economic fractures that have driven the civil conflict since 2014 remain capable of undermining any political process, as do competing external actors allied with domestic factions. Libya may have experienced a fragile peace since October 2020, but it remains dangerously divided and a return to violence cannot be ruled out.

The underlying military-political and economic fractures remain capable of undermining any political process, as do competing external actors allied with domestic factions

Mauritania: Domestic Politics and Regional Tensions (Maghreb / Sahel)

Francisco Freire

Faculty of Social and Human Sciences
Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Moustapha Taleb Heidi

Independent researcher, Nouakchott

Domestic Politics

After the period of turmoil linked to the 2019 presidential transition, the years 2020 and 2021 were marked by relative tranquility in Mauritania, consecrated by the soft power strategy implemented by the presidency of Mohamed Ould Ghazouani. This position must, however, be considered with caution, if we consider the judicial proceedings advanced against the country's previous presidency, and the implementation of a new legal framework easily read as limiting – or at least aimed at substantially increasing control – of public opinion and individual liberties.

Issues related to the fight against poverty should also be highlighted as elements on the national panorama. The period marked by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic outbreak – which was not particularly dramatic in terms of health, with only about a thousand officially recognized deaths – had very significant economic effects in the country, with a recognized slowdown of 4% in the national growth rate. In addition, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic must also be related to the difficulties experienced by many vulnerable families, in a country where about 30% of the population still lives below the poverty line (ANSADE, 2021).

At the level of domestic politics, it is important to highlight the arrest in June 2021 of Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, Mauritania's President between 2009 and 2019, on corruption charges (linked with fisheries, public infrastructure and hydrocarbon contracts), after a par-

liamentary commission assessed his conduct while in office. This must be signaled as a major event, as it questioned, probably for the first time in the country, the long-acknowledged relationship between corruption and central political power. Some of Aziz's close associates, from political and business circles, have also been charged, and former President Aziz is currently under house arrest, waiting for trial procedures to start (for an overview of his period in office, see Ould Mohamed Baba Moustapha, 2022).

This revolutionary process – if we consider local political practices – can also be seen as a perilous and symbolic exercise of the sort of leadership implemented by Ould Ghazouani. Will the latter assure the independence of the judiciary bodies watching over public interest, or will he manipulate a largely subservient political class to his wishes? We are still at the early stages of his tenure in office, and an effective assessment of his presidency cannot be made at this point.

The Mauritanian political landscape was also marked during this period by the prevalence of the national identity question, which can in fact be recognized since the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (1960), linked to the cohesion of a multi-ethnic country, although clearly led (demographically and politically) by Hassaniya-speaking groups.

Legal Changes to Civil Liberties

In November 2021 the Mauritanian Parliament approved a law concerning the “criminalization of attacks on the authority of the State” (*Loi portant protection des symboles nationaux et incrimination des atteints à l'autorité de l'État et à l'honneur du citoyen*). A legislative effort focused, once again, on the issue of guaranteeing national unity, through which

an attempt will be made to control the production of fake news and other expressions that threaten state institutions (with applicable penalties of between two and four years of effective imprisonment).

Recent cases of convictions for blasphemy, in fact, raise questions regarding the real ambitions of this new legal framework

Although clearly mentioning democratic values and the State's affiliation with the preservation of human rights, this legal text was strongly questioned as a mechanism that in practice will serve to monitor published content (both in physical format and on digital platforms / social networks) and, in this way, limit freedom of expression. In the legal text, we read that offences against the "sacred principles of Islam," national unity, territorial integrity, the President of the Republic, the flag or the national anthem, will now be punished as hate crimes. This legal article also stipulates that hate speech and incitement to hatred among different segments of the population will henceforth be punished with sentences of between two and five years in prison (up to ten years in prison for repeat offenders).

Recent cases of convictions for blasphemy (Freire, 2021), or the mention of the President of the Republic as a possible target of verbal abuse, in fact, raise questions regarding the real ambitions of this new legal framework, which could easily result in discretionary limitations on freedom of expression, which can lead to practically arbitrary accusations by the state leadership of contesting actors or movements. These elements also seem to point to a – more conservative – refocusing on the part of the State and the ethical and legal frameworks that support it. Both the RFD (*Rassemblement des Forces Démocratiques*), recognized as the traditional democratic opposition, as well as the Islamist Tawassoul party, have condemned this law, anticipating that it could lead to severe limitations of civil liberties.

A series of official meetings between President Ghazouani and the leader of the abolitionist movement Biram Dah Abeid, the outspoken protagonist of

the abolitionist movement in Mauritania, have also taken place. This particular rapprochement is quite significant, marking a state-sponsored effort to deal with the Haratin issue (associated with populations descended from slaves and demographically a very significant segment of the Mauritanian population). These talks amount to an official recognition of the importance of this movement and its incorporation in the traditional political arenas. Its leader (who has been imprisoned in the past for expressing his ideas) has now been rehabilitated as a valid political interlocutor, marking what could be viewed as a reconciliation between the regime and some branches of the so-called radical opposition. This sign of political openness could also indicate the growing maturity of Mauritania's political system. Despite this, it is also worth mentioning the emergence of different splinter movements, which have recently left Biram's IRA (*Initiative pour la Résurgence du Mouvement Abolitionniste*), accusing its leader of spurious connections with the state apparatus.

Regional Tensions

In the regional context, we would like to highlight two aspects: Mauritania's involvement in the G5 Sahel, and the negotiation of the country's new role in the strategic rearrangement to be developed after the Spanish (and the United States) endorsement of the Moroccan plan for Western Sahara.

Mauritania remains very active within the framework of the G5 Sahel, which is probably the most solid and dynamic, foreign policy engagement of the country. While acting as host for this organization's executive committee, Nouakchott has engaged in projects that go well beyond a mere focus on defence and anti-terrorist activities. Globally considered as development and infrastructure programmes, the financing managed through the G5 Sahel has served as a platform to promote reforms in the field of electricity and telecommunications networks, education, urbanism and territorial planning (for an overview of the major trends currently involving the Sahel, see Villalón and Bodian, 2021). The current presidency of Mauritania is in a privileged position for the management of this dossier, since the current President Ghazouani was, during his military career, a very active element in the international coalitions implemented in the region, be-

ing President in office of the G5 Sahel between February 2020 and February 2021.

Regarding Mauritania's northern frontiers, it is crucial to mention the position taken by the socialist government of the Kingdom of Spain in March 2022, when it formally declared its support for the Moroccan position in the resolution of the Western Sahara conflict. This profound change in the region's geopolitical landscape aligns with a recent trend, with the endorsement of the United States, different countries of the Persian Gulf and Israel of the Moroccan plan of extended autonomy for Western Sahara. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania has maintained a "neutral" role since the 1980s in relation to Western Sahara, and regarding this recent development, it hasn't yet made any official comment. Will the Mauritanian position on Western Sahara evolve according to the new diplomatic arrangement? It is worth noting the rapprochement between Mauritania and Spain, expressed by the visit of President Ghazouani to Madrid in March 2022, the month that saw the Spanish political shift on the Western Sahara conflict.

Nouakchott is currently being charmed by Morocco and Algeria as a potential ally

Despite its official silence on this sensitive topic, Nouakchott is currently being charmed by Morocco and Algeria as a potential ally. Formal political encounters between Rabat and Nouakchott have already taken place, and Algiers also seems committed to attaining Nouakchott's support, by offering significant economic aid to Mauritania (notably regarding the energy sector and the development of infrastructure that might facilitate the transit of cargo and people from southwestern Algeria to northern Mauritania). Mauritania's "neutrality" over the question of the Western Sahara – unsubstantiated in any legal document – is not easily understood by the actors involved, thus relegating Mauritania's relations with the two regional powers (Morocco and Algeria) to a fragile balance that is permanently renegotiated with each new diplomatic development, or military escalation. Besides its position over the Western Sahara conflict,

deeper transregional significance is also attributed to Mauritania by its northern neighbours, regarding political, economic and even religious developments (with Morocco and Algeria having shown interest in the West African Sufi orders that often have direct links with the Mauritanian Islamic landscape).

On a global level, it is also worth mentioning the signing, during 2021, of two significant memorandums of understanding endorsing industrial projects meant to produce green hydrogen in Mauritania. Project Aman and project Nour (signed with CWP Global and with Chariot), if implemented, might bring significant changes to Mauritania, with profound impacts on the country's economy. The importance of projects of this sort should mitigate the country's dependency on livestock production (small ruminants, cattle and camels), helping to free the country's economy from increasingly significant contingent aspects, which we can associate with global climate change, and which in the last two years have been translated into Mauritania's most severe periods of drought in the last fifty years.

Bibliography

- AGENCE NATIONALE DE LA STATISTIQUE ET DE L'ANALYSE DEMOGRAPHIQUE ET ECONOMIQUE (ANSADE). *Synthèse des résultats de l'enquête permanente sur les conditions de vie en Mauritanie 2019-2020*. Nouakchott, September 2021. <https://ansade.mr/fr/>
- FREIRE, Francisco. "Islam, blasphemy and realpolitik in Mauritania: the Mkhaitir affair." in *Africa Today* 68 (2): 57-80, Winter 2021.
- OULD MOHAMED BABA MOUSTAPHA, Elemine. "The Flexible Use of Democracy in an Islamic Republic: The Case of the Mauritanian President Abdel Aziz (2009-2019)." in FREIRE, Francisco (ed.) *State, Society and Islam in the Western Regions of the Sahara: Regional Interactions and Social Change*, London: Bloomsbury / IB Tauris (Forthcoming, August 2022).
- VILLALÓN, Leonardo A. and BODIAN, Mamadou. "Education, Citizenship, and National Identity in the Sahel." *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, VILLALÓN, Leonardo A. (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 683-699, 2021.

Egypt: Economic Ruin Threatens Stability

Hafsa Halawa

Non-Resident Scholar

Middle East Institute (MEI), Washington DC

Over the nine years of President Sisi's rule, Egypt has experienced significant challenges to its security and stability. Periods of security breaches along its western border have now given way to a prolonged engagement in Libya's civil turbulence, while a longstanding insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula continues. Elsewhere, the country has contended with significant challenges in its battle for water security, as relations with Sudan and Ethiopia over the decade-long dispute surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) remain frayed, with no negotiated solution in sight. Domestically, the political situation has secured Sisi's grip on power, through a protracted and ruthless crackdown on political opposition, dissidents and rights activists, while the economy has fluctuated, periodically throwing up new challenges for the regime to contend with. In large part, these have been responded to through mass external borrowing and an effective takeover of the economy by the military apparatus.

While Egypt has endured a relatively calm, albeit still deadly experience with the Covid-19 pandemic, 2022 arguably poses the greatest threats the country has faced in the last decade, as the war in Ukraine brings the country to the brink of economic collapse. Without the immediate and unconditional support and bailout promises from Gulf nations, which were forthcoming in 2013 at a similar – if not more manageable – inflection point, President Sisi faces a watershed moment in his leadership.

Egypt's Domestic Woes

The country has had a multitude of challenges to contend with over the last decade. Some of the most en-

during ones, however – namely economic – have, significantly, been of its own making, as the regime has responded poorly to attempts of economic and social reform, amid a drive to effectively militarize the State. Egypt is no stranger to concurrent crises, and its various forms of leadership have spent the last decade battling social, political and economic reform. Under President Sisi, that has materialized into a heavy crackdown on civic activism, political opposition and attempts to subdue parts of the security apparatus to secure and hold onto power. Meanwhile, the economic burdens have never been availed of, and poor policy and mass external borrowing have plunged the country into debt on a level it has never experienced before. The Ukraine war has had spillover effects all over the world, and the ripple effects of Russia's invasion are yet to be fully felt. Yet, Egypt stands to be one of the most affected in the Middle East region. Not just because of its own dependence on wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine, which combined make up over 60 percent of Egypt's annual wheat supply, but also looming shortages of fertilizer, steel, and the inevitable global downturn (notably the effects on the US economy and strain on the US dollar) are already causing panic in Cairo.

Driven by a need to immediately and severely change course on economic policy, President Sisi is enacting a series of dramatic political and economic decisions as he attempts to stem the effects of the economic shocks, and the compounding effects of Covid-19 and the Ukraine war on its sustainability. Thus far, in 2022, the President has enacted a devaluation of the artificially-valued currency, with a larger devaluation still on the cards. Interest rates have been raised as inflation soars, and negotiations have entered a critical phase with the IMF and other international lenders for their support. Key to these negotiations is the condition that Egypt's military and state

apparatus begin a divestment programme for the country's economy.

While there is little record of exactly how much of the economy is controlled or managed by the military, combined, the state and military incursion upon the private sector has contributed to a years-long "crowding-out" of investors and private companies, and has contributed to a sustained lack of foreign direct investment. And while many are quietly and cautiously optimistic that a serious attempt to privatize state assets and companies, and divest parts of the military is underway, there are significant political calculations and costs that come from Sisi's need to change economic course.

President Sisi did not come to power on the back of a significant military constituency. He was elevated to the role by virtue of significant popular support and a "cult of personality" that demanded he become President. Despite requiring – and depending – on the voice of the people to remove the former Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Morsi (now deceased), Sisi spent little time placating himself to the people. Almost instantly, his guise turned towards building constituency and securing his position among the military and the various other branches of the security apparatus.

A large trade-off has seen the National Security apparatus effectively left to run riot. Over the course of nine years, which have seen security forces implement their own interpretation of a civil and social crackdown, thousand of citizens have become enshared in the system

In practice, this course of action has resulted in significant internal changes in the military and security leadership and consecutive attempts to consolidate power at the very top to prevent any kind of repeat performance of the events of 2011, which brought down the 30-year rule of President Hossi Mubarak. Key to the overthrow of the former President, in the eyes of this current leadership, was the fiefdoms of power controlled by different arms of the security apparatus,

and notably the immense power yielded by General Intelligence and the significant size of the police force. As Sisi has worked to bring military power back to the fore, he has experienced both success and failure at consolidating power within the police and wider security network. A large trade-off has seen the National Security apparatus ("Amn El Dawla") effectively left to run riot. Over the course of nine years, which have seen security forces implement their own interpretation of a civil and social crackdown, thousands of citizens have become ensnared in the system, held for years in pre-trial detention, or tried in emergency courts that have no right of recourse or appeal upon sentence. Thousands of largely young men and women languish in prison, subjected to poor prison conditions, while civil society has been decimated. Thousands of local NGOs have been forced to shut down, unable to source funds, while those who continue to operate, largely do so on an ad-hoc basis. They rely on volunteers, if they can no longer hire staff, or threats of closure and police action if they are active in the human rights space.

Meanwhile the President's policies and influence over a pliant and security-led parliament have seen political parties targeted, shut down or forced into submission. Candidates are almost all hand-picked and vetted by intelligence services to ensure their enduring loyalty. Politics has effectively been diminished to the point of being irrelevant in the country, with the President choosing securitizing institutions over forming a party himself, and dominating the political system through its mechanisms. The President's constituency among the military has also led to a purge of dissident generals. Amid the institution's mass buying off through salary hikes, hundreds of new companies have taken over core local manufacturing such as pharmaceuticals and cement, as well as insert themselves into other sectors like fisheries. In addition, the President has spent billions on upgrading the military and security apparatus through massive billion-dollar arms deals with a range of countries including the US, France, United Kingdom, Germany and Italy.

And as President Sisi builds his constituency, he has kept the population quiet and largely unassuming through a mass infrastructure drive (owned and operated by the military), which has seen new bridges and roads change the landscape of its most well-known urban centres, such as Cairo and Alexandria, while 20 new mega projects have seen the creation

of new cities and a changing desert, as five-lane highways connecting the country take hold. Even as daily life gets harder and more expensive, many citizens point to the very visible changes and developments they see as a justification for the economic hardship they are enduring.

It is the worst time for the President to face internal threats and challenges, further exacerbated by an expected global recession and more suffering, as the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine is still being calculated

But the panic in Cairo that has set in now is reflective of an economic and social challenge so great that there is real fear of how to tackle it and what kind of response the regime will be met with. Protests have remained sporadic, light in number and easily extinguishable throughout Sisi's tenure, but by no means are they absent. And while the private sector is somewhat alleviated of the challenges they have faced from military incursions into the economy through plans to divest and privatize companies, there is a looming question mark surrounding Sisi's constituency within the military and how he can diversify support enough to prevent threats to his leadership or his regime. These domestic challenges come at a time when climate change threatens Egypt's driving force – agriculture – further pressured by the continued construction and filling of the GERD in Ethiopia, with no negotiated agreement between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan. Border security is once again top of the agenda after weeks of serious security breaches in North Sinai, as the insurgency gathers new steam, and Libya sits on the precipice of a new round of civil conflict, despite Egypt's attempts to deescalate and prevent such a situation.

It is, therefore, arguably the worst time for the President to face internal threats and challenges, further exacerbated by an expected global recession and more suffering, as the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine is still being calculated. It is, therefore, a clear signal of just how pressured the regime is feel-

ing that, of late, there has been a warming to political opposition, through the announcement of a new "national dialogue" and the resurrection of the "Presidential Amnesty Committee" to review the cases of political detainees, and a privatization drive has begun, with a string of announcements of assets and companies of which a percentage of ownership will be made available for private purchase. The country is therefore being told, through this cascade of new decisions and political U-turns from the President – some that have formed the bedrock of his leadership style and hold on power – that there is real panic rippling through the presidential palace, and continued paranoia over the size and power of threats against the current leadership from internal dynamics and developments.

Conclusion

The recent decision comes as Egypt is preparing to host the UN Climate Summit (COP27) in November in Sharm el Sheikh and has enjoyed a prolonged period of political and security-related stability, if not a complete economic revival. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing shutdowns, the country was enjoying the return of tourists to levels not seen since 2010 and the highest recorded remittances in its history, not to mention skyrocketing consumer purchasing power, albeit largely concentrated among a small but wealthy elite.

Today, the country is contending with the most powerful of economic shocks, as the world concurrently absorbs similar challenges, which only add to exacerbating Egypt's domestic situation. While recent decisions regarding a possible relaxation of the political and civic crackdown have sparked rumours of a course correction under President Sisi, it is far likelier to be an attempt to expand the number of actors and players that are bought into the regime, as it continues its trend of absorbing dissenting voices. Whether it be through notable prisoner releases or relaxing some of the legislation that drives the crackdown through National Dialogue, President Sisi is not only looking to stem the blow of the economic shocks to come, but is also looking further ahead, arguably ensuring this moment cannot be used to materially challenge his authority, with a presidential election looming on the horizon in 2024.

Jordan Amid Diverse Challenges and Comprehensive Counter Strategies

Dr. Amer Al Sabaileh¹

Non-Resident Fellow for Middle East and North Africa
Stimson Center

Jordan has been countering various challenges in recent years. Since the war on Iraq in 2003, Jordan's security challenges have emerged due to an increase in terrorism and instability in Iraq. Then, in 2011, the Arab Spring took Jordan to a new phase of instability with the spread of internal demonstrations calling for domestic changes. In addition, the Syrian crisis and the waves of refugees have generated new challenges for Jordan on socioeconomic, security and military levels. A decade later and Jordan is still witnessing increasingly diverse and complex challenges, especially in 2021, with these challenges evolving within Jordan itself.

Regional Challenges

The strategic location of Jordan represents one of the country's most important leverages. In recent years, Jordan has continued to suffer from a non-active status with its neighbours: Syria, Iraq, Israel and Saudi Arabia. Recently, Jordan has made attempts towards re-engagement with these countries.

Syria

After a decade of turmoil in Syria, there was no clear international or regional attempt to deal with the on-

going crisis there. Jordan started to adopt a new approach leading to a noticeable acceleration in attempts on both sides to restore relations.

The promising gas pipeline project was the platform for re-engagement, given it warranted security and political engagement. This led to high level visits from Syrian officials to Jordan, which included the Syrian Minister of Defence, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Transportation. The new channels of communication between the two countries are a prerequisite for the progress of the project. Greater political engagement is needed to secure stability in Syria.

Israel

Although Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994, relations at the people's level did not prosper. And in recent years, Jordanian-Israeli relations on the political and diplomatic levels have deteriorated. However, with the departure of Netanyahu, Jordan adopted a new approach of engagement with Israel, especially with the Israeli Minister of Defence Gantz who often appeared in public meetings in Jordan.

Today, avoiding any form of havoc, destabilization and escalation of violence in the West Bank is one of Jordan's main challenges. Jordan's top priority is to prevent the deterioration of the situation in the West Bank and its ramifications for Jordan. This well explains Jordan's focus on its relationship with the Israeli Minister of Defence Benny Gantz. Security-related officials are best positioned to perceive the critical, if not dangerous, repercussions of increasing tensions in the West Bank.

¹ Amer Al Sabaileh is a Jordanian university professor and geopolitical expert. He is a leading columnist in national, regional, and international media, offers consultancies to think tanks and speaks at international conferences on Middle East politics and developments. Al Sabaileh received his PhD from the University of Pisa, Italy in 2006 in intercultural conflict management, and Master's degree from the University of Rome III in Education for Peace, Conflict Management, International Cooperation, Human Rights and Politics of the European Union. Al Sabaileh is a recognized expert on terrorism, de-radicalization and security studies.

The challenges for Jordan are serious, given the difficulties involved in containing the security situation. Hence, there needs to be an open channel of dialogue with all concerned both in Israel and Palestine. Limiting the dialogue to certain figures will limit Jordan's role and capacity to influence this tense situation.

Iraq and "The New Levant"

Since the arrival of Mustafa Kadimi as Iraq's Prime Minister, Jordan's political approach towards Iraq has become more proactive. This development triggered the launching of the project that connects Egypt to Iraq through Jordan, thus giving birth to a new triangle alliance known as "The New Levant." The ambitious Jordan-Egypt-Iraq trio pact is an appealing project with many advantages for the three partners involved. Security cooperation is the cornerstone of such an alliance, considering the high number of challenges in this area, which if unresolved could undermine the efficacy of such a collaboration. While building solid political relations with Egypt does not seem to be difficult for Jordan, the real challenge is to successfully develop fruitful relations with today's Iraq. Recognizing and acknowledging the positive outcomes of this cooperation by both parties, Iraq and Jordan, is fundamental for a mutual willingness to work together.

For Jordan, it is vital to adopt a strategic approach towards engaging with its neighbours based on mutual interests. This is specifically crucial for Jordan's relationship with Iraq and Egypt, and at a later stage with Syria. Therefore, problems pertinent to Jordanian-Iraqi relations need to be tackled courageously. Jordan is a country where Saddam Hussein's regime still enjoys wide popularity. In addition, there is wide anti-Shiite sentiment among the people of Jordan. All these factors hinder Jordanian-Iraqi bilateral relations moving ahead towards achieving the strategic objectives of "The New Levant."

Saudi Arabia

Since the arrival of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, popularly known as MBS, Jordanian-Saudi relations have had little in the way of significant aspects. In recent years, Jordanian-Saudi relations have been somewhat restrained. This might be due to the Saudi list of priorities which emphasize

domestic issues, primarily the ambitious plan of a futuristic city in Tabuk province known as "NEOM."

Jordan's top priority is to prevent the deterioration of the situation in the West Bank and its ramifications for Jordan

A key development in 2021 deteriorated relations between the two countries. Saudi Arabia was implicitly accused of being involved in the so-called "Schism plot" case in Jordan, in which Bassem Awadallah, former Chief of the Hashemite Royal Court and advisor to MBS, was accused of preparing a coup in Jordan in coordination with Prince Hamzah, half brother of King Abdullah II. The Saudi government disclaimed any involvement and responded with a letter of support for King Abdullah II once the plot was publicized.

Jordan's Domestic Challenges

Family Rift: "Prince Hamzah Case"

Last year, Jordan was in the spotlight of international media due to an extraordinary incident. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan witnessed intra royal family conflict triggered by an explicit accusation made against Prince Hamzah, half-brother of the King and former Crown Prince of Jordan during 1999-2004, that he was part of a plot targeting King Abdullah II. In April 2021, Prince Hamzah sent a video to the BBC in which he openly and fiercely criticized the Jordanian system, accusing it of inefficiency, bad governance, lack of freedom of expression, repression and, above all, corruption.

This is the first time in Jordan's history that the Jordanian people have openly witnessed such a conflict within the Hashemite family. While the problem was perceived as being resolved within the family. In April 2022, Prince Hamzah echoed his voice anew through his personal Twitter account, where he posted a letter stating that he was abandoning his title as a prince and re-voicing criticism of the system and its policies.

This incident further complicated the already complex situation within the Royal Family specifically concerning King Abdullah II and his direct family, through the so-called Pandora leaks, leading the system towards adopting reforms.

Attempts at Political Reforms

In June 2021, King Abdullah sent a letter to former Prime Minister Samir Rifai, entrusting him with chairing a Royal Committee to modernize the political system.

The committee was entrusted with introducing new election and political party laws, considering any necessary constitutional amendments relevant to the two laws and the mechanisms of parliamentary work, in addition to providing recommendations on developing the legislations regulating local administration, expanding participation in decision-making, and creating a political and legislative environment conducive to the active engagement of youth and women in public life.

Governments and the political system in Jordan at large is suffering from a lack of trust in their policies and performance amid the negative atmosphere that dominates the relations between the citizens and the political establishment

However these attempts at political reform still lack credibility among the people, a sentiment very apparent in relations today between the citizens and the political establishments worldwide. It is a big and demanding challenge for a system to gain positive popular responses to their policies, and restore hope and confidence in the system.

Governments and the political system in Jordan at large is suffering from a lack of trust in their policies and performance amid the negative atmosphere that dominates the relations between the citizens and the political establishment. So, it is a very demanding and tough assignment to rebuild trust-based relations and achieve concrete steps towards reform.

It is, therefore, paramount to focus on the real goal of these initiatives, which is political and social inclusion; and which cannot be achieved without guaranteeing human rights, liberties and fostering hope for a decent life for all.

For the process of reforms to succeed, concrete steps must be adopted which require political will and determination, in addition to a continuous follow-up of the implementation process amid serious accountability and justice in tackling public corruption.

Constitutional Amendment/National Security Council

Apart from the above-mentioned committee, other amendments were approved by the Parliament that gave the King “*Carte Blanche*” to make significant appointments through royal decrees without consulting the Council of Ministers, thus making de facto practices constitutional. Even prior to these amendments, the King could appoint and dismiss the Chief of Justice, the head of the Sharia Judicial Council known as the Grand Mufti, the Chief of the Royal Court, the Minister of the Court, and the King’s advisors.

Another amendment that provoked widespread criticism due to the powers it grants is the formation of the National Security Council, to be headed by the King, which deals with all internal and external affairs of the Kingdom.

Security Challenges

Terrorism

With regard to security challenges, Jordan is facing two major risks. The continuous presence of the terrorist groups in Syria and in Iraq, which has a major impact on the level of radicalism and terrorism inside Jordan, and the return of terrorist operations by Daesh (ISIS) in Syria and in Iraq starting in January 2021, when an attack was launched on a prison housing mercenaries in Syria and on a military base in Iraq.

Drug Smuggling

Jordan’s most challenging issue today remains the war on drug smuggling across its borders. Continuous clashes on its borders have resulted in Jordani-

an victims and casualties. In January 2022, a Jordanian army officer was killed during a clash with drug smugglers trying to enter Jordanian territory.

Jordan's efforts to counter drug smuggling is one of a series of major regional challenges with a direct impact on Jordan's domestic scene. Advanced tactics, networks and operations, therefore, are required to upgrade Jordan's professionalism in this fight. For drug smugglers, Jordan could easily develop from being a mere transit point towards becoming a solid market, resulting in much higher risks and further complicating the problem.

Recommendations

Each country's current preoccupation with its domestic challenges might push them in the coming period to reconsider their priorities, focus more internally and consider projects of immediate, short-term economic impact. However, working towards a project with long-term advantages is likely to gain momentum. So, it is important to start building solid bases for such a future project, while remaining aware of the surrounding major, yet surmountable, challenges.

Concrete examples of transnational cooperation, as underlined during public briefings, include Jordan's role in developing regional railways, energy projects and ports. Jordan can also reactivate the Port of Aqaba to support Saudi Arabia's plans to build NEOM, a cross-border city in the Tabuk province that would combine smart city technologies and tourism. Furthermore, Jordan could also provide aid to its neighbours to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. This would further secure continued EU interest in and financial support for Jordan, as underlined by a Jordanian speaker.

This said, there can be no positive atmosphere without guaranteeing human rights and liberties, as well as generating hope for a decent life for people. It is essential to create a positive perception among the people and dispel the feelings of marginalization and exclusion that many are suffering from today.

For any reform process to be successful, it requires political will and determination, continuous follow-up of implementation that should include the public punishment of public corruption and the impeachment of public officials who obstruct the process of reform and change. One of the most important issues is to respect and guarantee civil liberties, freedom of speech and expression, as well as ensure the freedom of political practices by criminalizing efforts to distort the law.

Integrating this new concept of national strategy should be part of the State's strategic vision. Its role is to accurately diagnose the underlying issues and deliver effective and efficient solutions. It does not necessarily require a new organ in the state body or a new institution. It can be achieved through a small unit that coordinates the work among the state institutions and enlightens others to think differently.

A reform process requires political will and determination, and continuous follow-up of implementation, which should include the public punishment of public corruption and the impeachment of public officials who obstruct the process of reform and change

Cross border criminality is currently one of the greatest challenges for the security apparatus, especially as these criminal groups increasingly interact with and facilitate terrorist groups. But it is also important to address the underlying factors leading to criminality through maintaining social stability. These groups are nurtured within society and recruit the marginalized. Therefore, it is important to remember that the more people are marginalized through economic hardship, the more they will resort to crime and terrorism.

Lebanon's Catastrophic Warlord Regime and the Tragedy of a Complicit State

Carmen Geha, PhD

Maria Zambrano Fellow and Senior Researcher
Inter-disciplinary Research Group on Migration (GRITIM)
Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona

I explain to the editor of this Yearbook that I am suffering from writer's block and keep postponing the deadline. In reality it's not writer's block at all, I am an expert on Lebanon and a survivor of Lebanon's violence. The truth is I am suffering from PTSD and, having lived through the traumas of the last three years, I am at a loss for words. The truth is, I am not blocked at all, I am burned out and exhausted from having to relive the events of the last three years, which are the manifestation of 30 years of violence, corruption and incompetence. It's July, and, in a few days, it will be two years since the Beirut explosion or the Beirut blast as it has been referred to as. This mass crime was caused by the explosion of around 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate stored at the Beirut port, immediately killing 210 people, wounding 6,000 and tearing down 300,000 homes and local businesses. In a nutshell for readers not familiar with Lebanon; nobody has been arrested and the investigation has repeatedly stalled. A Lebanese judge indicted two former politicians who have since successfully run for and won parliamentary seats, thereby immediately securing parliamentary immunity, meaning no judge can now drag them to court.

I am experiencing the form of burnout that comes with losing everything dear to you. I am luckier than others, I did not die in the explosion nor at the door to a hospital that would not let me in; and I am a high-skilled migrant who recently landed a new job and a prestigious fellowship in Spain. I am privileged and so I have decided to try to get over my

state of burnout and provide some analysis to an audience that is interested not only in understanding Lebanon but also in joining our call for justice and accountability. In doing so, I frame this analysis in a two-fold explanation of what happened: 30 years of warlord rule and a state that is complicit. These two titles will also help overcome two salient myths and inaccuracies in describing Lebanon; that the people are resilient and the State is weak. In reality, Lebanon's politicians are resilient and the State is a major accomplice to their crimes. This essay is a response to the simple question of what happened to Lebanon and what some of the prospects for its future are. To do this, I provide a short historical review and an empirical framework to help those interested move away from myths and mistaken depictions, to point them in the right direction when it comes to attributing responsibility and demanding accountability.

The Warlords Are Resilient, the People Are Depressed and Exhausted

In development and humanitarian circles – and in some literature circles too – this idea of people in Lebanon having resilience floated around for a long time after the civil war had ended. In fact, numerous international development and donor programmes sought to build capacity for communities' resilience. The logic here was that people could together build collective strength for more cohesive societies and stable localities. This sounds quite idiotic, since, while pointless funding and efforts went into increasing people's resilience, it was in fact the warlords who were gaining resilience. They co-opted international funding, exploited local NGOs and built their privatization empires borrowing money

from depositors in local banks. Expecting people to be resilient in the face of trauma, violence and mass corruption is unethical. Real efforts must be geared towards bringing the warlords to justice.

The 2019 October Revolution was a culminating moment for mass anti-regime protests and a sort of last straw for people's political agency. Activists since the end of the civil war have attempted to construct a national opposition to warlord-rule. This moment came to a head in October 2019. The Lebanese were suffering, burdened with the weight of corruption, and they wanted to see accountability for those who stole their dreams and had oppressed them for so long. Many Lebanese in the diaspora flew back to Beirut just to participate in these protests.

The revolution's political significance lay largely in signalling out all warlords together as being responsible for corruption, inequalities and the lack of basic services. This grouping of different sectarian and party leaders, brought together under the slogan of "all of them" (*kellon ya3neh kellon*), shows us the ways in which the warlords have historically and more recently employed three practices to evade reform and oppress people. This narrative cemented the fact that all warlords and sectarian parties have been responsible for the crimes and corruption of the last three decades. But the framing of all warlords as being responsible also empowered these same warlords to react in three ways, thereby continuing in the same vein as the last 30 years.

First, they acquiesced to the demands of the protestors, acknowledging corruption but shirking any kind of responsibility. They pointed fingers, bickered and accused the protestors of being biased towards their own parties. Second, they used state institutions, including the armed forces, as their own personal arsenal, sending police to shoot live bullets, the army to arrest activists and the courts to summon those people speaking out against the system. Third, they reactivated their networks of clientelism to pay supporters and loyalists not to take to

the streets. These actions, which they have mastered over the years, allowed them to remain resilient not only during the revolution, but to survive the pandemic, and to come out on top following the Beirut explosion. In fact, the warlords won an overwhelming majority in the Parliament at the last May 2022 elections, with regime opposition members taking only 13 seats.

Lebanese politicians are resilient, they have proven this resilience even in the face of the biggest refugee crisis since World War II and despite a war in neighbouring Syria. The Lebanese State allows UNHCR to operate and receives billions in aid without being a signatory to the Geneva convention. Despite some expectations that Syria's conflict would spill over into Lebanon and despite the massive influx of Syrian refugees, the political system remained intact; by which I mean it remained corrupt, sectarian and refused to grant refugees legal status.¹ The Lebanese State does not recognize the 1 million – or so – Syrians as refugees.² Their fate is left to the hands of local associations, some international agencies and UNHCR.

Expecting people to be resilient in the face of trauma, violence and mass corruption is unethical. Real efforts must be geared towards bringing the warlords to justice

The international community plays along with this warlord resilience and hardly recognizes the pain and suffering of refugees stuck in Lebanon. Instead, the United Nations' Secretary General stated that "Lebanon is a key pillar in the international framework for the protection of Syrian refugees, and, without it, that entire system would collapse."³ After the port explosion, the situation of refugees was exacerbated by the mass destruction, financial col-

¹ KNUDSEN, A.. "Acquiescence to assassinations in post-civil war Lebanon?" *Mediterranean Politics*, 15(1), 1-23. 2010.

² "or so" used here since there is a deliberate absence of reliable data, as per politicians' wishes, enabling this issue to be exploited and refugees to be used to incite hatred and fear. This is partly due to UNHCR officially accepting the government's request in 2015 to stop registering newborns. The "or so" is part of the problem.

³ UN news report, 2014

lapse and destruction of health and education services. Instead of calling for responsible state policies, on 22 August, the UN Special Coordinator Mr. Jan Kubis wrote on Twitter: “Many thanks to the High Commissioner 4 @Refugees @FilippoGrandi for visiting #Lebanon, for bringing assistance to its people, when they need it the most, after they have hosted Syrian refugees for so many years. The international community is in debt to Lebanon, needs to repay it now.” His statement clearly shows no regard for discriminate state policies and communicates the belief that the UN should simply pay Lebanon for allowing Syrians to have a home, no matter how abusive that home is.

A Complicit Vulture State, Not a Weak State

Lebanon’s state institutions are tools used by warlords to perpetuate fear and inequalities. The State is in fact a very powerful tool, which can be used to hand out favours to regime loyalists. From narcotics trading, illegal imports at the port, employment opportunities and private bodyguards, the State is a powerful tool for those loyal to the warlords. The State provides protection and immunity to government officials and parliamentarians. In an economy with 80% living under the poverty line, becoming a Member of Parliament can earn you a salary for life and a guarantee that your actions will never be called into question by the courts. The State can refuse a marriage certificate, allow a rapist to marry their victim, stop issuing passports, ensure you have drinking water and arrest you for no more valid a reason than a post on social media. The State is used to ban movies and concerts, limit women’s rights, crack down on dissent and squander money through the Central Bank. The State in Lebanon is not weak; it is a vulture imposing violence and corruption on people who refuse to give in and express blind loyalty.

Lebanon’s disasters and compounded crises were totally preventable. Arabic graffiti written on one Beirut wall in the aftermath of the port blast captures this point: “This need not be how we end.” The recent economic crash, like the explosion, was not inevitable, yet every step of the way politicians persisted in doing the wrong thing and using public resources for their own private gain. The State is not

weak, it is feared, it can take away your children depending on what sect you belong to, it can refuse you entry at the border, it can detain you, since it does not recognize people as legal refugees, and it can hold migrant workers in slave-like conditions because the kafala system is legal. For decades, Lebanon’s politicians have focused squarely on preserving their hold on power, knowing that any serious reform measures would end their rule. So they devised intricate ways to allow them to channel state resources to confer contracts and deals among themselves. If real reform were ever to strengthen the role of the State, they would be out of business.

The State in Lebanon is not weak; it is a vulture imposing violence and corruption on people who refuse to give in and express blind loyalty

The roots of the crisis can be traced back to Lebanon’s post-war formula, which granted military chiefs amnesty for war crimes, ushered in a Syrian occupation for three decades and mainstreamed corruption throughout the State and even society. After the Syrian withdrawal, the political camps that were pro and anti-Syrian actually formed national unity governments blocking not only key political reforms but also attempts to improve women’s rights, urban governance, electricity and waste management, culminating in today’s garbage crisis and leaving Lebanon with the highest rates of cancer in all of western Asia. The Taif agreement led to a swift transition from conflict to relative peace. But post-war Lebanon saw neither peace nor economic development, only large-scale investments whose proceeds went into the pockets of the political elite. The Taif agreement contained plans for administrative decentralization, the eradication of sectarianism, sustainable development and equal rights of citizens. None of these saw the light of day. For the Lebanese people, 2020 unleashed “hell” – a word of President Michel Aoun’s own choosing in September 2020 when he was asked what could happen if no new government could be agreed. “Well, then we would descend into hell,” was his

blunt response. Many months later, no government has emerged because the parties entrusted to form it continue to squabble over ministerial positions. In reality, this squabbling is nothing but a distraction from the more fundamental point, which is that a functional government that would win the support of the people and the international community would need to be properly reformist in nature. The current leaders are incapable of and uninterested in reform because real change would lead to their ousting or jailing. This is the deliberate disaster that the people of Lebanon are experiencing.

Alongside the current pressures from Covid-19, is the collapse of the banking sector, which began in 2019 and locked many people out of their bank accounts, creating great economic hardship, and the port explosion, an incident which, despite the undeniable devastation, has led to no accountability or change.

No Prospects without Accountability

Lebanon cannot and will not move forward without accountability, and if accountability is unachievable within the current political and geo-political climate, then it is safe to say that there are no prospects for Lebanon moving forward. This is the reason that many of us are deliberately choosing not only to move

The current leaders are incapable of and uninterested in reform because real change would lead to their ousting or jailing. This is the deliberate disaster that the people of Lebanon are experiencing

away physically from Beirut but to disentangle ourselves politically. For my generation this is very clear because we grew up during the civil war and came to political consciousness in the ensuing years. We saw the rise and fall of a middle class and a post-war agreement that only brought about smaller wars, assassinations and mass killings that never saw justice. For us, we realize now that, of course, every dollar can save a life and that local institutions like schools and hospitals need all our support and mobilization. But there are no prospects unless a class of warlords who coalesce against our well-being, exploit the State and oppress dissent are held accountable for a series of decisions and actions that have destroyed the country. Lebanon's prospects may be that clear and yet that complicated; to move forward the people are not demanding the downfall of the regime (*iskat*), but rather accountability for a warlord regime and a complicit state (*mohasaba*).

The Israeli Government of Change under Naftali Bennett: Policy Substance, Political Fragility

Mark A. Heller

Principal Research Associate
Institute for National Security Studies,
Tel Aviv University

The March 2021 Israeli election produced a government that blocked an ongoing deterioration in governance, in the civility of political discourse and in the solidity of the democratic system, as well as in Israel's international standing, especially with regard to its relations with Europe and the democratic side of the American body politic. On 13 June 2022, this government celebrated a year in office. Given its fragility, its survival for even that long was a matter of some surprise. Headed by Naftali Bennett, whose own party commanded a mere six votes in the 120-member Knesset, it rested on a razor-thin majority and was beset by internal contradictions of such intensity that it was unable to address, much less effect, significant change in the two most momentous issues on the policy agenda: religion and the State and relations with the Palestinians. True, there were some rather impressive achievements in other, less contentious areas. Nevertheless, the heterogeneous character of the coalition and the defection or threatened defection of several disgruntled Knesset members undermined the government's longer-term prospects and the durability of the changes it did manage to bring about. The question about longer-term prospects was answered less than a week after the government's anniversary, when Bennett and his co-leader, Yair Lapid, fearing a loss of parliamentary confidence, announced their intention to dissolve parliament, necessitating yet another round of elections, probably in the autumn. The results of those elections will determine whether any of the government's accomplishments will outlast its incumbency.

Coalition Building and Domestic Affairs

From 2019 to 2021, Israel held four elections. The first three resulted in hung parliaments, so evenly divided that no one was able to muster the 61 votes needed to secure confirmation of a new government. Consequently, the incumbent government continued in office, on a temporary basis, unable even to pass a new budget. The fourth election produced a similar arithmetic outcome, but with two major differences. The first is that some of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's former right-wing and/or religious coalition partners had become so alienated from him that they broke away and joined with centrist, centre-left and left-wing parties to come close to the majority they needed. The second is that one of the two Arab parties, the Islamist-oriented United Arab List, agreed to join this coalition in order to promote civic matters of most immediate concern to its constituents (though without formal membership in the government), thereby putting the total number of members over the top.

The result was the most radically diverse coalition in Israeli history, one that spanned the entire spectrum of society (apart from the ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties) and some of whose component parts held diametrically opposed views on the most salient issues on the public agenda. But precisely because the government's existence was so precarious and the shared antipathy of its constituent parts to Netanyahu – waiting in the wings in the event that it collapsed – was so strong, coalition leaders avoided addressing these issues head on. Instead, and with the same rationale, they strove to fudge, compromise and agree on other issues, on which differences were not so pronounced.

One consequence of this was a remarkable shift toward civility in the tenor of public discourse. In a

conscious effort to emphasize inclusiveness rather than divisiveness, government leaders adopted a more restrained tone. In particular, they avoided labelling political opponents as enemies or attributing hostility to the State and/or the Jewish people to all those who opposed their preferred course of action. Unlike the previous government, they also refrained from attacking the judiciary, the attorney general, the media, the police and any other elements of the “deep State” ostensibly involved in conspiracies against “the people,” including the prosecution of allegedly trumped-up criminal charges against the Prime Minister. As a result, the public sphere was marked by a less charged atmosphere, and threats against the institutions that provided essential checks and balances in a functioning democracy were alleviated, at least for the time being.

Israel strove to rehabilitate relations with the European Union, which had come under stress during the years of Netanyahu-led governments

Secondly, the government did manage to register some noteworthy policy gains, the most prominent of which was the passing of a budget (for the first time in two years), thus enabling the imposition of conscious prioritization in spending choices (rather than operating on the basis of continuing resolutions from previous years). One product of this was the allocation of more resources to underfunded Arab localities, part of a broader approach to the Arab population, which also included the connection of electricity to unauthorized buildings, a crackdown on crime in Arab towns and a campaign to collect illegal firearms. None of these measures, or any others, could reasonably be expected to bring about complete Jewish-Arab rapprochement, but they did help to reduce tensions and prevent another round of the widespread communal violence that afflicted the country, especially in mixed towns, in mid-2021. Also on the economic front, the government managed to shepherd the country through another round of the Covid-19 epidemic – the so-called Omicron variant – without resorting to a nationwide shutdown.

Regional Integration

Israel’s foreign relations also witnessed a considerable improvement, as the country intensified ties within the region and beyond, bilaterally and in multilateral settings. Within the region, the government built on the foundations of the 2020 Abraham Accords, laid during the term of the previous government, in order to broaden and deepen relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Developments included a variety of defence, economic, agricultural and technological cooperation agreements, including a free trade agreement, as well as exchanges of high-level visits. Similar advances characterized relations with Morocco, visited by the Defence Minister in order to pursue formal security and intelligence ties, and where an Israeli embassy was opened in August 2021; with Jordan, which hosted high-level visits and expanded trade links; and with Egypt, which concluded an agreement in mid-2022 to liquefy Israeli natural gas for re-export to Egypt (part of broader international efforts to reduce European dependence on Russian gas). Even contacts with Saudi Arabia, maintained *sub rosa* for many years, were officially acknowledged in the form of permission for Israeli aircraft to fly through Saudi airspace. There was also a noticeable détente in Turkish-Israeli relations, not because of any innovation in Israeli policy but rather due to a reorientation of Turkey’s regional posture, stemming largely from President Erdogan’s domestic/economic calculations. Accompanying these improvements in a series of bilateral relations was an expansion of multilateral arrangements. Israel participated in joint naval exercises in the Gulf along with the US, the UAE and Bahrain, and in late 2021, it initiated a quadrilateral economic cooperation agreement with the UAE, India and the United States. It also signed a tripartite arrangement involving the import from Jordan of electricity from UAE-financed solar-powered generators and the export to Jordan of water produced in desalination plants powered by natural gas.

Foreign Policy beyond the Region

Beyond the region, Israel strove to rehabilitate relations with the European Union, which had come under stress during the years of Netanyahu-led gov-

ernments. Particular attention was paid to intensified security, energy and economic ties with Greece and Cyprus. No less significant was Israel's ability to dispel some of the tensions in relations with the democratic side of the aisle in US politics, a matter of considerable urgency following the inauguration of Biden after years of unusually partisan intimacy in relations between the Republicans and the Prime Minister of Israel. This was manifested in Israel's determination to avoid stridency in the reservations it expressed about negotiations with Iran on a revived Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and in Biden's announcement of a planned visit to Israel and Saudi Arabia, just when Bennett was undergoing his greatest domestic political stress.

The Elephant in the Room: Iran

All in all, then, the foreign policy landscape looked fairly positive. Just as the government was able, at least partially and temporarily, to suppress the issue of religion and the State in domestic affairs, it was able, at least partially and temporarily, to lower the profile of the Palestinian issue. There was, however, one huge flaw in this otherwise encouraging picture – Iran. On the one hand, the existence of a common threat from Iran is the primary reason for the détente between Israel and many Arab states, especially in the Gulf. Indeed, one of the most dramatic manifestations of regional integration was the establishment of an air, missile, and drone-defence cooperation forum, convened by the US, with Egypt, Jordan, the UAE and Bahrain, but also Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Indeed, there was considerable speculation that Biden's visit might produce a more institutionalized regional security structure grounded in formal Israeli-Saudi ties.

The existence of a common threat from Iran is the primary reason for the détente between Israel and many Arab states, especially in the Gulf

Israel was fairly successful in disrupting Iran's efforts to project its power by interfering with the con-

solidation of forward Iranian positions in Syria and the transfer via Syria of precision guidance systems to Hezbollah (which also avoided any escalatory activity on Israel's northern border).

On the other hand, Iran did continue support for its proxies in the Palestinian arena (Hamas and Islamic Jihad) and the Arabian Peninsula. Even more momentous was Israel's failure to either dissuade the US from categorically abandoning the quest to revive the JCPOA, from which America had withdrawn in 2018, or, alternatively, ensure that any new agreement that was crafted would correct the defects of the original version. Either of these outcomes was arguably beyond Israel's capacity to achieve, but the fact remains that Iran did persist in its effort to develop a military nuclear capability (while also advancing its missile and drone development programmes). Israel actively targeted facilities and individuals involved in the Iranian nuclear and missile programmes (as well as others active in exporting terrorism), thereby slowing the rate of progress and complicating Iranian efforts to accelerate the "breakout timeline." That is not insignificant, but the fact remains that during its time in office, the current Israeli government did not and could not eliminate the most serious threat to Israeli security: the prospect of a nuclear-armed Islamic Republic of Iran.

Future Prospects

Nor did it have the time to continue to address that or other problems. As noted, the coalition did not consist of natural partners, but was instead an unwieldy association whose major common denominators were antipathy to Netanyahu and apprehension about yet another election. But the inherent contradictions between left and right, religious and secular, and Jewish and Arab parties were contained only as long as their conflicting approaches to the most neuralgic issues could be suppressed. Despite periodic strains, that was achieved for almost a year, by practically treating the status quo on both matters as sacrosanct (apart from some minor changes in control over certification of Jewish dietary laws and improvements in the material quality of life for Palestinians), including the refusal to revive high-level Israeli-Palestinian political negotiations.

However, eventually (and inevitably) these issues reasserted themselves, usually for reasons like the religious or religious/national calendar, or the expiration of “temporary” legal arrangements governing the status of Israeli settlers in the West Bank, or outbursts of terrorist activity by Palestinians or Jewish settlers, all of which were beyond the control of party leaders. When that happened, the contradictions bubbling below the surface burst through – because party discipline was not strong enough to force individual Knesset members – who “owned” their seats and could not be ousted before the next election – to continue to vote contrary to their most deeply-held beliefs.

Because of the electoral system of proportional representation, this political morass, involving a polarized coalition in a polarized Knesset, is an accurate reflection of a polarized public

By June 2022, several Knesset members had defected from the coalition, costing the government its

majority and its ability to govern. Facing a gloomy future, government leaders decided to preempt their ouster and acted to dissolve parliament, thereby taking the country to yet another round of elections. While prediction of election results is inherently uncertain, projection from previous experience suggests that the most likely outcome is yet another deadlock between the major blocs.

Because of the electoral system of proportional representation, this political morass, involving a polarized coalition in a polarized Knesset, is an accurate reflection of a polarized public. In many respects, this situation recalls the condition of the Fourth French Republic. That analogy suggests that only a sense of epic crisis, coupled with the appearance of a figure of indisputably heroic proportions, can bring about a fundamental transformation; the system cannot transform itself. Given what looks suspiciously like systemic paralysis, the achievements of Israeli civil society in many walks of life, including economics, technology, medicine, education and defence, are all the more noteworthy – under this government as under those that came before it. But these achievements cannot be directly attributed to the performance of the political system, and without some reformation of that system, continued successes cannot be projected. Neither can mitigation of the failures that also exist.

The Palestinian Struggle for Liberation: Where Do We Go from Here?

Inès Abdel Razek

Advocacy Director

Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy

Policy member

Al-Shabaka, the Palestinian Policy Network

The wave of Palestinian demonstrations and uprising in 2021 – commonly called by Palestinians the Unity Intifada – and the subsequent 11-day devastating bombardments on Gaza – has brought to light Palestinian society's determination to reclaim their agency in confronting the Israeli apartheid colonial structure, and the current Palestinian political system, which is part and parcel of that structure.

Last year's uprising and its continuation in multiple, yet intermittent forms, today, has consummated the divide between the Palestinian Authority's leadership and Palestinian society and expedited the harmful irrelevance of the state-building agenda and the Oslo paradigm to bring about Palestinian self-determination and rights. The current state of permanent Israeli state violence and Palestinian anger amidst increased pressure, has exacerbated the loud cognitive dissonance between the internationally-backed paradigm of a conflict between two warring parties embarked on a faulty peace process, and the actual reality of power dynamics on the ground as one of apartheid.

Palestinian Leadership: The Trap of Oslo and Authoritarianism

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has been increasingly seen by the Palestinian people as the other side of

the occupation's coin, and the fracture between the PA and society has been consummated. The inaction and irrelevance of the PA during the 2021 Unity Intifada, followed by the assassination of vocal opponent and critic Nizar Banat, has marked a tipping point of no return in the authoritarian path of the PA's political and security apparatus and incapacity to lead a path towards Palestinian liberation.

All powers have been concentrated in the hands of very few people loyal to President Abbas, including Hussein El Sheikh¹ and Majed Farraj who respectively control the relations with the Israelis and the PA security and intelligence forces and who have been placed in key executive positions by the President.

Increasingly openly on social media and in public debate, people are calling for the resignation of the PA President and PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) chairman Mahmoud Abbas, calling the PA "collaborators." Most recently, in May 2022, Hamas' landslide victory and Fatah's broad defeat in the Birzeit University Student Council – elections considered a barometer for the national political landscape – testifies to the long decline of the President's faction dominating the PA. There, the 2021 uprising for Jerusalem, the assassination of Nizar Banat and the murder of Shireen Abu Akleh by Israel were at the centre of the debates.

By accepting the terms and conditions for the creation of the PA through the Oslo Agreements, the PLO traded its national struggle for liberation and structure as a national resistance movement for a constrained form of self-rule with no sovereignty and dependence on Israel in almost every sphere. The international support changing the centre of

¹ www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2022/02/08/en-palestine-l-ascension-de-hussein-al-sheikh-visage-d-un-pouvoir-en-bout-de-course_6112813_3210.html

gravity of political representation to the PA's limited autonomy under the agenda of "state-building," has further led to the demise of the PLO, which was supposed to remain the sole political representative of all Palestinians.

The PA leadership is therefore trapped: in order to maintain its very existence, it has to cooperate with and accept full dependency on Israel, whose sole goal is to eventually take "maximum land with minimum Arabs"² and use the PA to administer ever-shrinking and fragmented Bantustans.

This is not unfamiliar to other colonial settings in history where the colonizer cultivated local authorities run by elites with power patronage, serving to mediate between the colonizer and colonized and promoting tribalism as a way to consolidate limited autonomy in Bantustans.

Most Palestinian society and particularly young people recognize³ that Oslo has failed to bring about Palestinian rights and resent the Palestinian leadership for actively accepting a reality of entrenched apartheid and continued settlement expansion. Therefore, in the absence of any meaningful political strategy by the political leadership, a reality of ever-increasing colonization and military control from Israel with no intention of stopping, there has been growing support for armed resistance and direct confrontation through grassroots resistance, as a more effective way of confronting colonial domination.

Israel's Consolidated Power and Impunity

Maintaining the viability of the Middle East Peace Process and Oslo paradigm has allowed Israel to subjugate the Palestinians and their current leadership, enabling the settler-colonial agenda to go ahead with impunity and a sense of comfort.

Particularly since the end of the Second Intifada in 2005, Israel has progressively put Palestinians out of sight for Israelis, through a process of ghettoization and isolation, notably with the 750-km-long and eight-metre-high wall, bypass roads and tunnels benefitting

West Bank settlements, the full blockade of Gaza, mass permanent surveillance and other forms of coercive policies.

Enjoying a sense of relative security and freedom, Israelis have learned to enjoy "peace" as the absence of violence against them, regardless of the oppression of millions of people such tranquillity implies. Israelis have grown indifferent to "Palestinians" (or rather "Arabs" as many Israelis don't recognize Palestinian as a legitimate belonging), who have become a mere political issue among many others, as illustrated in the absence of Palestinians in the debates of the last four parliamentary elections held in the past three years, with Israeli society displaying ever-increasing confidence in their almighty ethnonational dominance.⁴ Settlers have integrated all institutions of the State, and racist and violent slogans, policies and marches have been mainstreamed across the entire Israeli political sphere. And Israelis are only reminded of Palestinians when they are sporadically facing violence through individual armed attacks or rocket fire, like in 2021 or more recently in March 2022.

Israel has progressively put Palestinians out of sight for Israelis, through a process of ghettoization and isolation

Regardless of their political colour – from Labour to Religious nationalists – all Israeli governments and prime ministers of the past decades have steadily pursued settlement expansions and annexation, which has included the demolition of Palestinian homes,⁵ forced expulsions and the passing of racist laws⁶ for preventing non-Jewish demographic growth.

The erasure of Palestinians has been facilitated by the impunity Israel has enjoyed internationally. Despite maintaining millions of people under violent subjugation and control, who have no say in their

² <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/79991>

³ www.badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2021/09/15/wp27-pal-youth-vs-oslo-eng-1631700884.pdf

⁴ www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/28/israels-left-and-right-stuck-in-segregationist-racist-trap

⁵ www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition

⁶ www.972mag.com/edition/israel-citizenship-law-racism/

fate, Israel has continued to be seen by the West and its allies as a liberal democracy. Such an illusion rests on the belief that one can separate the pre-1967 State from the rest of the territory under its de facto sovereignty; it also deliberately ignores the fact that Palestinians with Israeli citizenship do not have the same rights as Jewish citizens and that denying the Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homeland since 1948 is part and parcel with the apartheid structure.

With that understanding, Israel's allies have not been conditioning their relationship with Israel to end its apartheid on Palestinians. On the contrary, Israel has benefitted from strengthened geopolitical, political and economic ties with Western countries, without being held accountable or facing consequences for its consistent violation of international law and human rights.

Israel has continued to be seen by the West and its allies as a liberal democracy. Such an illusion deliberately ignores the fact that Palestinians with Israeli citizenship do not have the same rights as Jewish citizens

The EU remains Israel's biggest trading partner and has continued to give the State billions in cooperation programmes.⁷ The US continues to give USD 3.8 billion of public funding annually to the Israeli military. Similarly, with the "Abraham Accords," the Gulf countries and Israel are advancing their respective ethno-nationalist and economic agenda. In that equation, Israel has turned the occupation of millions of Palestinians into a geopolitical asset, exporting a model of militarized control "tested" on Palestinians. Israel's impunity has been particularly bitterly perceived by Palestinians following April's territorial aggression of Ukraine by Russia. The automatic heroization of Ukrainian grassroots resistance, the romanticization of armed resistance by Western media and the swift

economic and political sanctions being adopted widely against Russia by governments and private actors, have come in stark contrast to the permanent criminalization of Palestinian civil society and resistance, including demands for boycott, divestments and sanctions.

Therefore, the logic – often repeated by the international diplomacy involved –, by which isolation and boycotts of Israel would "hurt peace" or be counter-productive, leading society to increasingly extreme positions instead of bilateral negotiations and dialogue, has failed the reality test. Years of expecting Palestinians to negotiate their freedom and fundamental rights while Israel continues its colonization and entrenching apartheid as a fait accompli, years of insulating Israelis from unaccountable violence, have done nothing to prevent society from further ethnonationalist radicalizing and repressing Palestinians.

Rethinking Palestinian Self-determination beyond Partition

With the Unity Intifada and renewed grassroots mobilization, whether on the ground or online, Palestinians have actively defied Israel's divide-and-conquer policies and shaken Israel's belief that it could be shielded from the impact of its subjugation of the Palestinians.

Palestinians have increasingly put the emphasis on the need to have a unified anti-colonial struggle, breaking the artificial barriers and borders that have imposed the fragmentation of the Palestinian people from Historic Palestine, primarily through the Green Line and imposed exile. The Unity Intifada has not happened suddenly and can find its roots in earlier demonstrations for a new paradigm in the struggle for freedom in Palestine, such as the Great March of Return in Gaza in 2018, or protests against police violence in Umm Al Fahem (a Palestinian city on the Israeli side of the Green Line), all of them massively repressed by Israel or co-opted by the dominant Palestinian political factions.

The defiance against both Israeli oppression and the Palestinian political crisis was inevitably centred

⁷ www.timesofisrael.com/eu-innovation-program-granted-1-35b-to-over-1600-israel-projects-since-2014/

around Jerusalem,⁸ not only because of its historical and religious significance for Palestinians, but also because its youth population is disconnected from both the PA (prevented by Israel from operating in the city) and the political structures of 1948 Palestinians. From the #SaveSheikhJarrah campaign that started in April 2021 to the funeral of Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in May 2022, Palestinians have been reclaiming their identity and unity, with Jerusalem at the heart.

The digital space has become a tool for Palestinians to reclaim their narrative, to consciously contribute to collectively re-imagining the Palestinian present and future

The participation of 1948 Palestinians (Palestinians with Israeli citizenship who live on the territories taken in 1948) in the uprising, in cities like Lydd, Haifa or Jaffa was particularly significant and a reminder that many of them still position themselves within the larger Palestinian anti-colonial struggle, despite their direct exclusion from the two-state and Oslo Agreement-backed statehood project. This is not the first time in the Palestinian national struggle that Palestinians from Historic Palestine have been central to the struggle – this was also the case, for example, in the General Strike of 1936 and the Land Day uprising in 1976 – but it was certainly the most significant participation in many years.

The Unity Intifada last year and current political dynamics mark a generational shift, with young people under the age of 30, representing about 70% of the population, having grown up under the disillusion of the Oslo paradigm and scarred by a childhood during the Second Intifada. This new political generation is currently turning to direct confrontation with the Israeli authorities and creative forms of grass-

roots organizing, in the absence of any Palestinian representative leadership and national strategy for liberation.

The effective use of social media by activists and civil society organizations has been central to the organizing and spreading of the mobilization, while defying media bias and imposed fragmentation. The digital space has become a tool for Palestinians to reclaim their narrative, to consciously contribute to collectively re-imagining the Palestinian present and future and changing the vocabulary and imagery imposed by Israeli and Western-dominated narratives. The political transition at play contains many hopes but also many uncertainties as to how the newly inevitable framing will materialize politically for the Palestinian national movement.

The Challenges ahead for a Unified Political Movement

If the popular mobilization today can only strengthen and has power to take down the old order, the principal challenge for Palestinians remains building a new political order that can articulate a political strategy and move it forwards towards self-determination. A new political order must be able to unify the Palestinian communities, including refugees and those living inside the 1948 territories, as well as articulating the steps needed to dismantle the apartheid colonial structure. Key challenges remain for the powerful energy and agency regained by the new Palestinian generation.

Often overlooked by Western diplomats and governments when analysing the challenges of “Palestinian democracy” are Israeli policies and practices to actively demobilize the Palestinian people and deter any forms of democratic political fabric: permanent surveillance and the use of predictive technologies,⁹ mass arrests¹⁰ and incarcerations including of children;¹¹ recruiting informants¹² and dividing people socially; all remain major obstacles to Palestinian organizing.

⁸ <https://merip.org/2021/11/jerusalem-youth-at-the-forefront-of-2021s-unity-intifada/>

⁹ www.mei.edu/publications/nowhere-hide-impact-israels-digital-surveillance-regime-palestinians

¹⁰ www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/24/a-war-declaration-palestinians-in-israel-decry-mass-arrests

¹¹ www.dci-palestine.org/no_way_to_treat_a_child_palestinian_children_in_the_israeli_military_detention_system

¹² <https://electronicintifada.net/content/israels-dark-arts-ensnaring-collaborators/7712>

Second, the monopoly of power among the large factions, Hamas and Fatah, who have largely accommodated the current power equilibrium with Israel, also remains a reality. Functioning as a patronage system based on clientelism rather than political parties, they intend to hijack all forms of political mobilization, and the undercurrents that led to their creations (local committees, social institutions etc.) still have a powerful presence and loyalty structures.

In addition, the international community has had a habit of directly or indirectly interfering, deciding who is an acceptable interlocutor on the Palestinian political landscape, conditioning engagement, favouring personalities, while criminalizing others as too “radical” or “terrorists,” and creating perverse incentives for some to appeal to foreign audiences and others to grandstand domestically, weakening the ability of Palestinians to develop a united organic leadership,¹³ while reinforcing phenomena of social hierarchies.

It is imperative to rebuild civic and political engagement through trust-building, social cohesion and a sense of belonging among Palestinians

Finally and most importantly, prospects for elections in the current institutional structures cannot be equated with hope for democratic renewal. The PA elections exclude more than half of Palestinians, who

are 1948 Palestinians or in exile, while the current PLO electoral structure defined by its Basic Law of 1968 is based on outdated quota mechanisms. Therefore, it is imperative to rebuild civic and political engagement through trust-building, social cohesion and a sense of belonging among Palestinians. Short of that, partial electoral exercises bear the risk of reinforcing fragmentation and tribalism.

Conclusion

Palestinians, particularly the younger generations of activists and intellectual elite, are actively managing to attract the international spotlight and gain support from international allies in the human rights community and social justice and antiracist movements around the world. Such dynamics are helping the growing recognition that Israel maintains an apartheid regime in the whole of Historic Palestine, with a necessary political reframing from one focused on a conflict between two parties in an equal dispute, and on a faulty bilateral peace process, to one of apartheid.

Palestinians are regaining ownership over their narrative while shaping their own aspirations and demands rather than waiting for international diplomats to take belated action. But the historical transition we are currently witnessing in the Palestinian national movement could last for many years, as long as the international community continues to back the old playbook of a two-sided conflict using bilateral negotiations, refusing to see Israel as a bad-faith actor and hold it accountable for its crimes and criminalization of Palestinian resistance in all its forms.

¹³ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/10/palestine-s-emerging-national-movement-questions-on-my-mind-pub-84717>

The Not So Frozen Crisis

Natasha Hall

Senior Fellow

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, DC

The eleven-year conflict in Syria has shifted away from large-scale military hostilities along major frontlines to localized clashes between armed groups and government forces. By March 2022, it had been two years since the last major military offensive, when the Syrian regime took further bites out of Syria's Idlib province, displacing a million people. In spite of the reduction in large-scale offensives, ongoing protection concerns and a devastated economy continue to prevent large-scale refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs) returns. Half the pre-war population are refugees or internally displaced and some data shows that the rate of return is continuing to decrease.¹

While the frontlines remain frozen, the status quo is fragile, with five foreign armies – Russia, Turkey, Iran, the US and Israel – operating on different sides of the conflict, and no progress in political negotiations. Continued Russian and Syrian government shelling and airstrikes, Turkish drone attacks in northeastern Syria, suspected Iranian proxy fire on US troops in Deir ez-Zor, and ongoing local clashes and ISIS attacks are all potential flashpoints. Heightened geopolitical tensions outside of Syria – culminating in Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 – have exacerbated uncertainty in Syria. By April 2022, Geir Pederson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, emphasized that “Syria is a hot conflict, not a frozen one” to the UN Security Council.

A Shift from Conflict Resolution to Crisis Management

Struggling international negotiations have come to a halt over the course of the year, signalling that while violence is muted, the drivers of the conflict are ever-present and increasingly entrenched. The lack of progress on the UN Special Envoy's “step for step” process or the Constitutional Committee have pushed regional and international stakeholders into crisis management. As Western donor countries deliberate over aid approaches, some regional states have taken steps towards normalizing relations with the regime.

The increased humanitarian need has led Western donors to focus on aid to manage the crisis. Throughout Syria, 14.6 million¹ people need assistance and protection, up by 1.2 million people compared to the previous year. In 2022, fuel and food costs have soared as the crisis in Ukraine, a major wheat exporter, impacts food security globally and the Middle East, in particular. Though donor fatigue is on the rise especially as other crises have emerged, aid continues to be a priority for donor governments invested in Syria.

Regionally, the trend towards normalization with the regime has accelerated as Arab countries also try to move towards crisis management. Eager to shore up a struggling economy and curb security issues on its border, Jordan's King Abdullah had his first phone call with President Bashar Al Assad since 2011 and developed a plan for renewed cooperation with the regime, getting buy-in from the Biden Administration. The King advocated for an electricity and gas deal that would allow Jordan to transfer gas and

¹ www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14870.doc.htm

electricity to energy-deprived Lebanon through Syria. Such a deal, while technically and logistically difficult, would benefit the Syrian government economically and politically. Some Arab League members are also beginning to advocate for Syria's return to the fold. While the United Arab Emirates paved the way for other states to begin the process of normalization in 2018, the leadership made a significant symbolic push this year, making preliminary agreements to begin small infrastructure projects in Syria. The trend was capped off with President Bashar al Assad's first trip outside Syria, Russia or Iran since 2011 to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed's palace in Abu Dhabi, a significant public show of support for the isolated leader during the anniversary of the Syrian revolution.

However, moves towards normalization have, thus far, not provoked regime behavioural change. No headway has been made on political negotiations and drug trafficking largely attributable to regime allies and institutions actually skyrocketed in the past year. More Captagon,² a cheap amphetamine mostly produced in Syria, was seized in the first few months of 2022 than all of 2021. Rather than this political and economic opening towards the regime or humanitarian aid, securitization of borders, the US presence in the northeast and the Turkish military presence in the northwest continue to be the primary factors in containing the crisis.

Consolidation of Power: Government-Controlled Areas

The Assad government – along with Russia, Iran and aligned militia forces – controls about two thirds of Syria's territory. However, the regime and its allies continue to battle a low-level insurgency with rebels in the south and Islamic State elements in the central desert areas. At the same time, the Assad government has further consolidated power amongst an increasingly tight group of regime allies since capturing major pockets of formerly opposition-controlled areas from the south to the northwest.

In southern Syria, particularly in the Daraa governorate,³ clashes have been ongoing since July 2021 between government forces and armed opposition groups. A ceasefire was reached on 1 September, but quickly unravelled as Syrian government forces continued to launch raids, airstrikes and missile attacks. Violent clashes resulted in dozens of civilian deaths in January 2022 alone. The government has also besieged towns and imposed heavy restrictions on civilians attempting to flee and on the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The regime has used this period of a relative lull in violence and regional goodwill to consolidate power

The southeast of the country, where US forces and US-backed local forces called Maghawir al-Thawra maintain a presence at Al-Tanf base, is still contentious. Iran-backed militias have targeted US forces at Al-Tanf with armed drones. In one attack, operatives appear to have been able to enter the base to plant explosive devices. The regime's ally, Russia, continues to prohibit any aid convoys to the 10,000 people stranded in Rukban camp, a makeshift desert settlement on the Jordanian border near Al-Tanf, where UNICEF estimates all children are suffering from malnutrition. To the west of the Euphrates River, the regime and its allies continue to suffer casualties at the hands of ISIS elements.

Overall, the regime has used this period of a relative lull in violence and regional goodwill to consolidate power. The regime's inner circle continues to contract, with Maher al Assad, Asma al Assad, Bashar al Assad and their close allies and business partners at the locus of political and economic power. As the Assads continue to rout out any elements of opposition in recently conquered areas, aid access remains limited, especially in areas taken by the regime since 2017.

² KNELL, Yolande, "Captagon: Jordan's undeclared war against Syria drug traffickers." *BBC News*, 18 April 2022. www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-61040359

³ www.globalr2p.org/countries/syria/

Backed into a Corner: Opposition-Controlled Areas in Northwest Syria

Around four million people, two-thirds of whom have been displaced from other parts of the country, remain in Syria's northwest pocket. Insecurity continues to plague areas controlled by the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) and Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS). Regime shelling and bombardment adds to the instability of prolonged displacement and local skirmishes. In Idlib, HTS has essentially defeated or co-opted all its Syrian armed opposition rivals in Idlib, including those from the Turkish-backed SNA and al-Qaeda-linked fighters such as Hurras al-Din (HAD). In February 2022, a US military operation in Idlib resulted in the death of IS leader Abu Ibrahim al Qurashi. Levels of violence are still far lower than they have been for years. The static frontlines continue to be contingent upon the maintenance of a good working relationship between Russia and Turkey.

The lower levels of violence have not contributed significantly to an improvement in living conditions in the area. Having lost much of its arable land, the northwest enclave is especially dependent on foreign assistance. Though aid continues to be delivered and implemented relatively unimpeded across the border from Turkey, this assistance remains under threat. As a result of ongoing extensions of UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR)2165 (2014) and subsequent renewals, UN agencies have been able to coordinate, implement and deliver assistance across borders to those in need in non-government controlled areas, without the approval of the Damascus-based government. However, over the course of three years, Russia, Assad's key ally and permanent member of the Security Council, has vetoed three of the original four UN border crossings at the Security Council. Russia hopes to extract concessions from Western governments in favour of the Damascus-based government. In July 2021, the final crossing, Bab al-Hawa, was extended with UNSCR 2585 after intense negotiations. Russia's ongoing military invasion of Ukraine has thoroughly skewered Russia's relationship with Western Security Council mem-

bers, intimating even more intense negotiations this year when UNSCR 2585 expires in July 2022. Uncertainty over life-saving assistance, protracted displacement, ongoing instability and an economic downturn threaten to exacerbate already dire living conditions for civilians in the area.

Reluctant Unity with an Uncertain Future: The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) controls a demographically heterogeneous region in northeastern and eastern Syria. In coordination with the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh, the SDF managed to retake control of the 30 percent of Syrian territory that the Islamic State captured in 2014. Since then, the associated civilian local governance structure, the Autonomous Administration of Northeast and East Syria (AANES), and the SDF are governing areas as far south as Hajin where Arab tribes hold great power. Though the SDF is diverse, the high command continues to draw from, and be associated with, the Kurdish-majority Peoples' Protection Units (YPG), allies of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

There has been relative calm in the region for the past year. However, ongoing insecurity stemming from remaining ISIS elements, tensions with the AANES and a limited Syrian regime presence, ongoing Turkish and Turkish proxy attacks on the SDF and its affiliates, and an extended drought are a constant reminder that stability is fragile.

In spite of losing all territory in 2019, ISIS elements continue to intimidate and extort locals, helping the group obtain new funds and recruits while discouraging people from joining the SDF. The enduring threat of the group gained international attention with an attack on one of the prisons in northeast Syria holding ISIS members. In January 2022, Islamic State fighters seized Sinaa prison. US forces joined SDF partner forces in a lengthy battle to retake the prison. The incident⁴ highlighted the ongoing dangers that ISIS poses with hundreds of casualties and

⁴ HASSAN, Mohammed and AL-AHMED, Samer. *A closer look at the ISIS attack on Syria's al-Sina Prison*. Middle East Institute, Washington, 14 February 2022. www.mei.edu/publications/closer-look-isis-attack-syrias-al-sina-prison

potentially dozens of escapees. About 10,000 IS fighters are held in detention facilities across northern Syria. The SDF also still retains custody of about 57,000 people allegedly linked to ISIS (mostly women and children) at the Al Hol IDP camp where conditions are grim.

ISIS elements continue to intimidate and extort locals, which helped the group obtain new funds and recruits while discouraging people from joining the SDF

Ongoing Turkish attacks against SDF and PKK figures in the area continue, as the Turkish government sees the PKK as a national security threat. As a result, SDF clashes continue with the Turkish-backed SNA factions from Operation Peace Spring – a strip of territory Turkey and its proxies captured in north-eastern Syria in 2019. These dynamics have added to other regional and internal tensions, hindering greater stability in the area.

Other vulnerabilities have limited the ability of local and international actors to capitalize on the relative calm to improve conditions for residents. In particular, unprecedented water shortages in 2021 have hit communities hard. The drought threatened the agriculturally dependent economy, potable water for three million people and hydroelectricity to over five million people. Water scarcity and the need to improve regular humanitarian access and trade flows have added to the region's challenges.

In the meantime, Russia and the Syrian regime are attempting to capitalize on these issues through highly publicized “reconciliation campaigns” in Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor and Aleppo. These campaigns are aimed at gaining the trust of those outside regime-controlled territory with only limited success.

As SDF-controlled areas still contain around 70 per cent of Syria's oil and wheat resources, the region will continue to be a strategic territory for stakeholders in Syria's future.

Tensions Seethe and Conditions Deteriorate as Syrians Remain in Limbo

The war has entered a new phase as de facto governing bodies and armed actors have consolidated and entrenched their power. However, the current status quo remains so primarily as a result of foreign powers freezing the lines of control. These same foreign powers provide protection and support to de facto local authorities. Therefore, the immediate future of Syria continues to depend on the commitment of Turkey, the US, Russia and Iran to hold the house of cards together.

The failure to resolve the main drivers of the conflict and the further entrenchment of a war economy engenders new local tensions and heightened geopolitical competition

In the meantime, the failure to resolve the main drivers of the conflict and the further entrenchment of a war economy engenders new local tensions and heightened geopolitical competition. As a result, economic deterioration, individual protection concerns and prolonged displacement continue to impede more sustainable stability. Such an environment will test the limits of international aid as needs rise, in spite of a relative lull in violence and large infusions of assistance. These endemic issues threaten to keep Syria on an uncertain and destructive trajectory for the foreseeable future.

The Post-Pandemic Landscape in Turkey

Carmen Rodríguez López

Professor of Contemporary Turkish Studies
Autonomous University of Madrid

Political Arena and Shades of Authoritarianism

In the last year, Turkey has held more or less steady in the rankings referring to its political situation. According to Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2022* report,¹ Turkey had a global freedom score of 32 out of 100 for the year, and its political regime was classified as "Not Free." It scored 16 out of 40 on political rights and 16 out of 60 on civil liberties, unchanged from the previous year's report.²

Meanwhile, the 2022 BTI Transformation Index³ ranked Turkey 63rd out of 137 countries (with the top-performing country ranking first), denouncing the "consolidation of authoritarianism"³ and describing its political regime as a "moderate autocracy."

In the political sphere, the presidentialist system implemented after the controversial 2017 referendum concentrates executive power in the figure of the President, who has moreover expanded his influence over the legislative and executive branches. In 2017, the Council of Europe's Venice Commission warned of the risk posed by this reform, which paved the way for an authoritarian and personalist regime. In the wake of the attempted coup of July 2016, the country was subjected to a wide-ranging political purge affecting all types of dissidence. Although the state of emergency proclaimed after the coup ended in July 2018, the anti-terrorism law was strengthened and

certain government authorities have retained their extraordinary powers to this day.

As for the political opposition parties, attention should be drawn to the continued imprisonment of Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, co-chairs at the time of their arrest of the second largest opposition party, the pro-Kurdish progressive People's Democratic Party (HDP), along with other members of parliament. In a December 2020 judgment, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) called for Demirtaş's immediate release, denouncing that he had been preventively detained on political grounds, a decision likewise applicable to other MPs from the party. Notwithstanding the Court's harsh criticism and the binding nature of its judgment on Turkey, the HDP MPs remain in prison. Other MPs were also stripped of their immunity over the last year and arrested on terrorism-related charges. One of the affected parties, Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, regained his status as MP following an appeal to the Constitutional Court. In June 2021, that same Court agreed to hear a case to ban the party, which was accused of acting as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), classified as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the European Union (EU) and the United States. HDP's closure would deliver a serious blow to the country's political pluralism. The party has lost 11 of the 67 MPs it won in the 2018 general election for the Turkish Grand National Assembly, retaining just 56. Furthermore, since the 2019 local elections, 48 of the party's mayors have been removed from their positions at the head of their respective municipalities. All of this is compounded by the brutal murder of party member Deniz Poyraz in her office in Izmir, also in June.

¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2022>.

² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2021>.

³ <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/TUR>.

Although the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), does not face such a repressive context, some of its most prominent figures have nevertheless also been targeted by the judiciary. The Court of Cassation upheld the prison sentence for its provincial chair in Istanbul, Canan Kaftancıoğlu, set at 4 years and 11 months in May 2022, for tweets she had made between 2012 and 2017, mostly in relation to the 2013 anti-government protests in Gezi Park. Kaftancıoğlu played a key role in the victory of Istanbul's mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu, who is also facing a potential prison sentence for allegedly insulting members of the Supreme Election Council after they cancelled the local elections he had won in 2019, wresting control of Istanbul from the Justice and Development Party (AKP) after 25 years at the helm of one of the country's most important mayoralties. The repeat election held one month later would reaffirm his victory. Meanwhile, the central government has taken back powers delegated to the local government, undermining the city council's ability to act, and, in December of last year, the Interior Ministry launched an investigation against hundreds of city employees, accused of having ties to terrorist groups, prompting strong criticism from the city's mayor for the handling of the investigation.

Rapprochements for a United Opposition

In this context, movements have taken place in the political field of the opposition to the governing coalition. Although the presidential system monopolizes executive power in the figure of the President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's party failed to win an absolute majority in parliament in the 2018 general elections. Its alliance with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) led by Devlet Bahçeli was key to strengthening its position in the body vis-à-vis the rest of the parties. On the other hand, the expansion of presidential power and erosion of rights and freedoms that the country has experienced in recent years has sparked shifts towards unity across the opposition spectrum.

The 2018 general elections and 2019 local elections proved an excellent setting to observe formal alliances and informal support amongst the opposition parties, which yielded tangible results, such as

the election of an opposition candidate as mayor of Istanbul, the heart of the country.

Over the last year, rapprochements have been undertaken with the aim of establishing a joint roadmap to restore the parliamentary system and replace the current presidential one. These shifts involved two political factions splintered off from the AKP: the Future Party (GP), founded by former Foreign and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, and the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA Partisi), founded by former Economy Minister Ali Babacan. They were joined by the CHP, led by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, and an MHP splinter group, the Good Party (İyi Parti), founded by Meral Akşener in 2017, after she was expelled from the party for challenging the leadership of Bahçeli, who had become a key ally for the party in power. These parties would also be joined by the Felicity Party (SP), led by Temel Karamollaoğlu, which, like the AKP, emerged following the banning of the Islamist Virtue Party (FP) in 2001, and the Democrat Party (DP), led by Gültekin Uysal, in agreeing a joint statement, signed in February 2022, with the aim of restoring the parliamentary system and launching a democratization process to expand fundamental rights and freedoms, explicitly and expressly affirming their commitment to the rights of Turkish women. The second largest opposition party, the HDP, did not participate in the agreement, nor did it hide its anger with an alliance from which it felt excluded. In fact, it will play a key role in future elections. It thus remains to be seen whether the HDP will find a way to insert itself in this roadmap to a democratic parliamentary system or if its exclusion will weaken the opposition to the party in power.

The expansion of presidential power and erosion of rights and freedoms that the country has experienced in recent years has sparked shifts towards unity across the opposition spectrum

These movements towards unity are, in turn, arising in a political context of growing partisan fragmentation. At present, 14 parties are represented in the

600-member-strong Turkish Parliament, of which only five have more than 35 MPs. Another nine parties have at most one, two or four MPs (this is the case of the Turkish Workers' Party, TIP), and seven MPs represent their constituents as independents. Of these parties, the Homeland Party (MP) was founded by the former CHP presidential candidate Muharrem İnce, and Ümit Özdağ's Victory Party arose from a schism to the right of the İyi Parti last year. Previously, in 2020, two other political forces had emerged in parliament, including the DEVA Partisi. The electoral and social effects of this partisan fragmentation will become tangible in the 2023 elections. The leader of the CHP, Kılıçdaroğlu, himself has called attention to "forces that appear to be the opposition" but which, in reality, could be instruments of power intended to distort the political arena.

The Erosion of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms

The year 2021 was not a good one for the defence of fundamental rights and duties in the country. Although a Human Rights Action Plan was announced, it failed to address the most pressing issues in this area. The European Commission's annual country report for Turkey noted the continued "deterioration of human and fundamental rights," underscoring the broad-scale restrictions imposed, which affect freedom of expression and promote censorship or self-censorship of critical voices, as well as the difficulties in exercising the freedom of assembly and association, which, according to the report, faces "recurrent bans, disproportionate interventions and excessive use of force in peaceful demonstrations, investigations, administrative fines and prosecutions against demonstrators on charges of terrorism-related activities. Legislation and its implementation are not in line with the Turkish Constitution, European standards or with international conventions."

In late 2021, the Council of Europe initiated disciplinary action against Turkey for its refusal to comply with the ECHR's binding judgment calling for the release of the philanthropist and activist Osman Kavala, in prison since 2017. Not only was Kavala not released, he was sentenced to life in prison in April 2022, along with seven other defendants, sentenced to prison terms of 18 years. Kavala had been ac-

cused of attempting to overthrow the government at the Gezi demonstrations in a highly controversial trial. After learning of the sentence, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling the detention "unjust, unlawful and illegitimate" and noting that "the current Turkish government has deliberately destroyed any hopes of reopening its EU accession process or opening new chapters and closing open ones under the current circumstances."

The authoritarian turn taken by the regime in recent years has been accompanied by an openly anti-feminist religious and nationalist discourse

Meanwhile, in July 2021, Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, established to actively combat violence against women following a presidential decision published in March. Turkey was the first country to sign the convention named after its historic city and the only country to withdraw from it. It did so on the grounds that it undermined traditional family values and promoted extramarital affairs and homosexuality. Although the Turkish government indicated that it would design a national action plan to stop violence against women, it has yet to take any relevant measures.

The authoritarian turn taken by the regime in recent years has been accompanied by an openly anti-feminist religious and nationalist discourse. Other groups, such as the LGBTI community, are also facing an increasingly homophobic discourse from political leaders. The ban on celebrating International Pride Day, in force since 2015, for reasons of security and order marked a turning point in how this group is treated, and the context has grown considerably worse in recent years. The index prepared by ILGA-Europe to assess the impact of the laws and policy practices of 49 countries on the lives of LGBTI people ranks Turkey second to last, ahead of only Azerbaijan.

Student demonstrations also played a significant role in 2021, especially in the wake of the presidential appointment of a new rector for one of the coun-

try's most prestigious public universities, Bosphorus University. After the 2016 coup attempt, the President obtained, through separate emergency degrees, the power to appoint university rectors. Although the President had already appointed a candidate as rector for the university in 2016, the appointment of an AKP-affiliated rector, Melih Bulu, in January 2021 sparked strong protests by students and faculty, who called for a return to the democratic system of electing rectors and criticized the new system as a means of undermining university autonomy. Bulu was replaced by Mehmet Naci İnci, again by presidential appointment, in August. The protests, which have continued throughout the year, have been harshly repressed. According to the group Boğaziçi Watch, around 1,000 students have been arrested, two of whom, Berke Gök and Perit Özen, remained in prison from October 2021 to January 2022. This is in addition to the close to one hundred students who have lost their scholarships for participating in the protests and the reprisals suffered by a sector of the faculty.

Overcoming the Pandemic in a Context of Economic Crisis

At the start of the academic year, another series of student protests took place in different parts of the country. This time, the protests criticized the lack of affordable housing and residence halls for university students. The issue of rent was related to one of the most pressing issues affecting the country in 2021, marked and growing year-on-year inflation. Whilst in the second half of the year, the country's economic growth far outpaced that of the rest of the emerging and advanced economies, the depreciation of the lira and high inflation had a decisive impact on the day-to-day lives of Turkish families. Erdoğan's policy, opposed to interest rate hikes, seeks instead to promote credit, exports and cheap labour. But these measures did not help control inflation, which soared over the year, nor could they prevent the dramatic depreciation of the Turkish lira, which plummeted 44% against the dollar. The year closed in December with a year-on-year inflation of 36.1%, which, at the start of 2022, was further exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and a significant increase in the prices of energy and other commodities for which Turkey

depends on imports. The consequences of the war were felt not only in import prices, but also in the cutbacks in exports to Ukraine and the growth prospects of the tourism industry. Russians accounted for the largest groups of tourists to Turkey in 2021, with some 4.7 million visitors. Ukrainians ranked third, after Germans, sending some 2 million travellers to the country.

According to Reuters, Turkey's year-on-year inflation reached 69.97% in April 2022. Erdoğan's economic preferences, markedly against raising interest rates, have affected the Central Bank's independence. Between 2020 and 2021, three Bank governors were removed, and they were not the only ones affected by the changes. In December 2021, Nuredin Nebati replaced Lütfi Elvan as the new Finance Minister.

The depreciation of the lira and high inflation had a decisive impact on the day-to-day lives of Turkish families

Although inflation has continued to grow worryingly in 2022, the lira managed to stabilize itself relatively in late 2021 (compared to the worst months of the economic crisis), reaching a value of 13.36 lire to the dollar in January 2022.

The war has thus slowed the long-awaited economic recovery, driven by the vaccination phenomenon, which began in January with the Chinese Sinovac vaccine and German BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine, which it is hoped will be joined by another of domestic origin to be called Turkovac. Mobility restrictions were gradually and progressively lifted beginning in June, benefitting the summer tourism season. Unemployment fell from 13% in the first quarter of the year to 11.3% in the fourth. Amongst the economically active population, minimum wage workers account for more than 40% of the total labour force. To limit the impact of inflation on their income, the President announced a 50% increase in the minimum wage, bringing it to 4,250 lire in 2022.

The context of economic crisis has negatively contributed to the cultivation of xenophobic potential in Turkish society, which hosts some 3.7 million Syrian

refugees, 1.4 million foreign nationals with residence permits, and a third category of irregular immigrants consisting mostly of Afghans, Pakistanis and Syrians, whose numbers are ambiguous, as well as a final category consisting of some 350,000 asylum seekers. The flames of this xenophobic sentiment are being fanned by some opposition parties, which have weaponized this issue to attack the reception policies of the AKP, which, in recent years, has also promised to promote the voluntary repatriation of, at least, one million Syrians to Turkish-controlled areas of northern Syria. According to the Turkish President, half a million Syrians have already voluntarily returned to their country of origin.

The economy and the refugee question are two of the key issues that could seriously affect the electoral prospects of the ruling party

The economy and the refugee question are two of the key issues that could seriously affect the electoral prospects of the ruling party. A December 2021 survey conducted by MetroPoll pointed to an 8% fall in the AKP's expected share of the vote compared to the 2018 general elections, in contrast to the expected electoral gains of various opposition parties. In the final stretch of the legislative period, the country's internal and external dynamics will surely be marked by the 2023 electoral race.

References

- BTI TRANSFORMATION INDEX. *Turkey Country Report 2022*. <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/TUR>
- ERTAN, Nazlan. "Rights groups, world politicians urge release of student protesters in Turkey." *Al-Monitor*, January 6, 2022. www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/01/rights-groups-world-politicians-urge-release-student-protesters-turkey#ixzz7UkrWzgUJ
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Turkey Report 2021*. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/turkey-report-2021_en
- EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. 2022 resolution on the case of Osman Kavala in Turkey. www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/product/product-details/20220505DPU32862
- FREEDOM HOUSE. *Turkey. Freedom in the World 2022*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2022>
- ILGA-Europe. *Country ranking*. <https://rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>
- MOURENZA, Andrés. "Turquía sustituye el estado de emergencia por una ley antiterrorista más dura." *El País*, July 18, 2018. https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/07/18/actualidad/1531904842_048458.html
- SÁNCHEZ PASTOR, Paula. *Situación macrofinanciera de Turquía*. Banco de España, Notas EC.
- "Survey shows support for AKP declining, İYİ Party's popularity soaring." *Duvar – English*, December 9, 2021. www.duvarenglish.com/survey-shows-support-for-akp-declining-iyi-partys-popularity-soaring-news-59810

How the Situation in Sudan Is Affecting the MENA Region

Atta H. El-Battahani
University of Khartoum

Researchers and academics are baffled by Sudan's geographical setting: is it sub-Saharan Africa, north-east Africa, the Middle East or part of the Horn of Africa? However its geo-setting is defined, Sudan and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have impacted and continue to impact each other in multiple ways. This short article will show how Sudan has impacted MENA in selected fields: economic history, nation-state and territorial disintegration, political culture, radical Islam and terrorism and youth-led social movements.

It is argued here that a combination of state clientelism, economic dependency and a fractured political class have shaped not only the politics of the country, but also its impact on the MENA region.

Economic History and Dependency

The year 1821 marked a turning point in Sudan's recent history, when Mohamed Ali Pasha, the viceroy of Egypt invaded Sudan in search of resources, both natural and human. For decades during the 19th century, Egypt was extensively involved in colonizing Sudan as a peripheral area, adopting extractive policies and hunting for minerals and agricultural products to meet Mohammed Ali's programme of "forced industrialization." Heavy handed and repressive policies implemented by the Egyptian Administration inflicted misery on the local population, breeding and ripening an insurrectionary political climate for the

Mahdist revolt, and culminating in the expulsion of the colonial forces in 1885, ushering in an era of an Islamic Mahdist state.¹

In 1898, the Anglo-Egyptian army reconquered and colonized Sudan, though effectively it was now a British colony. Socioeconomic projects introduced by the British led to the emergence of an educated class with strong links with MENA. Following independence in the early 1950s, Sudan played the role of mediator. During the 1950s and 1960s, Sudan hosted Egyptian military jets, sent battalions to fight alongside the Egyptian army following the June 1967 war with Israel and played a key role in ending the Arab cold war in 1967 when reconciling President Nasir of Egypt and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. Sudan was the only "Arab" country to side with President Sadat when the latter signed the Camp David Peace Accord between Egypt and Israel.

Sudan remained tied to MENA from the 1970s onwards. The failure of nationalization policies in 1970, and the impact of the use of oil as a weapon in the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973, among other factors, compounded Sudan's economic difficulties and marked a shift from a quasi-articulated pattern of development to a disarticulated one (O'Brien, 1983). In the mid-1970s, a tripartite partnership between the Arab capital, Western technology and Sudan lands, sought to make Sudan the breadbasket for MENA, reinforcing Sudan's dependency (Ali, 1992). However, the 30-year rule of radical Islamist officers from 1989 up to 2019 put the country at odds with MENA, weakening it, reinforcing its dependent status and turning it into a playground for interventions by regional and international powers. Sudan changed regional allies, and in 2015 took the

¹ A precursor to the Islamic State in MENA in the 21st century.

side of Saudi Arabia, Emirates and Egypt and sent troops to fight in Yemen.

In their efforts to stabilize and shape developments in Sudan and align it with MENA politics, dominant world powers are working through proxy deals with regional agents such as Egypt, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia and, most recently, Israel. Now, Saudi rulers, in coordination with American and other Western actors, are using the good offices of Saudi Arabia to bring Sudanese parties to stabilize post-el-Bashir Sudan,² which led to the secession of South Sudan and left the rest of the country embroiled in violent conflicts, with all the signs of the country drifting as a failed state *par excellence*. Close ties with MENA have been a key part of Sudan's conflict history.

A Nation-State at War with Itself

Sudan has been at war since the mid-1950s, and a pro-MENA element is not far away from this. Over-inflating Sudan's Arab identity and downplaying its African character was a major factor in alienating African ethnicities who from the early days of independence in the 1950s took up arms to demand self-rule in a federal state. The Arabized ruling elite failed to manage the country's ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, thus sowing seeds of violent conflict and protracted civil war that ended in South Sudan seceding in 2011 and other parts left in violent conflicts with ruling Arab-Muslim elites.

South Sudan's secession emboldened other ethnic-regional groupings to demand the power and wealth be shared with the Arab-Muslim centre of power, as reflected in the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement, signed between the Khartoum government and a number of armed movements. Yet, not all armed movements have joined this transactional peace deal, as shown by the stance of the Sudan People Liberation Movement – North (El-Hilu) and Sudan Liberation Movement (Abdelwahid).

Multiple armed groups and militias are taking up arms in peripheral regions, appeasing and holding the au-

thorities to ransom. Given the geopolitics of Sudan, these armed groups and militias cross borders and roam across MENA countries and sub-Saharan Africa, raising more fears about links with Islamic terrorist groups and bent on pillaging mineral resources. Moreover, Sudan is considered a transit and corridor for migration to Europe.³ All these miseries have compounded the challenges facing the political class, a class fractured and factionalized since independence and weak and lacking in effective leadership.

Political Culture and Fractured Political Class

An observable similarity between Sudan and MENA politics (Lebanon, Tunisia, currently Libya, etc...) is a fractured political class and instability. In Sudan, this structural feature dates back to the days of British policies of working with tribal and religious sectarian leaders in what was known as "indirect rule." Post-independent governments followed in the colonial footsteps and relied on coalitions and alliances bringing together traditional and conservative forces and the more modernized and educated northern bourgeoisie class.

In the mid-1970s, a tripartite partnership between the Arab capital, Western technology and Sudan lands, sought to make Sudan the breadbasket for MENA, reinforcing Sudan's dependency

A marked feature of Sudan's recurrent failed democratic governance is not only the fact that it has been dominated by the autocratic northern elites, but also that its modus operandi has been to rule through a shaky coalition of northern factions/actors in a fragile alliance with regional elites. These ruling coalitions

² *Al-Arab* London-based newspaper, 16 June 2022. Currently, to stabilize Sudan politics, Saudi Arabia is playing a role reminiscent to the one it played in stabilizing Lebanon in 1989 with the Taif Agreement, when various parties in Lebanon reached an agreement that put an end to the civil war that had been fought there since the mid-1970s.

³ The European Union signed the Khartoum Agreement in 2015 entrusting the Rapid Support Forces to secure Sudan's borders to prevent migrants crossing to North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Europe.

have been shaped by an unstable equilibrium of compromises between the contending politicians, families and factions of the northern ruling elites that are constantly in competition with each other for soft and hard rent resources (El-Battahani, 2017).

South Sudan's secession emboldened other ethnic-regional groupings to demand the power and wealth be shared with the Arab-Muslim centre of power, as reflected in the 2020 Juba Peace

On the other hand, the military regimes that took over from the democratic regimes had to forge coalitions with these groups in order to sustain their rule. Thus, in order to protect their "inherited" rent privileges, the ruling elites presided over regimes that alternated between weak, multi-party governments and military, authoritarian rule, in what has frequently been described as a vicious circle of politics. Weak performance of the political class paved the way for the radical Islamists to rise to the top and take power in 1989, with serious repercussions for MENA countries.

Radical Islam and MENA Politics

For many years, many Sudanese have received their education either in Egypt (Al-Azhar University) or Saudi Arabia. During the Anglo-Egyptian rule over Sudan, many young Sudanese were educated in Egypt. Some of these were influenced by Hassan al-Bana, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in the late 1920s, and became disciples, establishing MB circles in Sudan. In 1957, after the country had obtained independence, they called for an Islamic constitution based on Sharia law.

Even the drift of secular, northern-educated Sudanese towards emphasizing their Arab identity was somehow aligned with Islamism, or at least not antagonistic to Islamist activities, with the exception of the Communist Party, which is wholeheartedly secular. Hence, successive governments in Khartoum have been very mild and accommodative to the MB.

Developments in MENA, the oil decades of the 1970s and 1980s and the introduction of Islamic banking in Sudan paved the way for an aggressive version of Islamism, led by Hassan al-Turabi, who influenced many Islamists in MENA.

Once in power, in 1989, Hassan al-Turabi's National Islamic Front (NIF) and other radical Islamists used security, intelligence and violence to maintain control, consolidate their hold on the power, and deliberately perpetuated the imposition of an Arabic-Islamic identity on all Sudanese, irrespective of the country's diversity. The NIF government and, later, the National Congress Party (NCP) used Islamic religious symbolism like jihadism in an attempt to rally "infidels" and "non-believers" into Islam and consolidate Sudan under a centralized political, economic and social identity.

In the 1990s, Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, emerged as a launch pad for an *Islamist Internationale*, providing safe haven to extremist Islamist groups operating against MENA state authorities, and hosting the Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, Carlos the Jackal, Bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and Al Shabab etc... a policy that earned the country an international boycott and its characterization as a pariah state.

However, the dictates of politics forced Omer al-Bashir, who took over from Hassan al-Turabi, to shift regional allies from Qatar, Iran and Turkey to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt in 2015, and to send troops to fight against the Houthi in Yemen. This situation remains unchanged, despite al-Bashir's removal from power in 2019.

Youth Movements

The legacy of the 30-year Islamic rule in Sudan can be seen in the country's disintegration, peripheral regions mired in conflict, widespread poverty and a rentier, parasitic ruling class at the top. This has posed a challenge to younger generations, the sector in all societies that is most sensitive to "existential threats." Faced with a grim future and politics dominated by a corrupt, kleptocratic class, youth groups in Sudan, like their counterparts during the Arab Spring, rose up and challenged the status quo.

Led by the Sudanese Professionals' Association (SPA), a coalition of trade unionists and youth groups formed by hundreds of thousands of unemployed

graduates armed with IT skills, a broad-based opposition movement succeeded in removing al-Bashir from power in April 2019. Following the removal of al-Bashir, an alliance of political forces, *al-Hurriya awa altagier* military in August 2019 and a civilian cabinet negotiated the Juba Peace Agreement in 2020, opening the door for some armed movements to join the government.

Faced with a grim future and politics dominated by a corrupt, kleptocratic class, youth groups in Sudan, like their counterparts during the Arab Spring, rose up and challenged the status quo

In the meantime, the Resistance Committees (RCs) continued to put pressure on the civilian government to stick to the objectives of the December Revolution and bring those responsible for the Sit-in Massacre in June 2019 to justice, thereby ending an era of impunity and enstating democratic governance, where rule of law and civil-political rights for all Sudanese are protected. These reforms were not accepted by the army, the RSF or armed movements, as they would mean these groups losing control over the economy and facing persecution for the Sit-in Massacre. Under the leadership of General al-Burhan, the army staged a coup in October 2021 and reinstated al-Bashir aides to the power, triggering a second wave of broad-based, youth-led protests. The MENA region is closely following developments in Sudan, as they will likely shape how the latter will impact the former.

Conclusion

Sudan's impact on MENA can be traced back to well before the country obtained independence. The political class's failure in uniting the country and Islamism ended in the country's disintegration, leaving

large areas embroiled in violent conflict. Signs of state failure in Sudan will no doubt have a negative impact on MENA. Vehement efforts are therefore being taken by MENA stakeholders to intervene and shape the outcome of Sudan's internal conflicts: from Turkey's movements on the shores of the Red Sea to Israel's "return to Africa," in part to find new alliances as it faces growing international pressure over its occupation of the West Bank (Lynch, 2022). Saudi Arabia has bought wide swaths of agricultural land in Ethiopia and Sudan, and the UAE is looking to establish naval bases in the Horn of Africa and Sudanese ports. Egypt has been embroiled in a conflict with Ethiopia over its plans for a dam at the head of the Nile River. Cultural and political assumptions regarding MENA are being reconfigured, and Sudan will remain an important piece of this jigsaw whatever plans regional and world powers have for a new map in the making.

Bibliography

- EL-BATTAHANI, Atta. "Transition to Democracy in the Post-2011 Sudan: A Dismembered State Navigating Uncertainties." in EL BADAWI, I. and MAKDISI, S. (eds) *Democratic Transitions, In the Arab World*. Oxford: CUP, 2017, pp. 269-304.
- ALI, Abdelgadir Ali, "From Dependency to Dependency: Sudan Economy and the International Monetary Fund." Cairo, Dar El Mustabal, 1992.
- Al-Arab*, London-based Newspaper, A New Taif Agreement in Sudan, 16 June 2022, [ديج فئات، نزنتم يجراخ طيسو..ن ادوسلا يف ةيسايسلا ةمزالا ل حل تاءاللا ةطراخ مسر دي عي](https://www.sudanakhbar.com/1179115) www.sudanakhbar.com/1179115, retrieved on 26 June 2022.
- O'BRIEN, Jay "The Political Economy of Capitalist Agriculture in the Central Rainlands of Sudan." *Labour, Capital and Society*, April 1983 Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 8-32 .
- LYNCH, Marc. "The End of the Middle East: How an Old Map Distorts a New Reality." *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2022, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2022-02-22/end-middle-east, retrieved on 19 June 2022

Saudi Reforms: Change for Survival or for Progress?

Moustapha Chérif Bassiouni

Research Associate

Aix Marseille University, CNRS, IREMAM,

Aix-en-Provence

The modernization of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and detailed in his Vision 2030 plan¹ addresses multiple national and regional challenges. Hampered home by his political communications, the change conceived by MBS is provoking popular enthusiasm, especially among young people, but raises a number of issues regarding his despotic practices. The reformist line of the regent emir illustrates, in fact, an authoritarian liberalization. The motherland's survival justifies his modernizing measures... and paradoxically, his repressive methods against dissenting voices.

Building the “New Arabia”: A Matter of National Pride

The violent austerity that shook the kingdom following the sharp drop in oil prices in 2014 paved the way for the alternative of change embodied by Prince Mohammed with his father's endorsement. Vision 2030, placed under the prince's responsibility, is implemented through the sovereign fund he chairs, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), which aims to exceed \$1,700 billion in assets by 2025. It is the potential

financial backer of mega-projects to redesign the country's societal, urban, territorial and tourist landscape (AIUla, Qiddiya, the Umluj Red Sea Project, etc.) as well as numerous artistic, museum and film productions. The PIF also owns the state defence company Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI).

The promotion of such massive construction projects galvanizes national pride and tends to show the greatness of a Saudi nation that builds and innovates. Interviewed on 3 March 2022 by *The Atlantic*, the prince insisted on the authenticity of their Saudi identity, while underlining their uniqueness on a global scale: “*We are trying to evolve using the potential of the Saudi people, the culture of Saudi Arabia, our history. We want to bring something new to the world. Many of our projects are unique. They are Saudi. For example, Neom, created by our country, this project is developing solutions that no one has provided before.*”² A new zero-emission megacity in the Tabuk region on the Red Sea, Neom will be powered entirely by clean energy and run by cutting-edge technologies such as human-machine fusion, artificial intelligence and robotics. This futuristic region will also offer sports, cultural, scientific and tourist attractions. The mega-projects allow the kingdom to “rebrand” itself internationally through the dynamic management of its tourist and cultural sites, contributing to its attractiveness in the eyes of non-Muslim foreign visitors. They are also in line with the government's orientation to Saudiize the sphere of labour. Vision 2030 emphasizes national preference in terms of recruitment in both the private and public sectors.

¹ Unveiled by the Crown Prince in 2016 during an interview with *The Economist*, this plan for the future of Saudi Arabia aims to reduce the kingdom's dependence on oil, diversify the economy and develop public service sectors such as education, infrastructure, leisure and tourism. The American consultancy firm McKinsey drew it up based on 96 strategic objectives structured around 13 programmes.

² “Mohammed bin Salman Saudi Arabia Palace Interview: Absolute Power.” *The Atlantic*, 3 March 2022, (www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/04/mohammed-bin-salman-saudi-arabia-palace-interview/622822/).

Winning over Saudi Youth: The Challenge of a Generational and Identity Rupture

After getting rid of his competitors, Mohammed bin Salman invented a new model of “popular” legitimacy by targeting a priority audience, the urbanized Saudi youth who are ultra-connected to the world. Fatiha Dazi-Héni’s study shows that this priority audience is very enthusiastic about aspects of MBS’ change. The researcher observes that the modernization he is carrying out “has the vocation of a generational break that he fosters in order to create an identity for young people formatted to the values of Vision 2030. This is the fundamental marker of his leadership.”³ MBS’s priorities match their ambitions, going beyond circles of family and tribal affiliation. MBS’s governance of change primarily involves a re-consideration of the social contract. It strives to adapt youth to a new work culture, compensating them with entertainment packages in a liberalized society that is better integrated into globalization. So many remarkable measures of *infitah* (openness) have deeply marked their daily lives and their imagination: reopening of cinemas, authorization to drive for women, sports competitions (Formula One) and musical events. These major events are organized by the General Entertainment Authority chaired by Turki al-Sheikh, one of MBS’ loyalists. The adviser to the Royal *Diwan* boasted on his Facebook account about the huge success of the 2022 Riyadh Season, which attracted 11 million visitors and tens of thousands of foreign tourists from 125 countries. The festival also created more than 150,000 jobs for Saudis. The MDLBeast international music festival, meanwhile, welcomed more than 700,000 people in December 2021. The change has created many opportunities for young people, supported by a powerful communications enterprise that fosters nationalist sentiment among this audience.

Young people now associate the prince’s leadership with the mission of safeguarding the interests of the homeland. MBS’s communication strategy is largely handled by the Misk Foundation, which promotes the Vision 2030 programme and the propagation of the values of the “new Arabia.” This is coupled with an innovative approach to textbooks in order to joint-

ly shape the “ideal citizen” of the Fourth Saudi State. Tools of influence and guidance are massively mobilized for this purpose, including social networks and communication and research centres, such as the Etidal – Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology and the King Abdel Aziz Center for World Culture, also known as Ithra.

The mega-projects allow the kingdom to “rebrand” itself internationally through the dynamic management of its tourist and cultural sites

Two areas of reform can be discussed to better define the identity markers of post-Wahhabi Arabia: education and political control of the religious domain.

Pedagogy through the Prism of *Infitah*

The modernization of school curricula is helping to forge the “new Arabia” and shape a citizen who is committed to the values of Vision 2030. Thus, freeing school from the Wahhabi grip has been one of the main axes of the kingdom’s transformation. The decision by liberal Education Minister Ahmad al-Isa in July 2018 to abolish the *Tawu’iya al-islamiya* (Islamic Awareness) programmes was a turning point in the history of the Saudi education system. Pointed out as having fuelled fanaticism among youth, they have been replaced by the *Wa’yî al-fikrî* (Intellectual Sensitivity) programme, which praises citizenship and makes young people aware of the importance of being open to foreign cultures. The de-Wahhabization of education has continued from another angle. On 5 December 2018, the government decided to teach critical thinking skills and philosophy in high schools. These two reform measures illustrate a political determination to promote cultural *infitah* and to combat religious fundamentalism in society.

³ DAZI-HENI, Fatiha. “Arabie saoudite – Le pari sur la jeunesse de Mohammed Bin Salman.” *Étude 80*. Paris: IRSEM, May 2021.

Reform Means Breaking with the Ideological Matrix of the Saudi-Wahhabi State

The assertion of MBS's political power has been accompanied by an accentuated regulation of the clerical domain. This reflects the kingdom's entry into the post-Wahhabi era, as evidenced by the decline of the religious police (Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice). The government decision of 14 April 2016 tangibly reduced the powers of its zealous agents.

The heightened control of religious discourse corresponds to two priorities: advocating the kingdom's return to an Islam "open to all religions and to the whole world" and sanctioning all forms of extremism. This repressive political line is stigmatized by Islamist opponents as justifying the systematic murder of dissidents. The 2017-2018 arrest campaign targeted *ul-ema* from the former *Sahwa* protest movement. On 11 September 2017, ten prominent Islamist preachers and scholars were arrested. Ahmad al-Amari, the former dean of the Faculty of Quranic Sciences at Medina University, died in prison in January 2019.

The survival of the homeland depends on the ongoing *infitah*, which consequently requires the neutralization of those who contest the prince's choices

The government severely punishes any criticism targeting the reforms. Thus, the Saudi preacher Issam al-Uwayid, detained since 2017, was sentenced to four years in prison by the terrorism court for having criticized the president of the General Entertainment Authority. On the other hand, the prince enjoys the unflinching support of a brigade of quietist preachers wholly aligned with his reformist line, such as Aed al-Qarni, a former *Sahwî* militant who has assured that he recognizes himself in the Islam "of the middle way" that MBS preaches, and Salih al-Mughamsi, who glorifies the person and the actions of the emir and denigrates his opponents.

Finally, Saudi Arabia has abandoned its diplomacy of globalized Islamic preaching, as stated by the Sec-

retary General of the Islamic World League (an NGO founded in Mecca in 1962 and affiliated with the regime). Interviewed on 19 January 2020 by the Swiss daily *Le Matin*, Mohammed bin Abdel Karim al-Issa, former Saudi Minister of Justice, announced that his country would stop managing and funding places of worship outside its borders.

Modernize and... Repress: Emir Mohammed's Authoritarian Liberalization

Change in Saudi Arabia is being accompanied by the closure of channels of expression. Saudi political discourse consistently nurtures an exalted patriotism based on the primacy of the Saudi identity and the preservation of the national interest. Thus, the survival of the homeland depends on the ongoing *infitah*, which consequently requires the neutralization of those who contest the prince's choices.

Issam al-Zamil, a brilliant young economist and businessman, was sentenced in October 2020 to 15 years in prison after criticizing the privatization of 5% of the Saudi oil giant Aramco (a measure included in Vision 2030). The authorities wrongly accused him of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood and of inciting the population to revolt. The arrest of feminist activists in May 2018 has greatly affected the record of progress for women. Loujain al-Hathloul, Eman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Yusuf and Aisha al-Mana were planning to found an association for battered women and victims of domestic violence. They were immediately accused by the security authorities of threatening the country's stability and undermining national cohesion. The detainees also faced unprecedented attacks on social networks and by the media machine of the ruling elite. The hashtag "*umalâ' al-sifârât*" (agents of foreign embassies) and the particularly violent comments of the daily *Al-Jazirah* stating that "the fatherland rejects the renegades" are evidence of this.

But it was obviously the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi on 2 October 2018 by a security commando close to MBS in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul that shook the international image of the reformist prince. The journalist had long been part of the Saudi media and diplomatic establishment before fleeing to the United States a few days after being banned on 16 September 2017 from writing for

the *Al-Hayat* daily by order of its owner, Prince Khaled bin Sultan. The *Washington Post* columnist committed the unforgivable by countering the policy directions of the rulers on local and regional issues, such as political Islam, the arrest of the Sahwa ulama, the Arab Spring or Saudi-Israeli rapprochement. Khashoggi challenged the mode of government dominated by the Salman clan. According to him, the prince had led the kingdom into one-man rule by creating a climate of intimidation and fear. He too faced a wave of defamatory accusations and was called “a naturalized intruder who has marred the image of Arabia, serving the agendas of foreign intelligence, because his loyalty is not to the fatherland.”⁴ Abdel Rahman al-Rached, a well-known journalist with the daily *Asharq Al-Awsat*, called him “an *ikhwanî* [Muslim Brotherhood sympathizer] who chose to join his brotherhood.”⁵

It was obviously the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi that shook the international image of the reformist prince

The governance practices of the prince regent are consistent with the functioning of personalized despotic regimes. This is illustrated by the composition of the PIF, which has developed into a system of cli-

entelist patronage. The emir favours his followers, who are appointed to key positions because of their total loyalty to him. They thus feel in a position of strength due to this royal privilege, which explains their use of violence to defend their leader and protector against his detractors. On 18 December 2018, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on the alleged responsibility of MBS’s communications adviser, Saud al-Qahtani, in the abuses inflicted on the detained female activists.

Conclusion

Uncertainties loom over the Kingdom’s future. In addition to the exorbitant cost of MBS’s reforms, the global economic and health crises caused by the spread of Covid-19 have hampered his ambitions. Other major challenges also weigh on his agenda. The sharp fall in oil prices on 9 March 2020 has led to a significant increase in the budget deficit. The Riyadh government is still mired in the Yemeni conflict – since 2015 – and the crisis persists in its relations with this US ally. The change the prince represents raises questions about the effectiveness of his absolutist governance. Omnipresent in the complex work of reform, the harried emir seems to be setting the bar too high for his promises to the Saudis. Introducing a new social contract may not please everyone. Will the young Mohammed manage on his own to make his power survive despite the vagaries of the future?

⁴ The tweet alluded to Khashoggi’s distant Turkish heritage. Cited by *Al-Jazeera*, 20 September 2017, (www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2017/9/20/لصاوتي-موجدل-ةيدوعسلل-ءءاقتن-ءءب).

⁵ Tweet from 19 September 2017, (<https://twitter.com/aalrashed/status/910144530791374848>).

A New Chapter in the Drone Race in the Middle East

Jean-Loup Samaan

Senior Research Fellow

Middle East Institute of the National University of Singapore

In the past months, drones seem to have been spotted on every battleground: in May 2021, amid the war in Gaza, Hamas used (though unsuccessfully) kamikaze drones against Israel. In November, Algeria accused Morocco of a drone strike killing three Algerian workers in a region controlled by the Polisario Front. Then, two months later, Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the UAE, came under a series of attacks by the Houthi insurgency in Yemen, which combined drones as well as cruise and ballistic missiles.¹ Finally, in the spring of this year, Turkey's Bayraktar TB2 drones proved to be a vital weapon for Ukrainian forces to disrupt the Russian ground invasion.

All these war vignettes are evidence that drones are becoming a central component of military strategies across the Middle East. But if the proliferation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) is now a fact of life, its exact ramifications for regional stability are yet to be fully comprehended.

The race to develop or import such systems has grown in earnest in the last ten years. Before that, only the US and Israel had significantly invested in the production of unmanned systems. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) first used UAVs during the Yom Kippur war in 1973, and today operate a wide range of them, with air force squadrons employing armed

drones such as the Heron TP and the Hermes 450. Those have been seen in action in targeted killings of terrorist leaders from Lebanon to Gaza. Israel has also been one of the biggest exporters worldwide, with companies like Elbit Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries selling systems to at least 26 countries from Latin America to Southeast Asia.

At first, Israel was also the main drone supplier to the Turkish armed forces. But following the political dispute between both countries, which culminated with the 2011 crisis over the Mavi Marmara Flotilla, arms sales were cut and Turkish defence industries ordered by Ankara to develop their own alternative. Since then, Turkey has become a kind of "drone power" and it is estimated that Turkish armed forces now operate about 130 indigenous drones.²

One of the new systems that came out of this reform of Ankara's procurement policy was the Bayraktar TB2, arguably the most iconic system developed today by Turkey's defence industry with orders made to at least 19 countries around the world. Turkish forces have used drones extensively on the battlefield in Syria and northern Iraq, but also domestically against militants of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in eastern Anatolia. In 2020, Turkey's use of drones to counter an offensive of the Syrian Army against Ankara-backed rebels underlined how central the system had become for the country's military strategy.

Noticeably, the TB2 is not considered a masterpiece of military engineering but for many potential buyers, it represents an affordable way to compensate for

¹ SAMAAN, Jean-Loup "Beyond the Houthi Attack on Abu Dhabi: How to Address the Drone & Missile Threat to Civilian Areas?" Trends Institute, 25 January 2022. <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/beyond-the-houthi-attack-on-abu-dhabi-how-to-address-the-drone-missile-threat-to-civilian-areas/>

² ROSSITER, Ash and CANNON, Brendon J. "Turkey's rise as a drone power: trial by fire." *Defense & Security Analysis*, 2022, 38:2, 210-229, DOI: [10.1080/14751798.2022.2068562](https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2022.2068562)

limited air forces. As sarcastically described by Aaron Stein, the TB2 is “the Toyota Corolla” of UAVs.³ During that same period, other Middle Eastern countries also invested in drones. Iran’s Revolutionary Guards have been developing their own indigenous capabilities with armed systems like the Shahed-129, the Mohajer 6 or the Ababil-3. Unlike Turkey, Iran is not a latecomer to the drone race. Tehran started its drone programme in the 1980s, around the same time it launched its ballistic missile programme. In both cases, it was a response to the trauma caused by the eight-year war with Iraq, which saw Iranian cities come under fire from Iraq’s Scud missiles.⁴

On the other side of the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia and the UAE bought in past years Chinese drones, like the Wing Loong systems (models I and II), as well as the CH-4. Noticeably, the Gulf states’ decision to turn to China for armed drones was a consequence of the US government’s refusal to provide them with access to the Predator UAV. Eventually, decision-makers in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi found Chinese drones to be a critical instrument in their war efforts in Yemen. In fact, drones may be the best field for China’s arms sales in the Middle East today: alongside Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria and Iraq have also turned to Beijing to equip themselves with UAVs.⁵

The motivations driving Middle Eastern states in this drone race vary depending on the status of their national armed forces. For Israel, whose military is the most advanced in the region, drones provide air support to ground operations, and they can replace fighter jets or special forces in counterterrorism missions, although IDF commanders do not look at it as a game changer. In fact, the IDF force structure was not substantially affected by the deployment of UAVs. For other armed forces in the region though, UAVs can compensate for shortcomings, either in resources or in personnel. In a way similar to ballistic missiles, UAVs can be seen as a low-cost alternative to

the build-up of an air force. For Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, drones are a perfect instrument to add to their arsenal, alongside ballistic and cruise missiles. They then serve a similar operational function in coercing the US and its Gulf partners. This is coherent with Iran’s “forward defence” military doctrine.⁶

The TB2 is not considered a masterpiece of military engineering but for many potential buyers, it represents an affordable way to compensate for limited air forces

There is also a logistical advantage to UAVs: unlike a traditional air fleet, drones do not demand the same level of maintenance or the same amount of pilot training. It does not mean anyone can operate a military drone, but the cost of entry is significantly lower than for an air force built around advanced fighter jets.

This is also the reason why the small monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula are seduced by the potentialities of drones. Because of their small national population (about 313,000 for Qataris and 900,000 for Emiratis) and their unease about relying on foreigners in the military domain, Gulf rulers see unmanned systems as a perfect solution. This is also influencing Gulf thinking in homeland security: a few years ago, Dubai bragged about the introduction of its first “Robocop” patrolling the streets of the city.⁷

Drones also represent an opportunity in the defence industry sector. Apart from Israel, Iran and Turkey, other Middle Eastern countries rely on external suppliers, but there is a clear desire from the UAE, and to a lesser extent Saudi Arabia, to give priority to unmanned systems in their current push to strengthen

³ WEAVER, Matthew “What Weapons have Other Countries Supplied to Ukraine?” *The Guardian*, 17 March 2022, www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/17/what-weapons-have-other-countries-supplied-to-ukraine

⁴ TABATABAI, Ariane “Decades in the making: The Iranian drone program.” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 12 October 2017. <https://thebulletin.org/2017/10/decades-in-the-making-the-iranian-drone-program/>

⁵ BOWMAN, Bradley; THOMPSON, Jared and BROBST, Ryan “China’s surprising drone sales in the Middle East.” *Defense News*, 23 April 2021. www.defensenews.com/opinion/2021/04/23/chinas-surprising-drone-sales-in-the-middle-east/

⁶ YOSSEF, Amr “Upgrading Iran’s Military Doctrine: An Offensive “Forward Defense.” Middle East Institute, 10 December 2019. www.mei.edu/publications/upgrading-irans-military-doctrine-offensive-forward-defense

⁷ Reuters, “Robocop joins Dubai police to fight real life crime.” 1 June 2017. www.reuters.com/article/us-emirates-robocop-idUSKBN18S4K8

their defence industrial base. Abu Dhabi is evidently keen on emulating Turkey's success story of the past decade. Turkey's experience conveys the promise for other countries in the region that investing on "niche capabilities" like UAVs is feasible in a short amount of time and that it can serve a political purpose – i.e., to rally the population behind a military system that feeds nationalistic sentiments.

As this Middle East drone race continues unabated, it slowly redefines military power across the region and portends new risks of instability. First, the growing affordability and accessibility of UAVs mean that their proliferation cannot realistically be curbed. There is no pre-existing legal or diplomatic framework able to contain this phenomenon.⁸ As of today, the Missile Transfer Control Regime provides guidelines, such as the prohibition on transferring UAVs "capable of delivering a payload of at least 500 kg to a range of at least at least 300km," but no country in the Middle East is a member of this non-proliferation initiative, leaving the framework inapplicable.⁹

The absence of regulating mechanisms enables local states to deploy drones in an atmosphere of impunity that only exacerbates the race. This is even more concerning as Middle Eastern countries have not shied away from providing drones to non-state actors at the service of their proxy wars. In Libya, the militia of Marshall Khalifa Haftar, a former officer in Muammar Gaddafi's army, launched an offensive on Tripoli in 2019, using Chinese-made Wing Loong UAVs, which were likely provided by the UAE, a key supporter of Haftar. Remarkably, Turkey then responded by supporting the forces of the Government of National Accord in Tripoli with the delivery of TB2 drones. Likewise, Iran has been supporting its close non-state allies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and the Houthis in Yemen. In each case, these militant organizations claimed to operate so-

called "indigenous" drones, but their design revealed obvious Iranian support.¹⁰

The race is also unlikely to stop because of the perceived cost in not obtaining them. This relates to the fact that defence against drones remains difficult. The most advanced systems operated by countries in the region such as Iron Dome, Patriot or THAAD batteries, were not initially designed to intercept a UAV, whose trajectory greatly differs from a ballistic missile – be it in terms of altitude or manoeuvrability. In recent years, non-state actors have demonstrated an ability to quickly change tactics thanks to the introduction of drones in their arsenals. The Houthis used kamikaze drones as a first salvo targeting Saudi Arabia's air defence systems before firing a barrage of missiles at civilian areas.¹¹ A "swarm" of drones, just like rockets, can harass and exhaust the defence of a country by their sheer quantity.

This does not mean that it is only counteroffensive means that work against UAVs. Israel has been investing in anti-drone defence systems for several years. Rafael developed several systems designed to add to the territorial protection provided by Iron Dome and missile defence systems like Arrow. Among them is the Drone Dome, a system that aims to intercept micro and mini-UAVs by using a high-powered laser beam. Other Israeli companies such as Skylock Systems, have also developed their own system. Unsurprisingly, the new Arab partners of Israel such as the UAE and Morocco, have shown an interest in benefiting from Israel's know-how in the domain. Rabat publicly acknowledged in 2021 that it was procuring Israeli drones as well as counter-drone capacities.

All in all, the affordability and accessibility of armed drones clearly trump the technical uncertainties and the high cost of defensive systems. In the absence of any diplomatic initiative to regulate the current trends, the drone race is likely to continue in the Middle East.

⁸ ARDUINO, Alessandro "Increasing reliance on drones raises critical questions about war-time ethics." *The Arab Weekly*, 31 August 2019. <https://theabweekly.com/increasing-reliance-drones-raises-critical-questions-about-war-time-ethics>

⁹ KERR, Paul "U.S.-Proposed Missile Technology Control Regime Changes." Congressional Research Service, 10 May 2022. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/nuke/IF11069.pdf>

¹⁰ GAULKIN, Thomas "Drones add little to rocket-filled Israel-Palestine skies, but represent growing global threat." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 20 May 2021. <https://thebulletin.org/2021/05/drones-add-little-to-rocket-filled-israel-palestine-skies-but-represent-growing-global-threat/>

¹¹ Conflict Armament Research, *Evolution of UAVs Employed by Houthi Forces in Yemen*, February 2020. www.conflictarm.com/dispatches/evolution-of-uavs-employed-by-houthi-forces-in-yemen/

Strategic Sectors | **Security & Politics**

Water Crises in North Africa and the Middle East: When Anthropogenic Causes Combine with Capricious Skies

Pierre Blanc¹

Professor of Geopolitics

Bordeaux Sciences Agro and Sciences Po Bordeaux

North Africa and the Middle East are now the driest regions in the world. There is nothing new about this. For many centuries, the peoples who live there have ingeniously circumvented this constraint, to the point that they have been described as hydraulic civilizations. Pharaonic Egypt and the Nabatean civilization of Petra, followed by the Arab apogees of the 9th and 12th centuries, were made possible by major social, legal and technical innovations in this geographic area, which regularly saw the emergence of hydro-powers. Though water has been an attribute of civilization, it is now a divisive factor, while at the same time revealing dynamics of political corruption that lead to its misuse. In addition to these two factors of crisis – conflict and predation – there are two other, more unprecedented factors: population growth and climate change, which are now upsetting the long-established yet fragile balance between populations and water resources.

Demographics and Climate

Let us first consider these last two factors before discussing the geopolitical and political underpinnings of the current crisis. In terms of population, the demographic transition has been unusually dynamic, with a quadrupling of the region's inhabitants since 1950. Not only are the 440 million inhabitants much

more numerous than at the end of the Second World War, but their food needs have increased tenfold due to the transition to more calorie-intensive diets. Admittedly, this food pressure on water resources is partly cushioned by agricultural imports, with all the fragility of being dependent, as we can see today with the war in the Ukraine granary. But agricultural production still represents 80% of the total.

In addition, climate change is already strongly felt in the region. For climate experts, the region is even a global hotspot for the changes taking place: temperatures are expected to rise more than the general average and precipitation is expected to fall to a greater extent. It is therefore not surprising that Algeria and Iranian Khuzestan experienced severe water crises in the summer of 2021, Iraq in 2018 and again in 2021, and that Morocco is now experiencing its worst drought since 1980. These are only the most severe of the recent crises where climate change is undoubtedly a factor. In many cases, the severity of the crisis has led to protests that are sometimes violent. Indeed, the social and health consequences are serious. In Iraq in particular, many farmers in the south of the country have had to give up their activity, which had already been undermined by years of conflict, and tens of thousands of people have fallen ill from severely degraded water. Without going back too far, we can also recall the terrible drought that occurred in Syria between 2006 and 2010, forcing some 300,000 people from the north-east of the country to flee; for some commentators, it was even a cause of the rise in mistrust against the Bashar Al-Assad regime, to the point that the civil war that followed is sometimes presented as one of

¹ Pierre Blanc is also a researcher at LAM (Les Afriques dans le monde) and editor-in-chief of the journal *Confluences Méditerranée*. His latest published work: BLANC, Pierre and CHAGNOLLAUD, Jean-Paul. *Le rendez-vous manqué des peuples. De l'échec des révolutions populaires aux dérives populistes*, Autrement, 2022.

the first climate wars. We must approach this analysis with great caution, as the uprising has a multiplicity of causes. The fact remains that the droughts already frequent in these climates are becoming even more so. While this climatic reality is not without impact on the water crisis, other factors explain it.

Climate change is already strongly felt in the region. For climate experts, the region is even a global hotspot for the changes taking place: temperatures are expected to rise more than the general average and precipitation is expected to fall to a greater extent

Geopolitics

Apart from blaming the climate, the authorities of countries in crisis tend to blame the other riverside neighbours of the same basin, in a water-sharing situation that is much more prevalent in the Middle East than in the Maghreb. Thus, in the recent crisis in Iraq or in Syria before 2010, the authorities referred to the withdrawals made by Turkey upstream. This geopolitical dimension of the water problem in the Mesopotamian basin, as elsewhere in the Middle East, which is a veritable arena for “water violence” due to the aridity predominating there, should not be overlooked any more than the climate. Such violence is perpetrated by countries that exploit a favourable balance of power to set themselves up as hydro-hegemonies. Regardless of whether they are located upstream or downstream, it is the power differential that prevails. And there is no need for the wars that the expression “water wars” tends to suggest.

Establishing itself as a hydro-hegemon, Turkey, the water tower of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, has been deploying vast hydraulic projects in the south-east of its territory since the early 1990s. The GAP project (South-East Anatolia Project) aims to irrigate and produce hydroelectricity in this Kurdish area, which, thanks to these development efforts, should become more cohesive with the rest of the country.

But this is not without effect on Iraq and Syria downstream. Support for the guerrilla movement of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which for a time hampered the deployment of this major project, has long allowed these two countries to slow it down in order to preserve the discharge of the two rivers flowing through their territory. But their political weakening since the American intervention in Iraq in 2003 and the civil war in Syria after 2011 has allowed Ankara to accelerate the development of irrigation, which diverts part of the water from the two rivers before they leave Turkey. If 500,000 hectares have already been irrigated, what will happen to Iraq and Syria when the project reaches its target of 1.7 million hectares?

In the region, Turkey does not have a monopoly on this hydro-hegemony. In the Jordan River basin, Israel, protected by its military arsenal, also imposes its hydro-hegemony on its upstream neighbours. Lebanon is only too aware of this since it cannot fully use the waters in the south of its territory but has to keep them flowing towards Israel. And how can we forget the Palestinians, who have to be content with using 20% of their groundwater, so that the majority of it reaches Israeli territory? Thanks to a highly effective system of constraints (control of wells, irrigation quotas, etc.) set up after 1967, the Israelis have managed to appropriate 80% of the West Bank’s groundwater, to the point that the Oslo II agreements ratified this situation in 1995. Of course, this was a provisional agreement, and everything was to be renegotiated at the end of the peace process. But the peace process is dead and the provisional agreement endures, while the commission in charge of the “agreement,” with its false airs of cooperation, is only the expression of Israel’s domination, because the Israeli right of veto ensures effective containment of Palestinian needs. Although the West Bank Palestinians can only use 20% of the water in the West Bank, the population has increased considerably since 1993, which jeopardizes agricultural development and even access to drinking water. In the Gaza Strip, the situation is worse. The population of 2 million inhabitants has to rely on a water table that is so low it becomes saline with the inflow of sea water, not to mention the fact that the human concentration requires extensive sanitation. The production of drinking water is therefore difficult and requires a great deal of infrastructure. However, not only did each of the various military operations of 2008-2009-2012 and 2014 destroy some of these

infrastructures, but the blockade by Israel does not facilitate their development, given the filtering of materials carried out at the entrance to the Gaza Strip. Finally, on the Nile, Egypt and, to a lesser extent, Sudan, have also been able to impose their hydro-hegemony on upstream countries, starting with Ethiopia, which is now taking its revenge after decades of relegation. As early as 1959, Egypt and Sudan, which had just become independent, had agreed to share the waters of the Nile and to grant themselves a de facto right of veto over upstream development. By organizing the repudiation of this agreement by the upstream countries in 2010, then starting the construction of the Renaissance Dam in 2011, despite protests from Cairo and Khartoum, Addis Ababa has shown its determination: after a decade of Egypt and Sudan's opposition to this project, it has been completed. Now the dispute is about how quickly this vast water reservoir should be filled. While Egypt demands a long fill, in order to spare the downstream flow, Ethiopia wants it to be quick, as it is in a hurry to generate hydroelectricity for its territory and beyond. Although direct conflict has been avoided so far, tensions remain high in the basin. It must also be noted that hydro-hegemony is being shifted to the Ethiopian headwaters, where 86% of the Nile's flow to Egypt arises.

Political Aspects

While these hydro-hegemonic behaviours and the deterioration of the climate have serious consequences, certain powers in the throes of these crises tend to ignore internal factors. In this manner, they attempt to exonerate themselves from any responsibility. Hence, lack of governance is a reality that is difficult to ignore for anyone willing to take a serious look. Let's consider the development of speculative agriculture, at times very expensive in terms of water – for example, intensive cotton cultivation, which increased the effects of the drought in Syria tenfold between 2006 and 2010 – , inadequate pricing policies, the failure to heed the warnings of scientists in these countries, as well as the delays in building infrastructure or repairing networks.

This water crisis is in fact only part of the systemic crisis afflicting a region that is plagued by predatory states, inadequate public policies and ongoing conflicts

This incompetence is above all compounded by a state of corruption characteristic of such authoritarian regimes. For instance, in Algeria, as part of the partial purge carried out by the “post-Bouteflika” government, four former water resource ministers were sent to prison for corruption. In order to keep a grip on power, the new authorities, following the lead of their predecessors, felt obliged to give pledges to the protesters of the popular uprising (*Hirak*) launched in 2019. In Iran, the construction of dams, which expose large volumes to evaporation, was carried out without public tenders or scientific studies, the company in charge of their construction being in the hands of the Revolutionary Guards, with all the corruption that this situation entails. In Iraq, where power is in the hands of militia groups, investment budgets have regularly vanished. In Syria, this corruption at the top levels of power also exists at lower levels. In all the countries of the region, many wells for agriculture and drinking water are built illegally, but this corruption from below is in fact sanctioned from above, with the authorities turning a blind eye to the practices of a population that is all the more difficult to handle because the authorities feel they have little legitimacy. A “fierce” state is not a strong state... The state of revolt in the region since the beginning of the 2010s is there to remind them of this.

This water crisis is in fact only part of the systemic crisis afflicting a region that is plagued by predatory states, inadequate public policies and ongoing conflicts. In any case, it reveals that climate change cannot be tackled, beyond innovations of all kinds, without the Rule of Law and cooperation. That is the agenda of this region. Many of its residents, tired of the prevailing violence, long for this.

Youth, Women and Employment in the Mediterranean Region: Continuity and Change

Roger Albinyana
Managing Director

Edward Rodger Martinez
Research Fellow
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),
Barcelona

The Union for the Mediterranean's (UfM) 5th Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour, held on 18 May this year in Marrakesh (Morocco), gave ministers the chance to address the issue of unemployment, particularly affecting young people and women in southern and eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) countries.¹ This issue has consistently been at the forefront of discussions on international cooperation in the Mediterranean region, since SEMED countries remain characterized by exceptionally high levels of unemployment, a large informal economy and low female labour participation. The UfM Ministerial Conferences on Employment and Labour therefore shed light on how Euro-Mediterranean cooperation adapts itself and reacts to shocks such as the 2008 economic crisis, the Arab Spring, the refugee crisis and, most recently, the Covid-19 pandemic.

The 2022 UfM Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour took place not only in the context of the post-pandemic recovery, but also against the backdrop of the European Year of Youth, and, finally,

with the explicit aim of bringing gender to the forefront of its agenda. All of this, in parallel with the European Union's New Agenda for the Mediterranean, combines with the pressing issues of the green and digital transitions. The ministerial declaration produced by the conference sets out a wide-ranging assessment of the current challenges around issues on employment and labour in the region, and aims to respond to these challenges with a renewed and ambitious focus on youth and women.

Current Trends in Youth Labour Markets

Whereas youth unemployment has slowly decreased as a global trend since 2014, with the easing of the most severe effects of the financial crisis, rates in the southern Mediterranean countries have shown no improvement.² According to publicly available data³ provided by the International Labour Organization (2022), youth unemployment rates in the southern Mediterranean region, with the exception of Syria and Libya, saw a peak in the aftermath of the revolts in 2011, and from 2014 they stabilized with a relative declining trend until 2020, when they were hit by the economic crisis caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic. This, along with the ongoing political turmoil in the region, has been a major factor of political and social unrest. Hence, youth unemployment, along with its various effects and consequences, is a "*generational time bomb*" (Dhillon and Youssef,

¹ Throughout this article we use the term "southern and eastern Mediterranean countries" and "southern Mediterranean countries" alike to refer to the Arab Mediterranean countries. In EU jargon these are known as the "EU Southern Neighbourhood," even if Israel is not properly considered in this paper as it follows very distinctive patterns and features in terms of human development compared with the Arab Mediterranean countries.

² See, for instance, the report edited by the International Labour Organization (ILO) entitled "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017." at www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_598669.pdf.

³ See ILO, "Youth unemployment rates – ILO modelled estimates." ILOSTAT, accessed 28-05-2022, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data>.

2009), and remains one of the main drivers towards insecurity and instability in the region.

The factors that triggered the wave of protests and uprisings in 2011 across the SEMED countries highlighted the reality for large segments of the population, who felt themselves excluded from private and public life. Moreover, it underlined the significance of the demographic profile for the region's youth. Never before has the region had such a large share of youth compared to other world regions, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa. Youth aged 15-29 make up a bit less than 30 percent of the population, compared with an average 15 percent in high-income countries, which is even lower in northern Mediterranean countries such as Italy or Spain, where the share of youth makes up around 14 percent of the total population.⁴

Furthermore, most countries in SEMED have witnessed little change in economic structure. The public sector, instead of creating the environment necessary for manufacturing, investment and trade to flourish, has forged monopolistic and uncompetitive alliances, while renouncing to a sound and sustainable system of public finances. This has led to a stifled private sector unable to absorb the demographic dividend by providing a sufficient amount of job opportunities and unable to create a fertile, business-friendly environment for new, young and independent entrepreneurs. Moreover, in some countries this has been aggravated by political shocks of different natures; authoritarian rule and repression, coupled with the systematic distribution of unproductive rents accrued not only from the exploitation of natural resources, but also created through licences, monopolies and economic controls. Demographic pressures and unchanged economic structures are the leading causes of youth unemployment rates in the region (Ahmed, 2012; ILO, 2020).

Not only does youth unemployment last longer than in any other region in the world due to insufficient labour demand, but also the school-to-work transition is particularly arduous given that education is not a guarantee against unemployment. For instance, data suggest that in countries such as Tunisia, Jordan or

Egypt, young people that have completed their tertiary education are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than those with primary education or less (UNDP, 2016). In other developing regions, as the level of education rises, the unemployment rates decrease.

Youth unemployment remains one of the main drivers towards insecurity and instability in the region

An alarming trend in the field of youth employability is the growing number of youngsters who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). In accordance with the latest estimates of the International Labour Organization (ILO), with available Eurostat statistics for 2019, the NEET rate for the 15-24 age group is 21 percent in Algeria, 28 percent in Egypt, 32 percent in Jordan, 22 percent in Morocco and 25 percent in Tunisia, while in the EU it is around 12.5 percent. The rate has been proved to be much higher for young women and it increases with low educational attainment (early drop-out).⁵

Added to this are a wide range of economic and social consequences; labour market conditions are one of the most relevant pull factors for migration flows from certain countries to others with better labour prospects. Youth emigration from SEMED countries has clearly increased during the last decade, amidst a diversification of the origin of migrants and the ways to migrate to Europe. Another consequence amongst youth is radicalization. Indeed, an overall sense of political, economic, social and cultural exclusion has pushed some in this direction.

In recent years, a number of active labour market policies have been implemented by public authorities in the region. But these alone cannot address the systemic challenges of youth unemployment, low

⁴ See ILO, "Population by sex and age based on UN estimates and projections." ILOSTAT, accessed 28-05-2022, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data>.

⁵ See ILO, "Share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) – ILO modelled estimates." ILOSTAT, Accessed 28-05-2022, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data>.

rates of productivity and competitiveness, or stagnant labour demand. Institutional stability, predictability and security are key factors to ensure sustained economic growth, which can then be translated into more inclusive, dynamic, open and flexible labour markets able to generate sustainable and decent jobs for young people and women. But these factors are mutually reinforcing; without inclusive development, both economically and politically, for young people within their societies, insecurity in the region will continue to grow. To this end, enhancing regional cooperation at the Euro-Mediterranean level is of the utmost importance.

In summary, the following current trends in labour markets hinder human development in SEMED countries, while they have become central destabilizing elements that generate considerable turmoil in the region's collective development:

- Failure of the education-to-work transition
- Financial exclusion and dependence in light of high unemployment and precarious job markets
- Exclusion of young women
- Exclusion of youth from public and political life

The Union for the Mediterranean's 5th Ministerial Conference on “*Employment and Employability of the Most Vulnerable, Especially among Youth and Women,*” 2022

How, then, does this year's UfM ministerial conference, and its subsequent declaration, respond to these trends?

The four previous UfM ministerial conferences on employment and labour were held in Marrakesh (2008), Brussels (2010), Jordan (2016) and Cascais (2019). While each sought to respond to contemporary challenges in its own way, it is also worth

noting the continuity in their conclusions. Since Marrakesh 2008, ministers have highlighted the high unemployment rates in the region, a young workforce facing social and economic exclusion, a lack of decent jobs and a large informal economy.⁶ The subsequent policy priorities have therefore also followed a certain line; the creation of decent jobs, for example, has featured in every ministerial declaration so far, as has the importance of maintaining social dialogue in the region, or encouraging the transition from informal to formal employment.⁷ The UfM ministerial declarations can be seen, therefore, as part of a wider context of Euro-Mediterranean attempts at cooperation and integration which, despite some progress in countries like Morocco, have generally failed to achieve their goals of unlocking the potential of the young workforce in SEMED countries, and often continue to emphasize similar policy priorities in response.

An alarming trend in the field of youth employability is the growing number of youngsters who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

This is not to say that this year's ministerial conference does not have its particularities, especially in the context of its response to the pandemic. The most prominent of these is what is broadly described as the green transition, which includes the UN's 2030 Agenda, and the inclusion of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are mentioned for the first time in a UfM Ministerial declaration on employment and labour.⁸ This ministerial declaration is the first to place so much emphasis on the notion of

⁶ See, for example; Ministerial Declaration 2008 (https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/employment_health_conclusions_1108_en.pdf), 2; Ministerial Declaration 2010 (<https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Declaration-Labor-2010.pdf>), 3; Ministerial Declaration 2016 (<https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/UfM-Ministerial-Declaration-Employment-and-Labour.pdf>), 2; Ministerial Declaration 2019 (<https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Ministerial-Declaration-EN-1.pdf>), 3-4; Ministerial Declaration 2022 (<https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Final-UfM-Ministerial-Declaration-EN.pdf>), 3.

⁷ See; Ministerial Declaration 2008, 1,5,7; Ministerial Declaration 2010, 4-5, 7; Ministerial Declaration 2016, 1-3; Ministerial Declaration 2019, 1, 3, 5; Ministerial Declaration 2022, 4-6.

⁸ See Ministerial Declaration 2022, 2.

a “just transition” and on social justice as a key pillar to sustainable development.⁹

This brings us to the question of youth and women; in the context of these notions of a just and inclusive transition, the 2022 declaration shows promising signs of having put youth and women at the forefront of its post-Covid employment agenda.

This ministerial declaration is the first to place so much emphasis on the notion of a “just transition” and on social justice as a key pillar to sustainable development

We can compare, for instance, the assessment in this year’s ministerial declaration of the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on women and young people, to the similar assessment of how these groups had seen the worst effects of the 2008 financial crisis in the 2010 ministerial declaration. In 2010, the fact that “vulnerable groups have been most affected by the crisis, including the young unemployed, women, working poor and poor households” is kept to a somewhat brief statement.¹⁰ The 2022 declaration, however, elaborates on this significantly, not only recognizing in much more detail why and how women have been disproportionately affected by lockdowns, but placing them at the centre of the proposed policy solutions.¹¹ With the ambition of building a “long-term socioeconomic recovery, as well as resilient, sustainable, inclusive and connected economies” in the Mediterranean, the 2022 Ministerial Declaration therefore places women and youth more at the forefront of its agenda than it ever has before.¹²

⁹ See Ministerial Declaration 2022, 4-5.

¹⁰ See Ministerial Declaration 2010, 7.

¹¹ See Ministerial Declaration 2022, 2-3.

¹² See Ministerial Declaration 2022, 2.

¹³ See Ministerial Declaration 2010, 7.

¹⁴ See Ministerial Declaration 2016, 1.

¹⁵ See Ministerial Declaration 2019, 4.

¹⁶ For more analysis on migration and the Euro-Mediterranean partnerships, see E. Cohen-Hadria & K. Sidf o, “A new agenda for the Mediterranean: Are the EU tools and means of action up to its ambitions?” 2022, [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/702558/EXPO_STU\(2022\)702558_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/702558/EXPO_STU(2022)702558_EN.pdf)

Lastly, it is worth mentioning the contentious issue of migration, and its absence from the 2022 Ministerial Declaration, despite its relevance to issues around youth unemployment in the region, since large numbers of young people turn to irregular migration routes in response to social and economic exclusion. While the 2010 ministerial declaration emphasized that “legal migration constitutes a factor that contributes to economic and social development,”¹³ by 2016 the focus, unsurprisingly, had shifted towards the “refugee crisis,”¹⁴ and in 2019 the declaration emphasized the need to “fight against irregular migration.”¹⁵ Perhaps in recognition of the clear friction between advocating for economic integration and job creation in the region on the one hand, and stringent border measures on the other, migration is, on the whole, left out of this year’s ministerial declaration.¹⁶

Policy Responses

In spite of the policy responses offered by the UfM Ministerial Conference, youth in SEMED countries will continue experiencing difficulties in contributing to stability and engaging in security partnerships, unless the central question of inclusive and human development is properly tackled, which includes creating job opportunities for young people. While it is very difficult to illustrate policy responses through a “one-size-fits-all” approach for all SEMED countries, it is important to highlight a set of structural reforms and policy recommendations that can enhance socioeconomic development for young people in the region, and therefore foster more inclusive, dynamic, open and flexible labour markets, able to generate sustainable and decent jobs for young people.

Some of these policy responses can be summarized as follows:

- Enhance the role of the public sector in SEMED countries by improving the provision of public and social goods such as education, vocational education and training; housing policies that favour the emancipation of young people; the planning of new infrastructure that reduces the gap between rural and urban communities; and control of inflation.

Is very difficult to illustrate policy responses through a “one-size-fits-all” approach for all SEMED countries

- Scrap the existing constraints on the demand side of labour markets that are not supportive for business development and job creation; upgrade the business environment to support private sector-led development and growth; simplify the administrative procedures for new businesses; nourish an ecosystem that promotes MSME growth and entrepreneurship by facilitating access to finance, and opening economies to enable them greater access to foreign markets and FDI.
- Young women should be given full attention and prioritized by the authorities in order to combat their exclusion from public life, gender-based violence and discrimination in education and labour markets. Legislative reforms are not sufficient and need to be accompanied by sound policy measures to increase women’s contribution to the labour force, increasing their access to vocational training and offering them better options to balance work with family care. Schemes of maternity and paternity leave should also be enacted whenever possible, as

well as a more flexible employment system that enables women to get part-time jobs. Finally, more attention should be given to women who have suffered gender-based violence by aligning all public services: judiciary, police and social services in the struggle against these atrocious acts.

- Develop comprehensive programmes to back youngsters in transition – from education to work and from adolescence to adulthood – which consider the different needs young people have in terms of housing, education, training, employment, marriage and civil participation. These should include legislative and economic reforms that broaden social security systems and intervene in the real estate market, reducing the costs of housing (for both renting and buying) for young people, and enforce financial aid schemes that support the most disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, especially in rural areas.
- Improve the effectiveness of active labour market policies (ALMP)¹⁷ and tackle the skills mismatch. ALMPs should play a significant role in facilitating the (re-)insertion of youth into the labour market. To this end, in the design of policies and programmes, there should be dialogue and cooperation between public and private employment services, involving all relevant stakeholders, including social partners, education and training providers and youth organizations. This should produce a holistic approach between supply and demand-side ALMPs. On the one hand, there is a need to provide appropriate career guidance, with services targeting youth, and particularly female youth, as well as services focused on providing digital and green skills. On the other hand, these policies should go hand in hand with the abovementioned improvement of the business environment so as to create more (and more decent) jobs.
- Enhance regional cooperation at the Euro-Mediterranean level. There is no doubt that

¹⁷ Active labour market policies (ALMPs) are public policies that help adjust the level of labour supply with that of labour demand. Traditionally, ALMPs focus on the supply side of the labour market by assisting job seekers in finding a job, either by upgrading their labour skills (active policies) or supporting their income (passive policies).

all initiatives undertaken at the level of the Union for the Mediterranean, in particular the Med4Jobs programme, should not only be enhanced but also scaled up, multiplied and replicated. The UfM offers a unique platform

The UfM offers a unique platform where decisions that favour the progressive integration of labour markets and progressive harmonization of labour legislation in the region could be made

not only for mutual learning and the exchange of best practices, but also where decisions that favour the progressive integration of labour markets and progressive harmonization of labour legislation in the region could be made. Furthermore, progressive integration in numerous economic areas would be a catalyst for generating sustainable youth employment in southern Mediterranean countries (as predicted in a study by Ayadi, Ramoset al., 2017).

Bibliography

- AHMED, M. "Youth Unemployment in the MENA Region: Determinants and Challenges." World Economic Forum's *Addressing the 100 Million Youth Challenge – Perspectives on Youth Employment in the Arab World*, 2012.
- ASSAAD, R. "Making sense of Arab labour markets: The enduring legacy of dualism." *IZA Journal of Labor & Development*, 3:6, 2014.
- AYADI, R., RAMOS, R. et al. *How regional integration leads to youth employment in the Euro-Mediterranean region*, IEMed-EMEA, 2017.
- DESAI, R.; OLOFSGARD, A. & YOUSEF, T. "The logic of authoritarian bargains." *Economics & Politics*, Volume 21, 2009.
- DHILLON, N. & YOUSSEF, T. *Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009.
- EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION. *Youth Employment: Challenges and Policy Responses in Arab Mediterranean Countries*. ETF, Torino, 2013.
- UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP). *Arab Human Development Report. Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*. New York: United Nations publications, 2016.

The Future of Mediterranean Tourism in a (Post) Covid World. Back to Mass Tourism or Leapfrog towards Sustainability?

Jérémie Fosse

Co-founder and President
eco-union, Barcelona

Mediterranean tourism, severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, is now at a crossroads. It can either shift towards greener and more inclusive tourism patterns based on more responsible behaviour, or, alternatively, return to its previous trend of uncontrolled mass tourism, causing the dramatic degradation of sensitive natural ecosystems, alterations of cultural heritage and little in the way of benefit to the local communities. Ambitious, green and inclusive recovery roadmaps, both at local, national and regional level are therefore strongly needed to ensure a positive future for Mediterranean tourism and contribute to a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable region.

Mediterranean Tourism: A Major Economic Sector in Transition

The Mediterranean region has unique natural ecosystems and offers an amazing diversity of cultural and historical heritage. It benefits from mild climatic conditions and populated and well-connected locations, making it a sought-after travel spot. In 2019, just before the pandemic, the Mediterranean region

was registering more than 400 million international tourist arrivals (ITAs) every year, as one of the world's most popular destinations. The tourism sector accounted for up to 15% of regional GDP,¹ with 75% growth since 1995, expected to reach 626 million ITAs by 2025 according to the UN World Tourism Organization (WTO).

A Negative Loop between Mass Tourism and Socio-Environmental Sustainability

The tourism sector as it stood pre-pandemic was highly unsustainable. Transport, motivated by leisure, personal or work purposes, is the biggest carbon emitting sector across the European Union, accounting for between 15 to 40% of countries' CO₂ equivalent emissions. Maritime transportation represents nearly 4% of this number.² On a global scale, carbon emissions from tourism are estimated to be roughly 8% of total carbon emissions, mainly due to (air) transport, growing year after year.³

The Mediterranean Sea hosts up to 9% of the world's marine biodiversity of which around 30% are endemic species. However, 51% of native marine fish species are in danger of extinction and 4% are listed as near threatened,⁴ due to the loss of habitats from unsustainable exploitation of resources, pollution, climate change, eutrophication and invasive marine species.⁵ Yet biodiversity is fundamental to

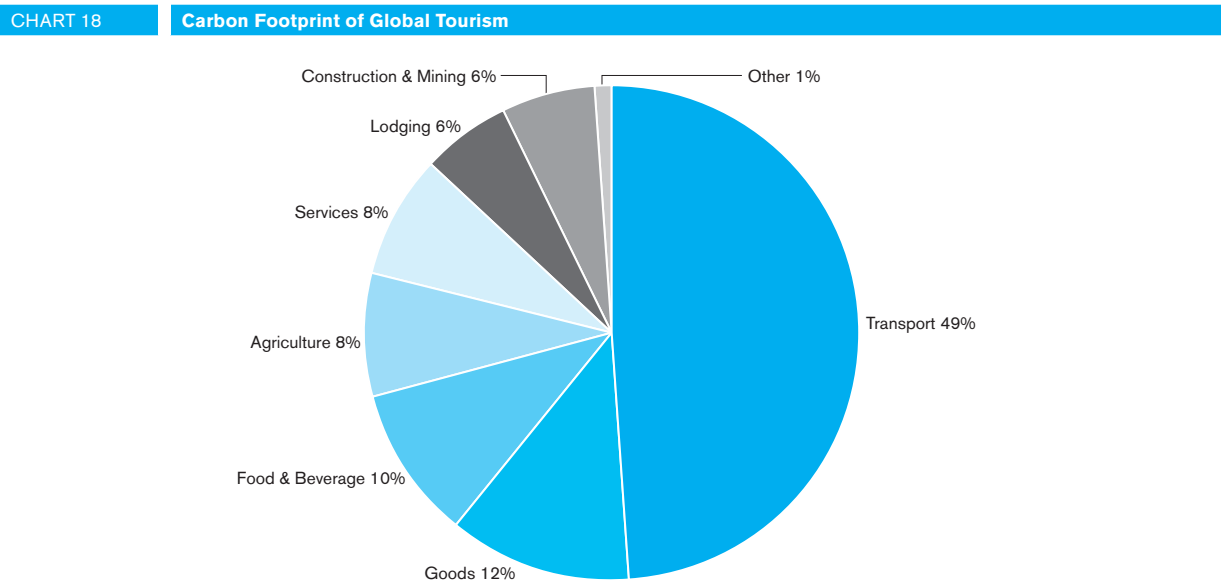
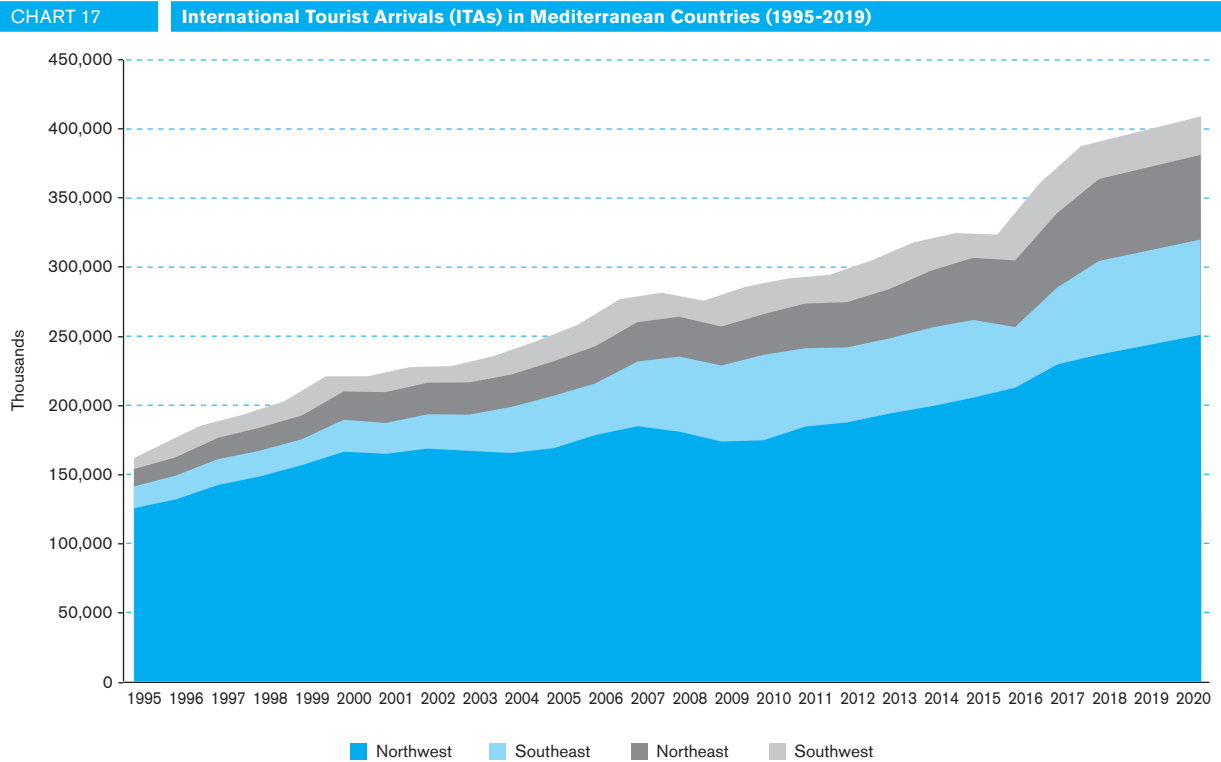
¹ World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), 2017 data, direct and indirect contribution of tourism to GDP. <https://wtcc.org/>

² EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY, *Transport emissions of greenhouse gases*, 2018. www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/transport-emissions-of-greenhouse-gases/transport-emissions-of-greenhouse-gases-12

³ LENZEN, M.; SUN, Y.Y.; FATURAY, F. et al. "The carbon footprint of global tourism." *Nature Climate Change* n. 8 (2018). www.nature.com/articles/s41558-018-0141-x

⁴ IUCN website: www.iucn.org/regions/mediterranean

⁵ COLL, M. et al., "The Biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea: Estimates, Patterns, and Threats." *PLoS ONE*. August, 2010 <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0011842>



the Mediterranean economy, with benefits derived from ecosystem services estimated at over €26 billion a year. Of these, more than two-thirds come

from tourism.⁶ Marine litter is also a critical issue: in some Mediterranean tourism areas, more than 75% of the annual waste production is generated during

⁶ WWF (2017). *Reviving the Economy of the Mediterranean Sea: Actions for a sustainable future*. WWF and BCG, 2017. wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/reviving_mediterranean_sea_economy_full_rep_lowres.pdf

the summer.⁷ Given the sectoral growth,⁸ these environmental and social pressures are likely to increase if adequate regulation of tourism flows is not implemented. Given that northern Mediterranean countries are fairly long-standing tourist destinations, most of these pressures tend to be stationary, but they are likely to increase in the coming years in southern Mediterranean countries.

Loss of Attractiveness and Climate Change Impacts

The same pressures also take their toll on the tourist industry, as they lower the attractiveness of tourist destinations.⁹ This loss of competitiveness due to pressures from coastal tourism is evident from waste pollution, including presence of fecal water in beaches, and a degradation of flora and fauna due to water scarcity derived from tourism-related infrastructure. The development of coastal tourism infrastructure, which is especially dense from southern Spain to northern Italy, has eliminated entire ecosystems and has resulted in highly vulnerable economies that are dependent on mass tourism.¹⁰

Moreover, the Mediterranean tourism sector is exposed to growing pressures linked to the effects of climate change. Coastal erosion, for example, is already evident throughout the Mediterranean coast, especially in the southern part.¹¹ Lack of water, coastal erosion, rising sea levels are just some of the challenges that climate change poses to tourist operators and other stakeholders on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The most worrying impact in the medium (2030) and long term (2050) are in the eastern (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine) and western (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) southern countries.¹²

Precarious, Marginalized and Unskilled Jobs

The Tourism sector is labour intensive, accounting for an average 11.5% of total employment in Mediterranean countries, according to the WTTC. It employs a high volume of both low-skilled and higher-skilled workers, with a heavy turnover from seasonal, part-time and temporary jobs, while providing employment opportunities for people usually disserved by the labour market: migrants, women, students, older workers, people in rural and coastal areas, sometimes in remote locations, who depend on these jobs to maintain their livelihoods.

The development of coastal tourism infrastructure has eliminated entire ecosystems and has resulted in highly vulnerable economies that are dependent on mass tourism

Because of the abundance of available workforce for temporary jobs in the tourist seasons and locations, the work is characterized by functional flexibility and low wages, which translates into structural insecurity for the workers. Professions in social care, facility cleaning, retail, transport, travel and tourism, leisure and hospitality suffer from low pay, poor working conditions, little to no career advancement, a lack of training and a highly gender-segregated workload for women.¹³ A significant share of the informal sector (with street vendors and the rise of owner-to-visitor platforms for accommodation for example) is also hindering the constitution of worker's unions to better the working conditions of low-skilled tourism workers.

⁷ GIULIETTI et al. "Tourism and the environment Towards a reporting mechanism in Europe." *EEA Report*, ETC/ULS. 2018 www.researchgate.net/publication/324330475_Tourism_and_the_environment_Towards_a_reporting_mechanism_in_Europe

⁸ UNWTO tourism recovery tracker: www.unwto.org/unwto-tourism-recovery-tracker

⁹ DRIUS et al. "Tackling challenges for Mediterranean sustainable coastal tourism: An ecosystem service perspective." *Science of the Total Environment*, February, 2019. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0048969718340026

¹⁰ GREENPEACE, *A toda Costa. Análisis de la evolución y estado de conservación de los bienes y servicios que proporcionan las costas*, 2018 <https://es.greenpeace.org/es/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/07/A-Toda-Costa-Cast-DEF.pdf>

¹¹ UfM "Climate change impact on the tourism sector in the southern Mediterranean." Final Report, July 2018 https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/UfMReport_ClimateChangeAndTourism.pdf

¹² Ibid.

¹³ OBADIĆ, Alka & PEHAR, Lorena. (2016). Employment, Capital and Seasonality in Selected Mediterranean Countries." *Zagreb International Review of Economics and Business*, vol. 19 December, 2016. www.sciendo.com/article/10.1515/zireb-2016-0012.

The Pandemic Shock in Mediterranean Tourism

The tourism sector has been dramatically affected in 2020 as countries worldwide imposed lockdowns and travel bans to stop the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. During 2020 and 2021, some countries across the Mediterranean region saw a rebound of visitors, while still enduring health restrictions. However, tourists largely opted to stay within their countries of origin and avoid air travel abroad.

An Uncertain Future for Tourism

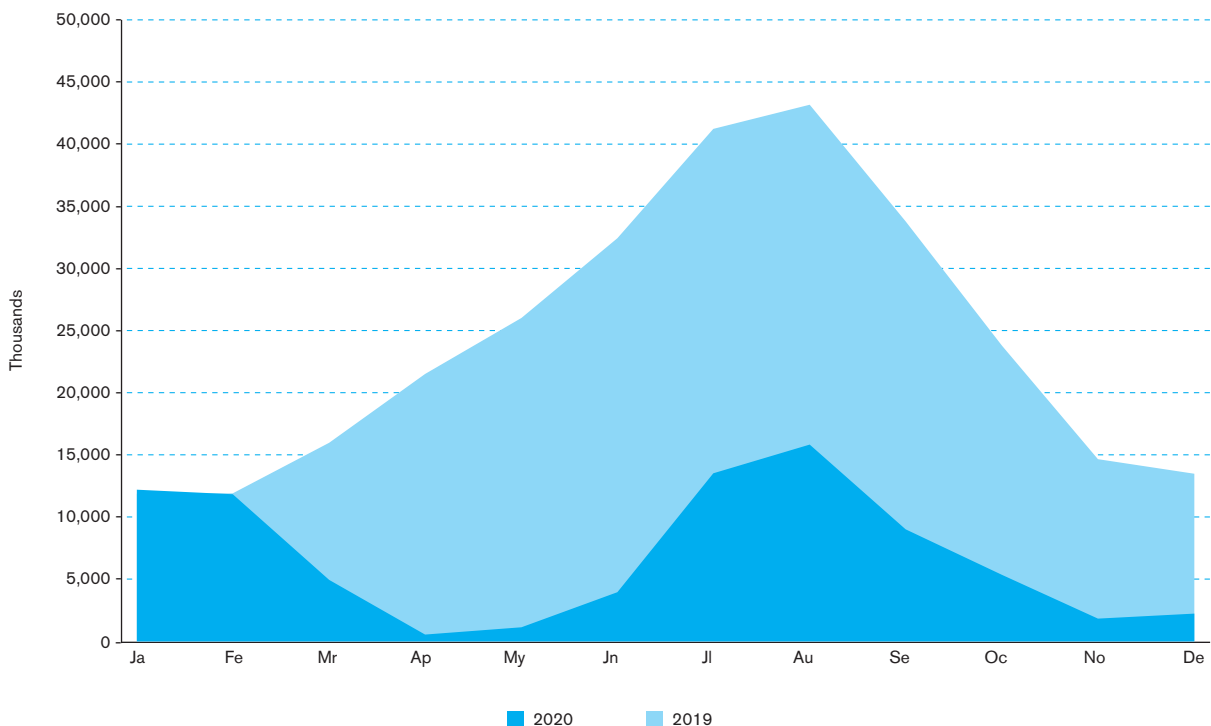
According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the return to the pre-pandemic levels of 2019 is not expected for another three to

four years.¹⁴ The only steady trend in the foreseeable future is the resumption of domestic tourism within European countries. Due to travel restrictions, closed borders and the risks of transmission via air travel, intraregional and domestic tourism are prioritized by travellers.¹⁵ Indeed, the OECD forecast¹⁶ shows that domestic tourism is the backbone of the tourism industry, with 75% of tourism expenditure coming from internal travellers. It is domestic tourism that will drive the recovery for the industry.¹⁷

Towards a Digital and Sustainable Transformation of Tourism

Two key directions appear for the future of the tourism sector: digitalization and sustainability. Regard-

CHART 19 International Tourism Arrivals (ITA) in European Mediterranean Countries (2019-2020)



Source: UNWTO.

¹⁴ UNWTO, *International Tourism and Covid-19*, updated October 2020. www.unwto.org/impact-assessment-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-on-international-tourism

¹⁵ UNWTO, *Market Intelligence*, 2020. www.unwto.org/market-intelligence

¹⁶ OECD, *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2020*. www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/oecd-tourism-trends-and-policies-2020_6b47b985-en

¹⁷ UNWTO. "UNWTO Highlights Potential of Domestic Tourism to Help Drive Economic Recovery in Destinations Worldwide." 2020. www.unwto.org/news/unwto-highlights-potential-of-domestic-tourism-to-help-drive-economic-recovery-in-destinations-worldwide

ing sustainable tourism, national and regional tourism agencies, for their part, should promote emerging destinations, less crowded spots or nature-based locations, in order to better distribute travel flows, reduce environmental pressures and generate jobs in less-travelled areas or hinterlands. They should also integrate local communities in the tourism planning and policy process; support sustainable activities based on biodiversity or cultural values; and guarantee social rights, adequate salaries and training programmes for workers.

The integration of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) in the blue economy sectors such as coastal and maritime tourism is a clear framework to align socioeconomic benefits and environmental protection, increasing local communities' resilience and ensuring long-term sustainability.¹⁸ Tour operators and travel agencies should, for their part, reduce the carbon and water footprint of their supply chain, avoid food waste, eliminate single-use plastics, prioritize low-carbon transports, partner with local providers, and provide appropriate training and salaries to their workforce.

Two key directions appear for the future of the tourism sector: digitalization and sustainability

In terms of the digitalization of tourism, storytelling tools allow for personalized, valuable experiences that shun mass tourism and favour the protection of the environment. Contactless technologies, biometrics and Artificial Intelligence are part of this trend. Moreover, digitalization, as well as reskilling and upskilling tourism workers, will create better jobs. Investing in the human capital locally is the best way to sustain a balance between quality tourism and environmental sustainability. There have to be guarantees that no workers or communities are left be-

hind in this change. To ensure this, public authorities should invest in digital competences. Additionally, digitalization has the power to better inform decision-making by making real-time information and best practices widely available: notably, the compliance of enterprises to maritime sustainability and emissions.

A Green and Blue Recovery for the Mediterranean

At the Mediterranean level, the *Mediterranean Action Plan* (UNEP/MAP) of the Barcelona Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea, ratified by 22 Mediterranean riparian countries, endorsed a *Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development* (MSSD) in 2016.¹⁹ This regional strategy integrates sustainable tourism as a strategic objective to be reached by 2025. However, the rather limited mandate of the Barcelona Convention towards environmental issues impedes significant progress on this cross-sectoral issue. A proposal to develop a regional sustainable tourism framework has not been advanced yet,²⁰ although the tourism sector is included in the *Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan* (SCP RAP), which is to be implemented by southern Mediterranean countries by 2026, with rather limited impact so far.²¹

Transformation towards a Sustainable and Equitable Mediterranean Tourism

Although the projects, policies and initiatives mentioned earlier are valuable and contribute, in one way or another, to sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean, they are, in general, lacking a structured and robust governance system at regional level that could ensure the necessary social and environmental transformation of the tourism sector. Tourism is a

¹⁸ ECO-UNION, *Towards a Blue Solidarity Economy*, 2020. www.ecounion.eu/en/portfolio/economia-blava-solidaria-ebs/

¹⁹ UNEP/MAP, *Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-25*, 2016 www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/mediterranean-strategy-sustainable-development-mssd

²⁰ FOSSE et al. "Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean: State of Play and Strategic Directions." Plan Bleu, 2017 <https://planbleu.org/en/publications/sustainable-tourism-in-the-mediterranean-state-of-play-and-strategic-directions/>

²¹ UNEP/MAP. *Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Production and Consumption in the Mediterranean*, 2016. <https://switchmed.eu/policy/regional-action-plan-sustainable-consumption-production/>

globalized yet fragmented industry that needs to be monitored, managed and regulated at various space, time and geographic scales.²² The involvement of the private sector, financial actors, academic world and civil society organizations is critical to implement significant change and take the opportunity offered by the recovery and resilience plans.²³ All of these measures should be multifold, involve various actors and benefit the environmental, social and economic environment in many different ways, as highlighted by the *High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy*.²⁴

Conclusion

The coronavirus pandemic marked the start of a deep recession for the tourism sector, leaving Mediterranean countries and industry actors, big and small, in a dramatic situation. Public and international subsidies have attempted to remedy the severe loss of jobs and income, with poor results so far. The road to recovery is dominated by uncertainty as there is no end in sight to the pandemic. Domestic tourism has a critical role in supporting national hotels, restaurants and tour operators, while they wait for the vaccines to be administered, thereby reducing travel bans; something which could take several years. At the same time, it is crucial that the decision and policy-makers from the

The massive investments provided by the recovery plans offer a unique opportunity to transform the tourism sector and ensure a better future for the whole Mediterranean region

public and private sectors play their part in turning the industry into a more sustainable one, promoting positive externalities for the environment, the workers and the local communities. The massive investments provided by the recovery plans offer a unique opportunity to transform the tourism sector and ensure a better future for the whole Mediterranean region.

Additional Information

Tourism Recovery Tracker (UNWTO): www.unwto.org/unwto-tourism-recovery-tracker

Blue Tourism Initiative (eco-union, IDDRI, ADEME): www.ecounion.eu/en/portfolio/blue-tourism/

Tourism Policies Monitoring (OECD): www.oecd.org/cfe/tourism/

State of Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (Plan Bleu): <https://planbleu.org/en/soed-2020-state-of-environment-and-development-in-mediterranean/>

²² ECO-UNION. *Blue Tourism. The Transition Towards Sustainable Coastal and Maritime Tourism in World Marine Regions*, 2019.

²³ UNWTO, *International Tourism and Covid-19*, updated October 2020. www.unwto.org/impact-assessment-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-on-international-tourism

²⁴ *High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy* www.oceanpanel.org/

Global Value Chains in the Spotlight of Economic Recovery

Patricia Augier

Institut de Recherche pour le Développement
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Aix-Marseille University and Aix-Marseille School
of Economics

International trade today is largely structured by global value chains (GVCs), since they account for 60% of global flows. They have therefore become essential for understanding the configuration of globalization. This paper will first present how GVCs work, then look at the developments that can be expected, firstly, as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, and secondly, in relation to environmental and social concerns. Finally, we will discuss how these developments could impact economic relations between the European Union and the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs).

How Global Value Chains Work

GVCs refer to the geographical fragmentation of the production of goods, i.e. the international dispersion of the various tasks and activities involved: manufacturing of product components, assembly, packaging, distribution, research and development, conception, design, marketing, communication, etc. The development of GVCs is the result of decisions made by companies, primarily multinationals. In concrete terms, businesses organize the fragmentation of production processes, either by entrusting the manufacture of inputs to a foreign supplier independent of the principal ordering company (international outsourcing), or by having the inputs manufactured by a subsidiary abroad (international insourcing), which gives rise to foreign direct

investment by the ordering company. Generally, when inputs are standardized, the choice is made in favour of independent foreign suppliers. When it comes to more sophisticated inputs, sometimes requiring technology and know-how transfers, principals tend to rely on their subsidiaries abroad. Beyond the characteristics of the inputs, this choice of organization may also be specific to each principal: Samsung, for example, has many subsidiaries around the world, whereas Apple and Nike work mainly with independent subcontractors abroad. Regardless of the type of organization chosen, manufacturing stages are relocated when the cost savings (particularly labour costs or those resulting from environmental regulations) achieved through relocation outweigh the additional coordination, communication and transport costs that fragmentation entails. It is therefore a cost-cutting rationale, combined with a favourable context marked by lower transport costs, the generalized reduction of customs duties and the development of information and communication systems that has led to a strong intensification of GVCs over the last 25 years. At the same time, in order to reduce their capital needs, large companies have also sought to reduce their stocks as much as possible by generalizing the “just-in-time” method to the entire production chain.

Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on GVCs: Diversification and Change in Stock Management Approach

The Covid-19 crisis suddenly put the spotlight on GVCs, which have become the subject of much discussion and, above all, much criticism in both political and economic circles. The crisis has made it

clear that the world's production systems are highly dependent on Asia, and more particularly on China. The automotive sector, for example, was forced in the first quarter of 2021 to cut back sharply on production because of a shortage of electronic parts, some of which are produced by fewer than five manufacturers in the world, all of them located in Asia. These shortages are not new, however: in September 2011, Peugeot was forced to shut down some production lines following a disruption in the supply of screws from its main supplier. The tsunami in Japan also disrupted some value chains. What was new with the Covid-19 pandemic was the realization that this dependence was a large-scale phenomenon and that it affected all sectors, including the most sensitive ones or those falling under so-called sovereignty industries (defence, finance, agri-food, health and energy).¹ In Europe, political figures and some industrialists are advocating a return to independence and sovereignty. Stefan Wolf, head of a major German automotive supplier, declared in the French national newspaper *Le Monde* on 4 June 2020 that *"the Covid-19 pandemic has created a hiatus; it will lead to a profound reorganization of the German industry's subcontracting chains... In the future, it will no longer just be a question of purchasing as cheaply as possible in China. Reorganizing subcontracting chains locally and relying more on German or European suppliers is the best solution to get out of the unbalanced dependence we have with certain regions."*

The vulnerability of GVCs is not linked to the system of international fragmentation of production processes, but to the concentration of suppliers in terms of both geographical location and number of producers

Will this awareness be accompanied by a large-scale reshoring of input production activities to na-

tional territories and in particular to European countries, as suggested by this automotive industrialist? The answer is clearly no, for two reasons. The first is that it would lead to an increase in the price of final goods that European consumers would probably not be willing to pay and which would call into question the competitiveness of European products on international markets. This rise in the price of final goods would, in addition, accentuate current inflationary trends. The second reason is that the vulnerability of GVCs is not linked to the system of international fragmentation of production processes, but to the concentration of suppliers in terms of both geographical location and number of producers.

Risk management will become an increasingly important factor in the decisions that will structure the organization of future international supply chains

Therefore, the change to be expected in terms of GVCs is that, henceforth, ordering companies may no longer choose their suppliers solely on the basis of the best price, but by taking the risk factor into account. This need to integrate the risk of disruptions in company supply chains has been further reinforced by the war in Ukraine. It is also possible that large companies will be increasingly forced by their shareholders to diversify their suppliers to protect themselves against the risk of producer failure or incidents affecting a particular geographical location. Risk management will become an increasingly important factor in the decisions that will structure the organization of future international supply chains, especially as the sources of uncertainty and potential risks (environmental, geopolitical, health, financial, technological risks, natural disasters, etc.) continue to grow.

This should result in a greater geographical diversification of suppliers and an increase in their number.

¹ The European Union has identified raw materials, batteries, active pharmaceutical ingredients, hydrogen, semiconductors and cloud and edge computing technologies as strategic sectors whose supply chains have become vulnerable. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/swd-strategic-dependencies-capacities_en.pdf.

In parallel with these analyses, recent papers (Baldwin and Freeman, 2021; Lafrogne-Joussiere et al., 2022) have shown that strengthening the resilience of GVCs must necessarily involve abandoning the just-in-time method of inventory management. For these economists, it is more the just-in-time organization of production that should be called into question than the existence of GVCs per se.

Certain GVCs have become so complex that ordering companies do not have full control over their entire supply chain

Impact of Environmental and Social Concerns on GVCs: Shortening and Transparency

One obvious observation is the need to move towards a more environmentally and socially sustainable and responsible economic model. However, GVCs can run counter to this type of model: on the one hand, the fragmentation and remoteness of production sites between different countries have a high environmental cost, and on the other hand, certain GVCs have become so complex that ordering companies do not have full control over their entire supply chain. General Motors, for example, reported having 856 direct suppliers and over 18,000 indirect ones. The collapse of the Rana Plaza² in Bangladesh in 2013 had already highlighted this complexity and lack of control over the chain of producers by multinationals in the textile sector. This system of opacity, which has become widespread, encourages poor environmental and social practices.

We can therefore expect a reshaping of GVCs under dual pressure: that of consumers/citizens who are paying greater attention to compliance with social and environmental standards; and that of regulatory developments, such as the European directive put forth in February 2022 on corporate sustainability due diligence, aimed at preventing human rights and environmental abuses across company value

The new regulations that emerge at the national, European or international level will all result in the need for much more transparent GVCs

chains, or the proposed carbon tax at Europe's borders. Regardless of whether the new regulations that emerge at the national, European or international level concern environmental protection, health or human rights, they will all result in the need for much more transparent GVCs.

At the same time, consumer-citizens, particularly in Europe, will increasingly emphasize criteria such as the number of kilometres travelled by product inputs. This consumer pressure and reputational risks are factors that will push companies to change their sources of supply and choose suppliers closer to home. Therefore, GVCs can also be expected to grow shorter.

Another factor that may encourage companies to shorten supply chains is the rising cost of shipping. The price of a container rose from \$1,471 in May 2020 to \$4,931 in May 2021 and then to \$8,955 in May 2022.³ The steepest increases involve containers from Asia. This phenomenon could be considered merely cyclical, without any consequences for the evolution of GVCs in the medium term. However, the possible introduction of environmental regulations in this sector, the uncompetitive structure of the maritime freight market and the war in Ukraine, which is undermining international freight, suggest that post-Covid transport prices will be higher than before the pandemic, and this for an indefinite period.

New Opportunities for VC Development between the EU and the Mediterranean Partner Countries?

As the economy recovers, the need to secure GVCs and the need for "corporate social and environmental" accountability of parent companies will require

² This building housed textile workshops. Its collapse resulted in the death of 1,138 workers.

³ According to the Global Container Freight Index (<https://fbx.freightos.com>).

diversification and the shortening of more transparent production chains. Multinationals will no longer choose their suppliers on the basis of a cost minimization calculation, but by henceforth integrating the risk factor. For certain strategic sectors, it can also be expected that, in the national interest, supplier networks will be built up on the basis of deep and trusting relationships, with a reciprocal responsible commitment on the part of buying and selling companies.

The Mediterranean Partner Countries could become important suppliers for European companies, since it would be too costly for the competitiveness of European products to relocate the various production segments to Europe

With regard to the EU, the Mediterranean Partner Countries could become important suppliers for European companies, since it would be too costly for the competitiveness of European products to relocate the various production segments to Europe. A joint report by the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) and the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences (FEMISE, 2022) identified intermediate goods that are both imported by the EU from developing and

emerging countries far from the EU (over 7,000 km from Brussels) and that are likewise already being produced and exported by the MPCs. These intermediate goods offer an immediate opportunity for European companies to diversify and shorten their supply chains by importing them from the MPCs. Such future developments in GVCs could therefore constitute a source of job creation and industrial development for the Mediterranean Partner Countries.

Bibliography

- AUGIER, Patricia; MORENO-DODSON, Blanca; BLANC, Pierre; GASIOREK, Michael; MOULEY, Sami; TSAKAS, Constantin; VENTELOU, Bruno. *Post Covid-19: Opportunities for growth, regional value chains and Mediterranean integration*, Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) and Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences (FEMISE), February 2022.
- BALDWIN, Richard and FREEMAN, Rebecca. "Risks and global supply chains: What we know and what we need to know," *NBER Working paper 29444*, forthcoming in *Annual Review of Economics*, 2021. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-economics-051420-113737
- LAFROGNE-JOUSSIER, Raphaël; MARTIN, Julien and MEJEAN, Isabelle. "Supply chain disruptions and mitigation strategies," *VoxEU.org*, 5 February, 2022. <https://voxeu.org/article/supply-chain-disruptions-and-mitigation-strategies>

Formalizing the Informal Sector: a Fundamental Policy for the Economic Stability of the MENA Region

Hamza Saoudi

Economist

Policy Center for the New South

The informal sector plays a major role in most MENA economies. It employs a large share of the total population and, on average, accounts for about 22% of GDP. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), which defines informal employment as the proportion of workers without access to social security, the share of informal employment in total employment in MENA countries ranges from 45% in Jordan to 80% in Morocco, with intermediate values of 59% in Tunisia, 63% percent in Egypt, 67% in Iraq and 70% in Syria.

In all MENA countries, informal employment is most prevalent in the agricultural sector, followed by industry and the services sector. The prevalence of informality in total employment in the agricultural sector ranges from 69% in Jordan to almost the entire workforce in countries including Yemen, Egypt and Syria. In industry, informal employment ranges from 57% to 83%, and in the services sector, from 38% to 73% (Chart 20).

The Informal Sector Is the Main Social Safety Net for a Large Proportion of Workers in the MENA Region

The informal sector's large share, both in terms of GDP and job creation, has several advantages and disadvantages. First, the informal sector provides a social safety net for a large part of the population in these countries, especially for new entrants to the labour market who are unable to find jobs in the formal sector, particularly low-skilled workers. The informal

sector helps by filling some of the common labour market shortages in MENA countries, who are characterized by high unemployment rates, especially among young people and women, which comprise nearly 27% of the total labour force, and by the inability to create enough formal jobs to absorb the stock of workers and new labour market entrants.

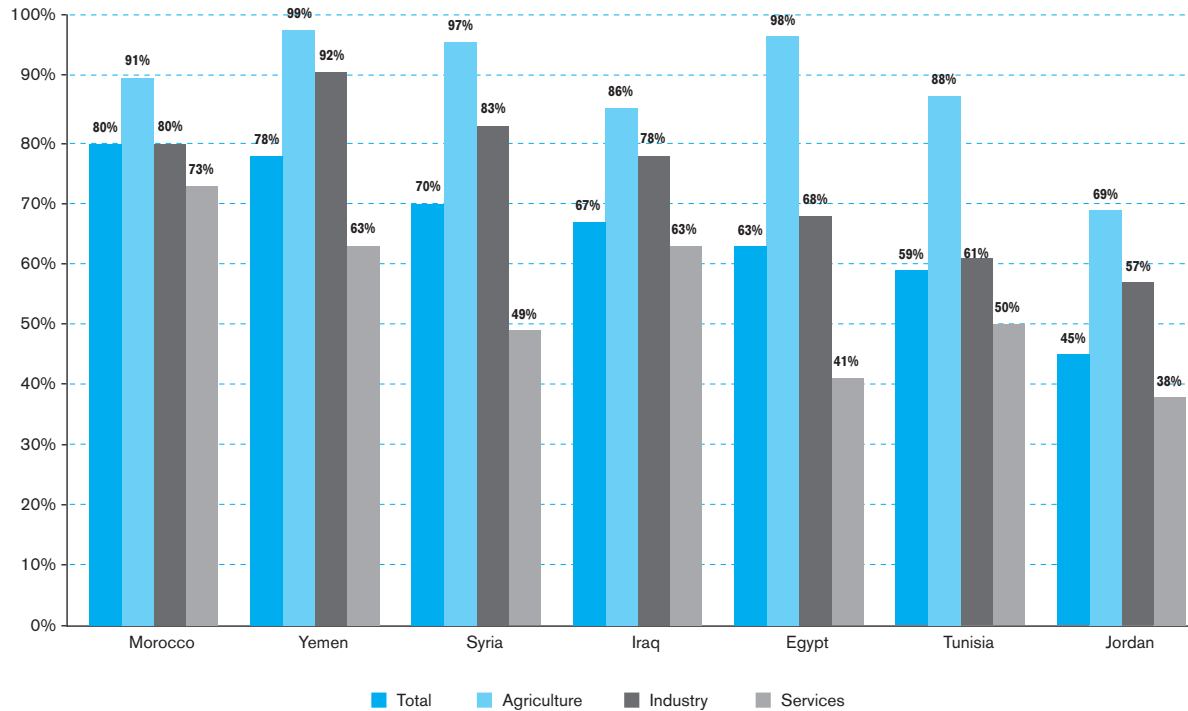
In addition, the informal sector absorbs some of the workers who are forced to turn to the informal sector, or even to leave the formal sector, in times of crisis. As a result, the sector acts as a shock absorber during economic crises and, in the absence of automatic economic stabilizers such as unemployment insurance or job loss compensation, acts as a social safety net in these countries (Saoudi, 2019).

But the Informal Sector Is Also a Source of Vulnerability for a Number of Workers

However, a large share of this sector in the economy is also a source of vulnerability for a large part of the population in these countries. High levels of informal employment mean that most of the population in these countries are not well protected by social security systems, and do not benefit from basic work-related rights, such as compulsory health insurance, unemployment insurance or job loss compensation, family allowances, pension entitlements, or work accident and disability insurance. It should be highlighted that almost 37% of the total population in the MENA region has no social protection at all, while 42.4% benefit from social assistance programmes. Only 15.2% of the population is covered by more than one social protection programme. The biggest challenge that policymakers face in implementing effective programmes of this nature remains the absence of a statistical system to help target the vulnerable and the poor.

CHART 20

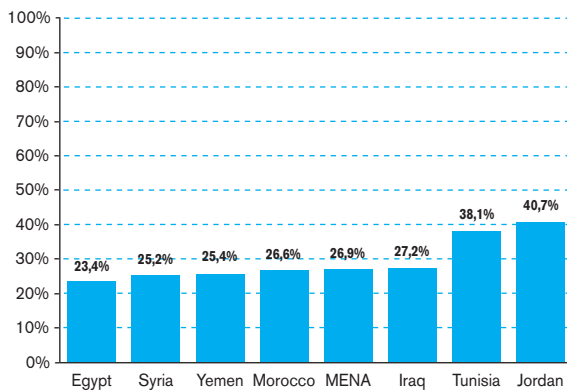
Informal Employment as Share of Total Employment by Sector, for selected countries



Countries were selected based on data availability. Source: ILO, 2018.

CHART 21

Youth Unemployment as Share of the Labour Force, 2020



Source: WDI, World Bank.

The Lack of Vocational Training and Poor Working Conditions in the Informal Sector Limit the Long-Term Prospects for Career Development and Social Mobility for a Large Proportion of These Workers

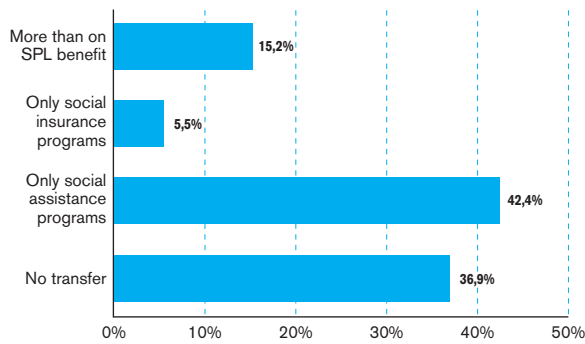
Although the informal sector helps to address certain labour market shortages in several countries in

the region and provides a short-term solution to unemployment, especially for young people and women who cannot find formal jobs, in the long term it limits career development opportunities and social mobility for a large proportion of these workers. Given the lack of vocational training, and poor working conditions that do not promote skills development for workers in this sector, it remains difficult to improve conditions for workers in this sector.

Furthermore, the prevalence of a large informal sector leads not only to an additional loss and deterioration of the informal workers' skills, but also sends a poor-quality signal regarding the skills of those workers to recruiters in the formal sector, and limits the informal workers's prospects of joining the formal sector, for which these workers lack the minimum qualifications.

Because of unfavourable working conditions, the level of quality-of-life satisfaction for a large proportion of MENA workers, especially those in the informal sector, is steadily deteriorating. This was already the case long before the Covid-19 pandemic. In 11 of the 14 MENA countries for which data is available, quality-of-life satisfaction in 2019 was lower than in 2010 (Hoogeveen & Lopez-Acevedo, 2021).

CHART 22

Coverage of Social Protection and Labour in Total Population (%) in the MENA Region

Source: WDI, World Bank, 2022 ASPIRE: The Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity www.worldbank.org/en/data/datatopics/aspire/region/middle-east-and-north-africa.

The Informal Sector Was Hit Hardest by the Covid-19 Pandemic

The coronavirus crisis has highlighted the importance for policymakers to find a way out of the informal sector. In previous economic and financial crises, the informal sector acted as a shock absorber and social safety net for many workers, but in this pandemic a large majority of informal workers found themselves, overnight, without any source of funding to meet their minimum consumption needs.

Moreover, while containment, curfew and social distancing measures undoubtedly saved lives, they also penalized economic activity and had a disproportionate impact on informal-sector workers (IMF, 2021). Many informal-sector workers were faced with the dilemma of either starving to death or dying from the virus. The ILO estimated that of the world's 2 billion informal workers, nearly 1.5 billion were significantly affected by social containment and distancing measures adopted by governments in 2020. Most of these workers were in Asia-Pacific and Africa, where there are nearly 988 million and 325 million informal workers respectively.

Moreover, the Covid-19 shock led to a sharp decline in the median monthly income of informal workers, and a significant increase in relative poverty, especially among informal workers, including in African and MENA countries (ILO, 2020).

The Combination of Governments' Limited Room for Manoeuvre and Very High Levels of Informal Employment May Lead to Instability and Social Tensions in Some Countries in the Region in the Medium and Long Term

The Covid-19 crisis was marked by a strong return of the state in several MENA countries, with intense recovery policies, both to avoid the collapse of the economy and to protect the most vulnerable, especially informal workers. Indeed, 21 MENA countries¹ have taken measures to cope with the effects of the crisis by setting up targeted cash-transfer programmes for those hit hardest by the crisis.

In general, these programmes have not been aimed directly at informal workers. However, some countries, such as Morocco, took advantage of high nationwide mobile phone penetration and established a unified internet portal to better tailor the delivery of targeted cash transfer programmes to assist workers who had lost their jobs. These interventions, as important and necessary as they are, may not be sustainable in the long run if countries face further crises over a long period, given the limited fiscal space available in many MENA countries. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the fact that the combination of a limited fiscal space and a large share of informal workers -highly prone to economic shocks- can further increase the risk of social tensions.

It is also worth noting that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict poses a new challenge to MENA economies that rely on imported commodities, including gas, oil and wheat. The prolongation of this conflict, accompanied by new sanctions against Russia, increases concerns about food supply and security, and may further increase inflationary pressures that will disproportionately impact low-income workers and ultimately lead to the risk of social unrest in some MENA countries.

Low-income informal workers will be particularly hard hit by the general increase in prices caused by the conflict. A prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict will make recovery even more difficult and will increase the challenges for MENA governments, which face tighter budgets and difficult spending and policy choices.

¹ See <https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/social-protection-for-all-lessons-from-covid-19-response-mena>.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendation

The economic environment is increasingly uncertain. Current uncertainties are the Covid-19 crisis and the crisis related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The future will see other shocks, both climate-related and technological, which could lead to major displacements of labour and further negatively affect informal workers (Saoudi, 2021). However, the present context also provides a great opportunity for MENA countries to implement inclusive policies to foster the gradual transition of informal workers and enterprises into the formal sector.

Governments should pursue a balanced strategy to formalize the informal sector. The focus should be on both increasing the productivity of the informal sector, and encouraging the expansion of formal enterprises by developing flexible fiscal, regulatory and legal frameworks that are conducive to private-sector development and formal-sector job creation. Policies should also identify and remove barriers that may discourage or impede the formalization of informal enterprises. Governments should put in place mechanisms to strengthen the capacity of tax administrations to control and combat tax evasion.

Reforms should also aim to make the formal sector more attractive, including by improving the business climate, facilitating access to finance and public procurement for small businesses, and also by building more flexible, resilient and inclusive social protection systems. Universal social protection for all workers, including those in the informal sector, is a priority for MENA countries to help workers prepare for possible future crises, and to facilitate the upcoming technological transition, which will be accompanied by a number of disruptions to the labour market (Saoudi, 2021).

The big challenge for MENA governments is to ensure the sustainability and durability of the financing of this social protection system. Governments must implement reforms aimed at creating more fiscal space, through; i) boosting economic growth and removing barriers to the participation of women in the labour market, ii) broadening the tax base by implementing a more progressive tax policy, and iii) rationalizing and coordinating all government spending by eliminating and replacing non-targeted food and energy subsidy programmes with targeted social safety

nets and transfers. Underpinning this, there is a need to improve access to data and to establish a dynamic statistical tool that can be used to identify the poor and the vulnerable, who are most likely to need and to benefit from social assistance programmes.

References

- ILO (INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION). *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, Geneva: ILO, 2018. www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang-en/index.htm,
- ILO. *Impact of lockdown measures on the informal economy*, ILO brief, Geneva: ILO, 2020. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/informaleconomy/publications/WCMS_743523/lang-en/index.htm
- ILO *The impact of COVID-19 on the informal economy in Africa and the related policy responses*, ILO brief, Geneva: ILO, 2020. www.ilo.org/africa/information-resources/publications/WCMS_741864/lang-en/index.htm
- IMF (INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND). *Regional Economic Outlook, A fragile recovery continues in the Middle East and Central Asia region*, 2018. Available at www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/MECA/Issues/2021/10/14/regional-economic-outlook-october
- HOOGEVEEN, Johannes G.; LOPEZ-ACEVEDO, Gladys. *Répercussions et répartition des effets de la pandémie de COVID-19 dans la région Moyen-Orient et Afrique du Nord*, World Bank, 2021. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/36618/211776ovFR.pdf>
- SAOUDI, Hamza. "Les cycles économiques ont-ils un effet asymétrique sur le chômage et la pauvreté ? Cas du Maroc." *Research papers & Policy papers 1902*, Policy Center for the New South, 2019.
- SAOUDI, Hamza. *The impact of new technologies on employment and the workforce: What are the implications for developing countries, especially in Africa?* Policy report. Policy Center for the New South, 2021. Available at: www.policycenter.ma/publications/impact-new-technologies-employment-and-workforce-what-are-implications-developing

The Mediterranean Region: A Cocktail of Climate and Environmental Risks

Joël Guiot

Aix-Marseille Université
CNRS, IRD, INRAE, CEREGE, Aix-en-Provence

The Mediterranean Basin, with its long history of human settlement, is now considered a “hotspot” of risks for ecosystems and societies, due to rapid climatic and environmental changes exacerbated by economic, social and political tensions and imbalances. Its growing population, often concentrated on the coast, is facing multiple risks due to rapid warming, increasing droughts and heat waves, rising sea levels, and air and water pollution on land and at sea. A specific effort to synthesize existing scientific knowledge across disciplines has led to a better understanding of these risks (MedECC, 2020), thanks to the MedECC network of climate change experts (www.medecc.org).

The Mediterranean Basin has not always had such a dry climate. On the scale of the Holocene (the last 12,000 years), the rainiest period was between eight and six thousand years ago. This was a prosperous period for agriculture thanks to relatively copious water resources over large areas, even as far as the Sahara, which has been described as green at that time. Subsequently, precipitation gradually decreased in summer and it can be said that this marked the strengthening, if not the beginning, of the Mediterranean climate. During this period, there were several particularly dry periods, around 5200, 4200 and 3200 years before the present. They may have lasted several centuries and were accompanied by fairly strong civilizational events in Mesopotamia and the Middle East. The last one, called the Late Bronze Age Crisis, saw flourishing cities on the eastern coast revert to a semi-nomadic state. The societal impacts are visible throughout the eastern

Mediterranean Basin. While these changes were due to natural factors (linked to the earth’s orbit around the sun), the current ones are due to anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane.

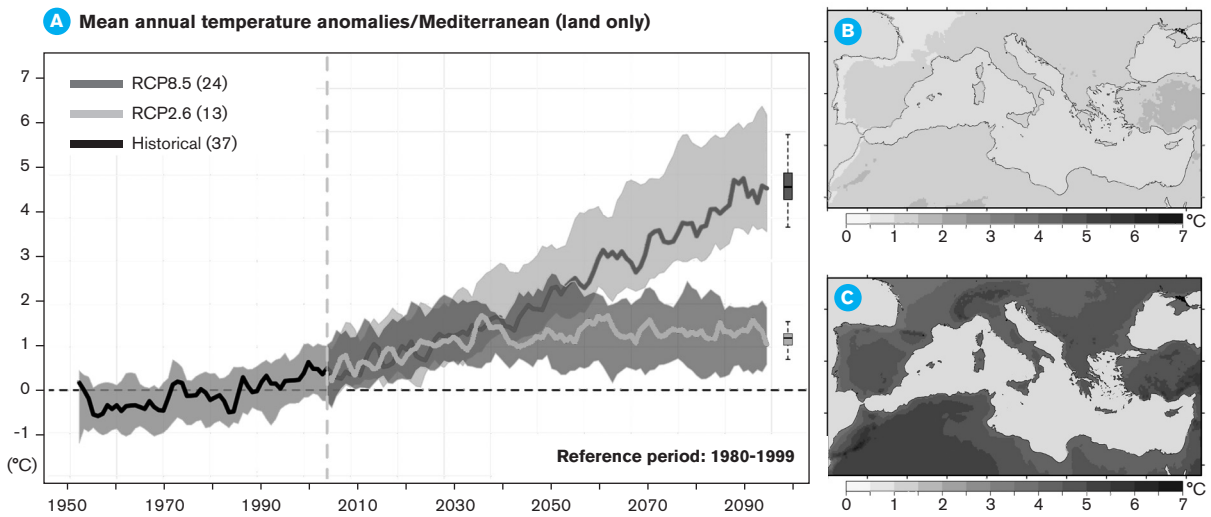
Air Temperature

Due to a 50% increase in the latter, the average rise in air temperature in the Mediterranean Basin has now reached +1.6 °C, compared to the pre-industrial period (1850-1900), i.e., more than the global average increase, which has just exceeded +1.1 °C (IPCC, 2021). This faster warming is similar to that of most of the world’s land areas, which are generally warming faster than the ocean surface. Over circum-Mediterranean lands, the additional warming by the end of the 21st century is expected to be at least 0.9-1.5°C for a very ambitious scenario of greenhouse gas emission reductions (satisfying the Paris Agreement), but more likely on the order of 3.7-5.6°C in the case of continued absence of strong climate policies (Chart 23).

With such high rates of warming, the intensity and frequency of heat waves will increase sharply, especially in urban areas already particularly exposed by their coastal location in a hot Mediterranean climate in summer. Heat waves – characterized by significantly higher than normal daytime and nighttime temperatures for several consecutive days – will be more frequent and intense than before. They will also be more intense in the heart of cities because of the urban heat island phenomenon linked to mineral surfaces. In old Mediterranean towns, their narrow streets (even if they are sometimes very congested, poorly ventilated and have little vegetation), small openings and reflective white buildings made it pos-

CHART 23

Projected Warming in the Mediterranean Basin



Projected changes in annual temperature compared to the reference period (1980-1999), based on the EURO-CORDEX ensemble mean of 0.11 °C; a: simulations for the Representative Concentration Pathway RCP2.6 and RCP8.5 scenarios; b: Temperature by the end of the 20th century (2080-2099) for RCP2.6; c: *idem* for RCP8.5.

sible to attenuate the effect of heat peaks, but modern cities made of concrete and glass can only protect against heat waves at the cost of powerful electric air conditioning, inducing a positive feedback loop on the climate.

The Sea

The semi-enclosed and relatively shallow Mediterranean Sea is warming faster than the world ocean (+0.3°C to +0.4 °C per decade compared to about 0.2°C globally). In addition, the acidification of the sea, caused by the increase in atmospheric CO₂, is expected to progress more rapidly than that of the global ocean, due to the higher alkalinity of Mediterranean waters. By 2100, the increase in acidity could reach – 0.46 pH units, resulting in significant loss of shellfish.

An important specificity of the Mediterranean is its virtual absence of tides, which has allowed people to build as close to the sea as possible. With the rise in sea level – 20 cm since the end of the 19th century – cities, infrastructures and heritage buildings are in danger of increasingly frequent flooding. Due to the thermal expansion of the oceans, but also increasingly due to the loss of ice in the world's mountains and in Greenland – the current rate of rise is accelerating and has recently reached 4.8 mm per year.

According to greenhouse gas emission scenarios, sea levels in the Mediterranean by 2100 are likely to be 40-120 cm higher than today. Much higher levels (170 cm by 2100), caused by the destabilization of the Antarctic ice caps, cannot be excluded (IPCC, 2021). This means that even with ambitious climate policies and dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas concentrations, sea-level rise will continue. In the deltas and estuaries of large rivers, this will lead to rapid coastal retreat, a process further compounded by the decrease in sediment supply from rivers due to dams and urbanization upstream.

Modern cities made of concrete and glass can only protect against heat waves at the cost of powerful electric air conditioning, inducing a positive feedback loop on the climate

Precipitation

Precipitation is undergoing a paradoxical evolution with an accentuation of drought during the summer months and an increase in heavy rainfall and thus flood risk in the winter months. Future climate pro-

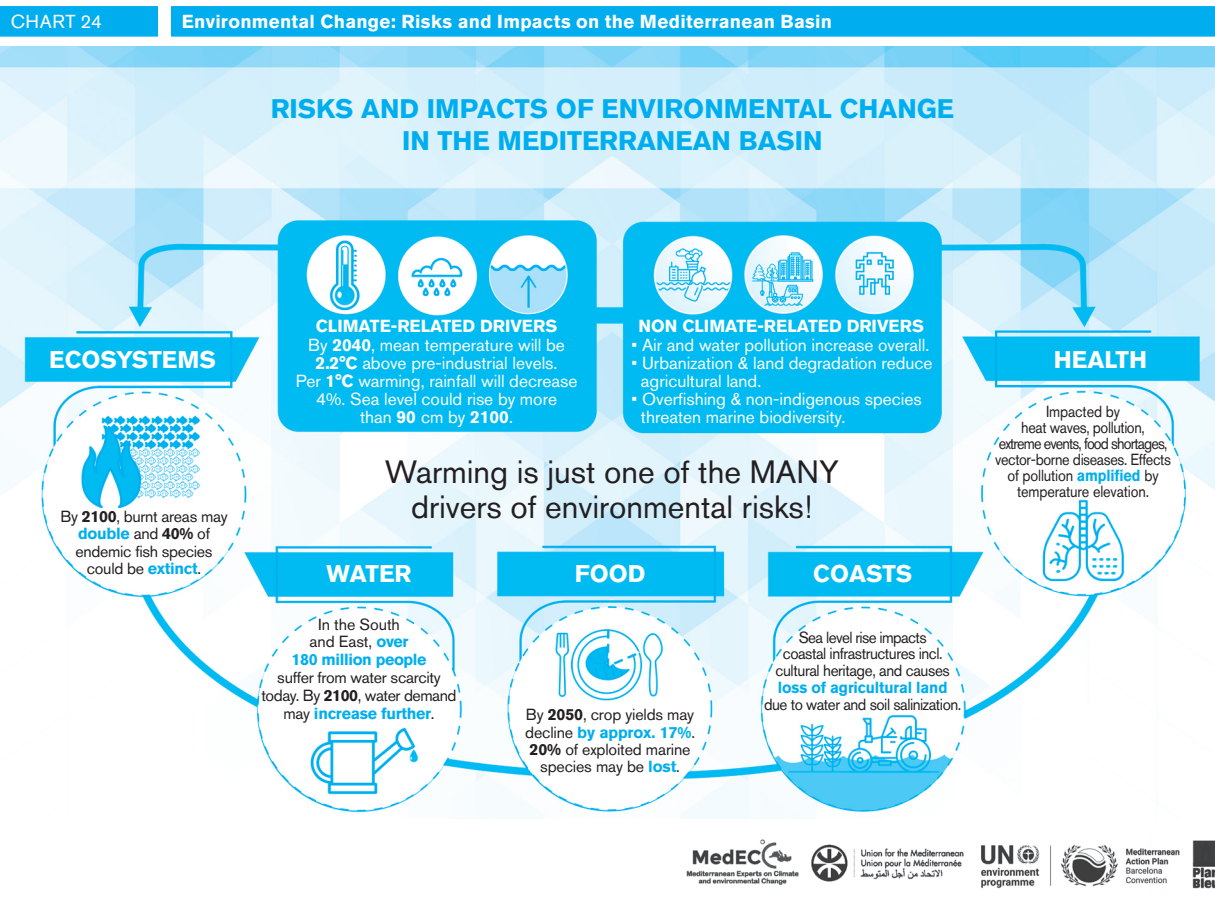
jections indicate a predominant shift towards a precipitation regime with greater inter-annual variability, higher intensity and greater extremes (particularly in winter, spring and autumn in the north), less frequent precipitation and longer droughts (especially in summer and in southern countries). An average decrease of 4% in rainfall per degree of global warming is calculated. Despite strong regional variations, summer rainfall is likely to decrease by 10-30% in some regions. Furthermore, stormy precipitation will cause flooding, aggravated by the artificialization of the soil, particularly in urban areas.

Resources and Ecosystems

The infographic (Chart 24) summarizes the most important risks arising from climatic and non-climatic factors. Water resources in the Mediterranean Basin are generally scarce, even in the absence of environmental change, particularly in the southern and east-

ern Mediterranean countries, where freshwater reserves are limited, unevenly distributed and often insufficient to meet human and environmental needs. In these countries, which have less than 30% of the freshwater in the entire basin, agriculture currently uses 76-79% of this resource. Overall, water demand is expected to increase by 22-74% by 2100 due to increased irrigation needs for agriculture, population growth and tourism.

Food production on land and at sea is strongly impacted by more frequent and intense droughts, as well as soil salinization, ocean acidification and land degradation. Reduced crop yields are projected for the next decades in most current production areas and for most crops (up to 60% with a 3-4°C climate warming). Marine ecosystems and their biodiversity are affected by overfishing, warming (including marine heat waves), acidification and the spread of non-native species (e.g., tropical species arriving through the Suez Canal or the Strait of Gibraltar). The effects of warming are amplified by the acidification of the oceans and



Find out more on www.medecc.org.

increased nutrient flows from land. In coastal systems, sea-level rise will impact on coastal wetlands throughout the basin – ultimately, many existing wetlands may disappear entirely this century. The survival and growth of seagrass meadows (which are an important carbon store) are also threatened.

The survival and growth of seagrass meadows (which are an important carbon store) are also threatened

On land, over the past 40 years, changes in biodiversity and species loss, largely caused by unsustainable land use (agricultural intensification, urbanization, land abandonment) have led to a general homogenization and simplification of biotic interactions. Between 1970 and 2013, 48% of Mediterranean wetlands disappeared, and 36% of wetland-dependent animals in the Mediterranean are threatened with extinction. Most global warming scenarios predict an increase in forest fires and thus in the burnt surface area in Mediterranean Europe. The area burnt in this part of the basin could increase by 40% for a warming of 1.5 °C and up to 100% of current levels for a warming of 3 °C by the end of the 21st century.

Health

Already today, human health is affected by high temperatures as well as air and water pollution through-

out the Mediterranean Basin. The combined effects of expected environmental changes (notably pollution and climate change) increase human health risks in multiple ways, primarily through longer, more frequent and hotter heat waves, but also through food shortages and respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Floods also cause significant loss of life and trauma.

Vector-borne disease epidemics in the Mediterranean region are favoured by a warmer climate and changing rainfall patterns that create hospitable environments for mosquitoes, ticks and other climate-sensitive vectors, including West Nile virus, chikungunya and leishmaniasis. All of these health risks are particularly relevant for population segments, especially the elderly and young children, and for the entirety of the population in disadvantaged areas and low-income countries.

References

- MEDECC, *Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report* [CRAMER, W., GUIOT, J., MARINI, K. (eds.)] Union for the Mediterranean, Plan Bleu, UNEP/MAP, Marseille, France, 2020. 632pp., DOI 10.5281/zenodo.4768833
- IPCC, “Summary for Policymakers,” in V. MASSON-DELMOTTE, P. ZHAI, A. PIRANI, S. L. CONNORS, C. PÉAN et al. (eds), *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Cambridge University Press, in press.

Cities and Mediterranean Integration: In Search of a “New” Political Project

Samuel Ripoll

Doctor of Political Science
Institut d'études politiques de Lyon
Laboratoire Triangle

On 26 November 2020, the mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, chaired an international online conference entitled Barcelona+25: Cities in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, organized by the city council and the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), in partnership with networks of local authorities (United Cities and Local Governments – UCLG, and MedCities) and research institutes (European Institute of the Mediterranean – IEMed, and Italian Institute for International Political Studies – ISPI). It focused on the role of cities in the dynamics of Euro-Mediterranean integration initiated in 1995 through the Barcelona Process and continued today, primarily via the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The point, indicated in the conference programme, was clear: the UfM, an organization set up by and for states, would grant only a marginal role to municipalities and decentralized cooperation. It would focus on major infrastructure and urban development projects. At the conference, the floor was given to a few mayors of large cities,¹ who shared their vision of their role in the Mediterranean. The tone was set from the start by Ada Colau in her introductory speech: the Barcelona Process had not produced the expected results and cities should propose their own agenda as an alternative to states and the EU. They were to lend regional cooperation a political dimension again, by promoting the recep-

tion of migrants, the regulation of mass tourism and the fight against climate change.

This appeal, however, was not new. Often organized in networks, cities have been developing their own vision of Mediterranean integration for some fifty years now. At times hand in hand with the initiatives of states and international institutions, at others in competition, they intend to make the Mediterranean a political space structured around the city and urban issues. In this article, based on a doctoral thesis,² I shall provide a (very) brief overview of this history.

Activist Origins, from Anti-Colonialism to Environmentalism

In the early 1970s, the Mediterranean had no political or international existence of its own. States and international organizations did not see it as a distinct region. It was not the object of any regional integration processes. The only notable exception was the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), which from 1975 onwards, under the aegis of the United Nations, established a multilateral framework for combating marine pollution. Cities began to organize as of 1973. More than 250 elected officials and municipal technicians from all around the Mediterranean met in Beirut in June for the first conference of Mediterranean municipalities against sea pollution under a common slogan: “Cities of the Mediterranean: Let's Unite.” At first glance, this was a seminar for technical exchange of know-how in the fields of municipal sanitation, the fight against uncontrolled urbanization of the coastline, etc.

¹ Amman, Izmir, Tunis, Florence.

² RIPOLL, Samuel, *Le rêve d'une Méditerranée des villes. Entre développement et démocratie (années 1960 – années 2010)*, Doctoral thesis in Political Science, Institut d'études politiques de Lyon, 2022.

It was organized by the United Towns Organisation (UTO), an international association of cities then led by left-wing political activists, mainly French and Italian. They were urban planners, journalists and local councillors, and had often met in networks of anti-colonial movements since the 1950s. For them, the Mediterranean was a laboratory for the renewal of relations between the “North” and the “South.” Away from states, often accused of neo-imperialism, the cities and twinning arrangements were to pave the way for a dynamic of regional integration in order to overcome the legacy of colonization and also find solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, they intended to make the Mediterranean the laboratory for a new international socialism that, while marking a clear break with the Soviet experience, would not stop at the borders of western Europe.

The technical reinforcement of locally elected officials and technicians in the South and East should enable the municipal level to assert itself as an essential political actor in a region characterized by centralized and authoritarian states

Environmental protection, integration and regional appeasement formed the different sides of the project. For the French urban planner André Chaudières, kingpin of the Beirut Conference, it was indeed a question of guaranteeing “peace through sewers.”³ The concern for the protection of a common sea and specific technical exchanges between European, Maghrebi and Levantine municipalities, but also between Israeli and Palestinian municipalities, were intended to create a framework favourable to the resolution of the Middle East conflict. The concrete achievements remained small but the networks expanded.

These Mediterranean initiatives multiplied and took shape in the 1980s under the leadership of the UTO

(then chaired by the French socialist Pierre Mauroy) and the city of Barcelona (in particular its socialist mayor Pasqual Maragall and his communist deputy Jordi Borja). For the Catalans, this Mediterranean dynamic was part of a project of democratic recovery following the death of Franco (1975): after decades of dictatorship, the local elites intended to reconcile the city with the sea, in the sense of both developing its coastline (neglected under the Franco regime) and establishing links with other municipalities in the basin after years of international isolation.

It was, moreover, in Barcelona that the MedCities network was created in 1991, an initiative of the World Bank, the UTO and several cities in the basin. It provided a first form of institutionalization of regional municipal movements. Still centred on environmental protection, technical exchanges between municipalities were organized and materialized thanks to the expertise and funding of international development institutions. But in the eyes of the cities and the UTO, this cooperation also embraced a deeper political project: the technical reinforcement of locally elected officials and technicians in the South and East should enable the municipal level to assert itself as an essential political actor in a region characterized by centralized and authoritarian states.

Democratizing the Mediterranean through Its Cities

The 1990s and 2000s were marked by a proliferation of new networks of cities and, more broadly, of local Mediterranean authorities. Although their origins and compositions were sometimes quite different, they nevertheless shared a common ambition: the desire to take part in the Euro-Mediterranean relations project launched by the European Union. The projects carried out were becoming more numerous and in-depth. They enjoyed more substantial funding and expertise. The structuring of municipal exchange also became more institutional and was moving away from the activist movements of the 1970s and 80s. It was now organized around the European Union, multilateral development institutions and European municipal governments.

³ CHAUDIÈRES, André, “La paix par les égouts.” *Cités Unies*, Supplement to No. 76, 1973.

The 1990s marked an important turning point. The collapse of the USSR was accompanied in the West by the hope of the universalization of liberal democracy. It was time for the “end of history.” In Europe, however, the Mediterranean remained a cause for concern, fuelled by large development gaps and chronic political instability. With the Renovated Mediterranean Policy (RMP) in 1992 and then, above all, the Barcelona Process as of 1995, the region was gradually becoming a Euro-Mediterranean political area of integration, development and stability. For the European Union, the democratization of the southern and eastern shores was seen as a priority. The absence of democracy, the “bad governance” of the Arab states, were designated as the mother of all vices. They hindered development, threatened stability and prevented regional integration.

Within the framework of the RMP, the European Commission attempted to mobilize cities, launching the Med-Urbs programmes in 1992. Based largely on existing city networks in the Mediterranean, they aimed to support decentralized cooperation initiatives on both sides of the basin. In particular, the aim was to disseminate “democratic” urban management practices at the local level in Arab cities. These programmes created a real dynamic: between 1992 and 1994, Med-Urbs injected 22 M ECU and thus financed the action of 170 local authorities from 17 countries. However, this programme was abolished in 1996 when, paradoxically, the EU had just strengthened its Mediterranean policy with the launch of the Barcelona Process (or Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, EMP). The reasons given by the European Commission did not concern the substance of the cooperation but were of a managerial nature (problems in the execution of contracts, in compliance with financial terms, etc.).

This was the beginning of a long mobilization of cities, in particular their political authorities. They were mainly French, Italian and Spanish (Barcelona, Marseille, Bordeaux, Rome, Turin, Genoa, etc.). They were lobbying the EU authorities to find their place in the EMP, which did not identify city and urban issues as a subject in its own right. They therefore organized the creation of new networks such as the Euromed Commission of Eurocities (1999), the Standing Committee for the Euro-Mediterranean

an Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities (COPPEM, 2000), the Latin Arc (2002), the Europe-MENA urban network (2004) and the Mediterranean Commission of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG, 2005). These multiple networks revolved around a common plea: cities have a role to play in Euro-Mediterranean relations, in particular in the democratization of Arab countries, primarily by disseminating “democratic local governance” techniques.

European locally elected officials generally included their Mediterranean commitment in broader strategies for access to EU bodies, in order to develop networks of influence and obtain funding to invest in their own cities

The Mediterranean was now clearly divided between Europe and its “neighbourhood,” whose cities were often relegated to the rank of “target” for projects. On the other hand, European locally elected officials generally included their Mediterranean commitment in broader strategies for access to EU bodies, in order to develop networks of influence and obtain funding to invest in their own cities. The Euro-Mediterranean project seemed like just another platform for achieving this, sometimes to the detriment of a real Mediterranean vision and an in-depth reflection on the role of cities in regional integration. The lobbying by European cities nevertheless succeeded in prompting the EU to create pilot decentralized cooperation programmes such as Med'Act (2003-2006) and Med'Pact (2006-2009), which nevertheless remained ad hoc experiments. The commitment of locally elected representatives, fragmented between multiple initiatives, was running out of steam as Europe lost interest in the EMP.

It should be noted that another form of Mediterranean integration was also taking shape in parallel with these European dynamics. Technical exchanges were continuing around the basin, this time main-

ly led by municipal technicians (particularly Catalan and Italian) and international development experts (UN, World Bank, Cities Alliance, etc.). Local technical projects – such as strategic urban planning⁴ – also had a political scope: they were intended to strengthen the capacity for action of municipalities in the Arab worlds, which, in the eyes of the West, constituted an “authoritarian exception”⁵ on a global scale. Centralism and authoritarianism were perceived as two sides of the same coin, which, in the aftermath of September 11, was seen as increasingly problematic. Institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations, by working on urban governance, thus attempted to promote a profound, “bottom-up” transformation of the Arab states, which were deemed impossible to reform head-on.

The City at the End of the Euro-Mediterranean Project

In the 2000s, the regional integration ambitions formulated in Barcelona seemed to fade. The stalemate in the Middle East conflict, the post-September 11 security shift of international relations and the enlargement of the EU to the East contributed to diverting political attention from the Mediterranean. In this context, French President Nicolas Sarkozy created the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in 2008, which in fact replaced the EMP. This organization bore witness to the irruption of states (in particular the French State) at the heart of regional integration dynamics. It eliminated the political objectives of stability, peace and democracy. Integration had to be achieved through specific major projects relating to infrastructure, energy and water management, etc.

Urban development thus entered the UfM’s agenda in 2012 following a ministerial meeting in Strasbourg. The aim here was to promote very large-scale development operations in Arab countries – mega-

projects that were sometimes criticized for their liberal and vertical approach to urban planning.⁶ The central states played the leading role. This marked a break with the pre-existing initiatives of cities and their networks – which were not very involved in the UfM – and their desire to reform urban governance from below, in particular by strengthening municipalities and associations.

However, the UfM contributed to creating a dynamic that would make urban issues a recognized theme of Mediterranean integration. In Marseille, two new organizations were created to strengthen cooperation: the Centre for Mediterranean Integration in 2009 (primarily on the initiative of the World Bank and the French government) and the Agency for Mediterranean Cities and Territories in 2012 (on the initiative of the French government and local authorities).

Nevertheless, for many observers of the region, the turning point of the 2010s marked the end of the Euro-Mediterranean project: both states and the European Union gave up their ambitions for regional political integration. The Arab Springs of 2011, initially a source of enthusiasm, gradually gave way to authoritarian regressions and even civil wars. International actors turned away from the regional space to focus on the Tunisian State (especially its decentralization), which appeared – until the start of the 2020s – as the ultimate democratic hope.

The turning point of the 2010s marked the end of the Euro-Mediterranean project: both states and the European Union gave up their ambitions for regional political integration

The Mediterranean project of local political authorities, embedded in that of the EU, also began to

⁴ These approaches have in common the fact that they bring together the actors of a city (municipality, trade unions, companies, associations, professionals, etc.) to produce a diagnosis and a long-term vision of the city’s development, with the hope of identifying strategic projects on which a consensus can be reached (renovation of such and such a precarious neighbourhood, expansion of the airport, development of a technology park for such and such a strategic sector, recovery of the waterfront, etc.). In 2011, there were already about 15 of them in the Mediterranean, led by actors such as MedCities and the city of Barcelona, the World Bank, the United Nations and Cities Alliance.

⁵ CAMAU, Michel, “Globalisation démocratique et exception autoritaire arabe,” *Critique internationale*, vol. 1, no. 30, 59-81, 2006.

⁶ See, for instance, BARTHEL, Pierre-Arnaud (ed.), “Arab megaprojects.” *Built Environment*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2010.

crumble. Moreover, at the turn of the 2010s, some of the leading city councils involved in the municipal movements – particularly Marseille, Barcelona and Rome – experienced changes in political majorities marked by a surge in right-wing and far-right politics. These changes were accompanied by a relegation of the Mediterranean issue in favour of policies of competitiveness and economic attractiveness, the geographical horizons of which were reorientated towards other territories considered to be in “strong growth,” for example in Asia. Most of the Mediterranean political networks, such as the Euromed Commission of Eurocities or the Mediterranean Commission of UCLG, have been dissolved.

Conclusion

From a region of integration and democratic modernization through cities, the Mediterranean seems to have once again become a geographical area divided by civil wars, migratory crises and authoritarian regressions. It is now pervaded first and foremost by states and international institutions according to conventional bilateral “North-South” development logics, in which the city and urban issues often occupy only a marginal place.

The project of “building the Mediterranean”, in particular through its cities, is thus being abandoned by the political authorities. This should not mask the persistence of so-called “technical” institutions and networks which, particularly from Barcelona and Marseille, continue to work to lend it substance and a future. We must give credit to these “technicians” and their political role. Far from confining themselves

to the neutral functions of executors, they convey visions of society and democracy. They maintain active transnational networks of urban planners, intellectuals, engineers and activists, concerned with transforming Mediterranean cities and rethinking their role on a regional scale.

It is necessary that mayors from the southern and eastern shores – too long limited to the role of project “partner” or “target” – get involved and be able to participate fully, as equals

What is probably missing today is overall coherence. In other words, a political vision. In this respect, the commitment of local elected officials is indispensable. Twenty-five years after the EMP was launched, the Mayor of Barcelona’s call to rebuild a Mediterranean project on a city scale may seem as salutary as it is solitary. In order to breathe new life into a true Mediterranean of cities, it is essential that mayors of other cities, such as Marseille, Rome and many others, collectively engage in developing a new Mediterranean project. But this must not remain a Western project: it is necessary that mayors from the southern and eastern shores – too long limited to the role of project “partner” or “target” – get involved and be able to participate fully, as equals, in this enterprise of transforming the Mediterranean through its cities.

Strategic Sectors | **Economy & Territory**

The Impact of Covid-19 on Migrants' Remittances in the Mediterranean – Evidence from Libya and Tunisia

Liz Griesmer

Displacement Tracking Matrix Associate
International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Flannery Dyon

4mi Project Manager – North Africa
Mixed Migration Centre, Danish Refugee Council

Joris Jourdain

Data and Research Officer (Labour Migration
and Human Development)
International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Libya

Ahmed Aziz Dabboussi

Information Management Officer
Mixed Migration Centre, Danish Refugee Council

Raffaele Bertini

Data and Statistics Officer, ad-interim Coordinator
of the Regional Data Hub
Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa
International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Despite representing a private, largely uncoordinated transfer of income across countries, international remittances can be a lifeline for families, communities and countries of origin. At the household level, migration and remittance-sending can act as a form of insurance, allowing members to weather labour, currency and capital market shocks by spreading risk across diverse economic contexts (De Hass, 2007). Under the right conditions, remittance inflows can also support development at the country level (De Hass, 2007). Given their frequent function as a risk diversification strategy, remittances take on renewed importance in times of crisis and often respond countercyclically to economic trends in sending countries (De Hass, 2007). However, the global reach of the Covid-19 pandemic

has raised questions as to the viability of this strategy, due to widespread economic impacts in both sending and receiving countries. Initial predictions of a large drop in remittances have since been revised to reflect a more moderate decline, supporting the view of remittances as countercyclical (World Bank, 2021). Nevertheless, by disaggregating survey data of migrants along key demographic, socioeconomic and migration-related variables, this paper highlights the wide range of consequences of and responses to the Covid-19 pandemic as related to remittance outflows from two Mediterranean countries: Libya and Tunisia. While confirming the moderate decline in remittances observed at the regional and global levels, this paper finds that variables such as length of stay, reason for migrating and region of origin all influenced the likelihood of continued remittance-sending during the pandemic, as well as the likelihood of migrants receiving “reverse remittances” from kin in their country of origin.

Background on Libya and Tunisia

Migrant Profiles

Despite the fragile security situation in Libya, the country continues to serve as a destination for migrants, hosting more than 630,000 as of January 2022. More than half of this population originates from sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Niger (25%) and Chad (13%), while just over a third hail from North African countries like Egypt (18%) and Sudan (18%) (IOM Libya, 2022). The international migrant caseload can be broken down into long-term migrants, short-term migrants, seasonal migrant workers, migrants in transit and displaced populations,

including asylum seekers and refugees (Darne & Benattia, 2017).¹

As per 2020 official estimates, Tunisia hosts around 48,000 officially registered migrants. Top nationalities among the regular migrant stock include other Maghreb countries such as Algeria (23%), Libya (20%) and Morocco (13%), as well as France (19%) (UN Population Division, 2020). However, this figure does not account for irregular migrants in the country, reflecting an information gap on the nationalities and volume of non-registered migrants in Tunisia.

Remittance Patterns

Limited data on remittance outflows impede a full understanding of Covid-19-related effects. In 2020, remittances from Tunisia fell 12 percent to 22.9 million USD (KNOMAD, 2020). While no data are available for Libya for 2019 and 2020, analysis of outflows over the last decade indicates a highly volatile trend, reflecting developments in the civil war (KNOMAD, 2020). Nevertheless, remittance outflows from Libya have exceeded those from Tunisia by at least 20-fold in the last 10 years (KNOMAD, 2020).

Since the start of the pandemic, studies focusing on the impact of Covid-19 on migrants' remittances in North Africa focus on a single country. (IOM Libya & Voluntās, 2021), (IOM & WFP, 2021) (IOM Libya, 2021). To the authors' knowledge, this paper is the first to compare remittance outflows among Maghreb countries during the pandemic. This comparison allows findings generated from IOM Libya's previous study on remittances to be reconsidered with a focus on the pandemic.

Methodology

This paper draws on data collected by IOM and the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC). As part of a Covid-19 socioeconomic impact assessment, IOM Tunisia surveyed 466 migrant beneficiaries in Tunis, Sfax and Zarzis in March 2022. Nationals of West and Central African countries feature more prominently

compared to the regular migrant caseload, with Côte d'Ivoire (38%), Guinea (15%), Cameroon (8%) representing the largest shares. IOM Libya data are derived from the report *Labour Migration to Libya – Remittances Amidst Conflict and Pandemic* (IOM Libya, 2021). 13,404 migrants were surveyed in 2019 and 2020 and 334 migrants completed in-depth interviews as part of this study.

Despite representing a private, largely uncoordinated transfer of income across countries, international remittances can be a lifeline for families, communities and countries of origin

MMC collects data through its 4Mi project, which administers a globally standardized survey tool, the 4Mi, with refugees and migrants on the move.² The 4Mi survey was adapted in July 2020 to focus on the impact of Covid-19 on refugees and migrants, including on their socioeconomic wellbeing. 2,887 migrants were surveyed in Tunisia and 2,416 in Libya across multiple locations in each country from July 2020 to February 2021.³ Respondents in Tunisia came primarily from West, Central and North African countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire (17%), Cameroon (8%), Guinea (8%), Eritrea (8%) and Sudan (8%). In Libya, respondents mainly originated from West, Central and Northern African countries such as Nigeria (26%), Sudan (12%), Ghana (9%), Niger (7%) and Cameroon (6%).

The Covid-19 Pandemic Coincides with a Decrease in Remittances Sent by Migrants in Libya and Tunisia

Data collected both by IOM and MMC confirm a decrease in remittances from migrants and refugees in

¹ For all the terms in this sentence (i.e. long-term migrant; short-term migrant etc.) we have used the IOM International Migration Law Glossary on Migration (2019). Accessed 24 May 2022, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf

² MMC, 4Mi FAQ, https://mixedmigration.org/4mi/4mi_faq/

³ The sample excludes children, migrants returning to their country of origin and migrants who have resided in the country of interview for more than two years to capture people on the move.

Tunisia and Libya in relation to Covid-19, with a more significant decrease reported by those in Libya. MMC data indicate that 38 percent of all respondents experienced reduced income due to job loss, and among those with lower income, 14 percent stopped paying or paid less in remittances.⁴ In Libya, the share was 21 percent and in Tunisia, 9 percent. IOM data similarly suggests a greater drop in remittance-sending from Libya compared to Tunisia following the onset of Covid-19. The pandemic caused 16 percent of respondents in Tunisia to stop sending remittances. In Libya, the share of migrants sending remittances fell 52 percent between January 2019 and July 2020 due to the dual crises of conflict and the pandemic. Among those who continued to send remittances from Libya, the monthly amount sent dropped 15 percent during this period. Although the decrease in remittances was greater in Libya than Tunisia, this likely reflects longer-term instability in Libya as well as the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the larger decline reported in Libya may be partially attributable to the greater share of migrants remitting from Libya prior to the pandemic than from Tunisia. Furthermore, limitations to certain datasets impede our ability to distinguish between those who stopped sending remittances and those who did not send them at all, potentially overstating the effect observed.

Data collected confirm a decrease in remittances from migrants and refugees in Tunisia and Libya in relation to Covid-19, with a more significant decrease reported by those in Libya

Migrants in North Africa are not only sending remittances, but are also recipients of financial support from their families in locations of origin or in third countries – known as “reverse remittances.” While

generally underexplored, those flows were also impacted by Covid-19. MMC data show that 15 percent of respondents across Libya and Tunisia lost financial support from their family due to coronavirus restrictions.

Migrants' Region of Origin Is a Key Determinant of Remittance Patterns during Covid-19

MMC data show that West and Central Africans were more likely to have lower income from Covid-19-related job loss (39% of Central Africans and 49% of West Africans, compared to 22% of East Africans). However, the group who most stopped sending remittances due to reduced income were East Africans (43%, vs. 12% of West Africans and 7% of Central Africans).

One possible interpretation of this outcome may be that East Africans face greater challenges accessing labour markets in Tunisia and Libya, and are therefore highly vulnerable to economic shocks. In turn, the pandemic may have created particular hardship for this group and affected their ability to send remittances.

With respect to remittance inflows, IOM Tunisia indicates Southern Africans as the group most likely to rely on reverse remittances as part of their income (28% vs 22% from Middle East and North African countries and 28% from West and Central African countries). Nationals from southern African countries were also far more likely to report Covid-19-related challenges receiving remittances due to the loss of a job or business.

Length of Stay in the Country of Interview Also Influences Remittance Patterns

Among migrants who lost income during the pandemic, those who had resided longer in the country of interview were less able to continue paying remittances (20% of those in the country between 19 and 24 months who had lost income vs. 5% of those in the country less than six months, among MMC respondents). This reflects the time necessary for mi-

⁴ The MMC Covid-19 survey asked respondents “Have you lost income due to coronavirus restrictions?”. Respondents could provide multiple responses from “Yes, I have lost income from loss of work,” “No, I had no income,” “No, I have continued to receive the same income,” “Yes, I have lost financial support from family,” “Other” and “Refused.” Among those having lost income (either from loss of work or loss of family support), the survey probed what was the impact of the loss of income, including “I have stopped paying or am paying less in remittances.”

grants and refugees to access work opportunities and build the capacity to send remittances, which contributed to a greater drop following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As with remittance outflows, MMC data indicate that length of stay is linked with reverse remittances, as 15 percent of those in the country for less than six months lost financial support from their family, vs. 13 percent of those in the country for 19 to 24 months. Strikingly, 31 percent of those in the country for less than a month lost financial support from family due to Covid-19 restrictions. Overall, this suggests that length of stay is negatively correlated with the likelihood of receiving remittances and positively correlated with the likelihood of sending remittances. Newly arrived migrants appear to be more vulnerable to the socioeconomic impacts of Covid-19, due to the difficulties of finding job opportunities without contextual knowledge or networks and the challenges of maintaining reverse remittances.

However, data from IOM suggest conditions in countries of destination influence this effect. Among those interviewed in Tunisia, those who had spent the better part of the pandemic in Libya and thus are presumed to be more recently arrived were more likely to send remittances than those who spent the pandemic in Tunisia. On the other hand, migrants interviewed in Tunisia who spent the pandemic in Libya were also more likely to receive reverse remittances than migrants who spent it in Tunisia (23% vs. 18%). This suggests that at least a portion of migrants who spent the pandemic in Libya were more resilient to the impact of Covid-19, as evidenced by their continued ability to send remittances, despite having arrived in Tunisia more recently.

Intentions in Countries of Destination Are Also Key Determinants.

According to IOM Tunisia data, those who migrated for permanent settlement or education were less likely to remit money home. This can be explained by the fact that students are less likely to work and have disposable income, while those permanently settled may have weakened ties to their country of origin compared to other migrant groups and thus have reduced incentives to remit. However, respondents who migrated for temporary employment were more likely to stop sending remittances due to

the pandemic than those seeking permanent employment, reflecting the precarity of this form of work as well as temporary workers' vulnerability to economic shocks.

Newly arrived migrants appear to be more vulnerable to the socioeconomic impacts of Covid-19, due to the difficulties of finding job opportunities without contextual knowledge or networks

Conclusion

Data confirm that the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on migrants' ability to send remittances in Libya and Tunisia. In particular, the paper finds that key variables such as regions of origin, length of stay and intentions for migration influenced the likelihood of continued remittance-sending during the pandemic, as well as the likelihood of migrants' receiving "reverse remittances" from kin in their country of origin. Future research should investigate into how migrants were able to send remittances in the face of Covid-19-related shocks, including through the adoption of coping mechanisms. Additionally, the social and emotional dimensions of remittances during Covid-19 should be further explored, considering these transfers often occur among kin.

Bibliography

- DARME, Marie-Cecile and BENATTIA, Tahar. *Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges*, 2017. Libya, Altai Consulting, IMPACT Initiatives, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Accessed 24 May 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/mixed-migration-trends-libya-changing-dynamics-and-protection-challenges>.
- DE HAAS, Hein. *Remittances, Migration and Social Development: A Conceptual Review of Literature*, 2007. UNRISD. Accessed 16 March 2022, www.unrisd.org.

- FITIGU, Yodit and CHEGOU KORE, Ousmane. *The Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Free Movement and Migration in Niger*, 2021. IOM Niger. Accessed 24 May 2022 from <https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/socio-economic-impact-COVID-19-free-movement-and-migration-niger>.
- IOM *International Migration Law Glossary on Migration*, 2019. Accessed 24 May 2022 from https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf.
- IOM Libya. *Circular Migration to Libya*. International Organization for Migration 2020. Accessed 24 May 2022 from https://migration.iom.int/sites/default/files/public/reports/DTM_LBY_Circular_Migration.pdf.
- IOM Libya and Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs. *Living and Working in the Midst of Conflict: The Status of Long-Term Migrants in Libya*, 2020. International Organization for Migration from <https://publications.iom.int/books/living-and-working-midst-conflict-status-long-term-migrants-libya>
- IOM LIBYA and VOLUNTAS POLICY ADVISORY. *Assessment of the Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants and IDPs in Libya*, 2021. Accessed 24 May 2022 from https://libya.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1931/files/documents/IOM_COVID-19%2520Assessment_Final%2520Report_210423_vF7%2520%25281%2529.pdf.
- IOM & WFP. *Hunger and COVID-19 In Libya*, 2021. Accessed 24 May 2022, <https://displacement.iom.int/sites/default/files/public/reports/WFP-IOM-Migrant-Food-Security-Report-FINAL.pdf>.
- IOM Libya. *Labour Migration to Libya – Remittances Amidst Conflict and Pandemic*, 2021. Accessed 24 May 2022, <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/labour-migration-libya-remittances-amidst-conflict-and-pandemic>.
- IOM Libya. *Migrant Report 40 (Dec 2021 – Jan 2022)*, 2022. Accessed 24 May 2022, <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/libya-%E2%80%94-migrant-report-40-dec-2021-jan-2022>.
- Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), 4Mi FAQ, https://mixedmigration.org/4mi/4mi_faq/
- UN POPULATION DIVISION. *International Migrant Stock*, 2020. Accessed 24 May 2022, www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock.
- WORLD BANK GROUP. *Defying Predictions, Remittance Flows Remain Strong During COVID-19 Crisis*, 2021. Accessed 23 May 2022, www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/12/defying-predictions-remittance-flows-remain-strong-during-covid-19-crisis.
- KNOMAD (GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE PARTNERSHIP ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT). *Outward Remittances*, World Bank Group, 2020. Accessed 24 May 2022, www.knomad.org/data/remittances.
- World Food Programme Libya. *Migration Pulse IV: Assessing and Monitoring the Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Livelihoods of Migrant Groups and Libyans 2021*. Accessed 24 May 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/libya-migration-pulse-iv-assessing-and-monitoring-impact-COVID-19-food-security-and>.

The Fluidity of Extremism: The Reshaping of Radicalization in MENA and the Balkans

Lurdes Vidal Bertran

CONNEKT Scientific Coordinator

Mariona Rico Santacreu

CONNEKT Project Manager

European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),
Barcelona

The war in Ukraine has had many spillover effects, ranging from higher energy prices to food insecurity. In Europe it has prompted a transformation of its security architecture and the geo-energy space. However, Russia's strong economic and military power in the Balkans has raised concerns about the peace and stability of the region. Indeed, the Russian invasion has been divisive in the Balkans, with some groups supporting Ukraine and seeing it as defending Europe against Russia and others backing the Russian position, bringing into play old allegiances of far-right groups and convergence on the notion of extreme ultranationalism (Morcos, 2022). The conflict entails the risk of exacerbating the existing political and ethnic divisions, which, coupled with the increased arms flows within Europe, could contribute to violent extremism (Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), 2022).

In the MENA region, with countries where more than 50% of wheat imports come from Russia and Ukraine, the interruption of the grain market is having negative repercussions on food security. Most Arab countries have adhered to neutrality, pragmatism and equidis-

tance. Detachment from a conflict that is seen as intra-European, the rejection of illegal occupation and the visibility of European double standards regarding international law, among other issues, have favoured such equidistance (Cherif, 2022). MENA governments have welcomed the emergence of a multipolar system that is seen as more balanced and opportunistic for the countries of the region.

However, the economic impacts will be paramount for the largest grain importing region in the world and for those countries dependent on energy imports. The inability to access basic food commodities and adequate standards of living can push people towards extremist narratives that provide them with avenues for channelling their discontent. The maintenance of social cohesion – bread riots have a long history in the region – will be based on the government's ability to protect citizens from price hikes. After a long season of droughts and loss of crops, the shortage of grain supplies and the price rise of heavily subsidized commodities such as bread or fuel will undoubtedly challenge the ability of governments to maintain social peace and prevent radicalization.

The H2020-funded project CONNEKT¹ (Contexts of Violent Extremism in MENA and Balkans Societies), through its empirical research on the drivers of radicalization and violent extremism in both regions, has identified some emerging trends and patterns of the radicalization phenomenon in the light of current events in both regions. The understanding of the complexity and multi-faceted interactions among drivers in the two levels of analysis undertaken so far

¹ CONNEKT (Contexts of Violent Extremism in MENA and Balkan Societies) is a research project that explores the drivers of radicalization and violent extremism among young people aged 12 to 30 in eight countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Egypt, Jordan, Kosovo, Morocco, North Macedonia and Tunisia. The project will map and establish interrelationships and specific significance of seven potential drivers within three different levels of analysis.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement 870772. <https://h2020connekt.eu/>

(macro and meso) provides some key insights on the approach to violent extremism and its major trends. The relevance of the meso level, the context, is paramount in this research, understood not only as territorialized bordered spaces but as spaces of social interaction, where drivers acting at the macro, meso and micro levels converge. Drawing from the study of seven pre-identified drivers (religion, economic deprivation, territorial inequalities, transnational dynamics, digital socialization, political claims and grievances, and educational, leisure and cultural opportunities) CONNEKT reveals the dominant role of state security actors and the disconnect between them and civil society actors dealing with mostly grassroots preventive strategies.

Mapping a Constellation of Drivers

Both the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) is a highly securitized domain in both regions, where hierarchization and lack of inter-institutional communication highlight the need for efficient coordination among state institutions and bodies dealing with the topic. Such an approach leaves little room for multidimensional strategies, particularly in the prevention field. In general, traditional approaches tend to be more focused on detection or identification rather than on preventive long-term measures. Therefore, prevention is sometimes addressed more as a firewall against potential violent actions than as a long-term social investment to building resilient communities. From a security viewpoint, prevention is often seen as a step towards impeding behavioural radicalization, and thus too often intersects with the aim of detecting potential violent extremists to be. Nevertheless, there is a growing acknowledgement of the fact that radicalization cannot be explained outside a given social context, where group dynamics favour these reshaped interactions between collective and individual root causes. Therefore, P/CVE requires a multidisciplinary engagement beyond security institutions to deal with the complex and evolving faces of radicalization processes (Torrekens and de le Vingne, 2020).

As for the type of actors involved, which is crucial for determining whether there is a “security monopoly” here, while in the Balkans greater involvement of CSOs has been identified, in the MENA region

P/CVE is mostly a matter of security-related state institutions. However, CSO involvement tends to be restricted to the field of prevention and social intervention and very much determined by the globally-set agenda. Rather than funding projects defined upon criteria identified by local grassroots organizations, it is the interests or agenda of the international donors that defines the approach and content of the programmes (Torrekens and de le Vingne, 2020).

Drawing from the study of seven pre-identified drivers (religion, economic deprivation, territorial inequalities, transnational dynamics, digital socialization, political claims and grievances, and educational, leisure and cultural opportunities) CONNEKT reveals the dominant role of state security actors and the disconnect between them and civil society actors dealing with mostly grassroots preventive strategies

Furthermore, in both regions legislation suffers from the absence of consensual global definitions regarding radicalization and terrorism, which, in certain countries, permits their instrumentalization for political purposes. In such situations, there tend to be human rights violations. In the context of CONNEKT’s research it is notorious in the MENA region. Finally, political instability, coupled with the general absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, has also been identified as a hindering factor for the continuity and maintenance of P/CVE programmes (Ibid). Regarding the drivers of radicalization and VE, the data collected by CONNEKT reveals a prominent role given to religion as a driver of radicalization at the macro (state) level. The control of the religious field by the state in order to promote a moderate version of Islam and the promotion of religious institutions stand out as one of the main priorities, particularly in the MENA region. The Moroccan model

is regarded in this context as a success story. In the Balkans, tensions emerge among official and non-official religious institutions, strongly linked to a general mistrust of government-related organizations (Chirchi and Jrad, 2021). Contrary to the MENA region, the strategy of state supervision over religious affairs here is more a matter of discussion. In the Balkans, religion as a driver is considered when intersecting with other factors, such as economic deprivation and marginalization. Muslim Roma communities in Bulgaria stand out as a combination of such drivers with the religious dimension. In the Balkans, besides reluctance on the spreading of foreign ultraconservative narratives and the issue of foreign fighters, religion is also revealing an additional feature of certain far-right extremist groups, which emphasize Orthodox Christianity and white supremacy in their narratives (Demjaha and Peci, 2021).

Research at the meso (community) level links religion with poverty, political ideas and marginalization as the combination of drivers leading to radicalization. In the MENA region, religion is seen as an instrumentalized channelling medium and often claimed as a potential factor for resilience. In the Balkans, though, ethnonational identities seem to play a more relevant role than religion. In many case studies, religion appears strongly intertwined with digital socialization and transnational dynamics. Indeed, while in the Balkans digital socialization is considered a major driver at community level, in the MENA region, it is religious socialization that is seen as a factor to be taken into account.

CSO involvement tends to be restricted to the field of prevention and social intervention and very much determined by the globally-set agenda

The economic driver is mostly considered as a matter of perception and intersects with other territorial inequalities, lack of education, culture or leisure opportunities and particularly with unemployment. In combination with other drivers, economic

deprivation can operate as an indirect trigger. According to CONNEKT's results, territorial inequalities is a driver that is almost ignored by state actors, while at the community level it stands out as a multiple player. The case of the (lack of) education, culture and leisure opportunities driver is similar to the previous one, also particularly linked to education access. In fact, such neglect might justify a greater investment of CSO activities in this field. Education is generally considered a key instrument to build community resilience, and when it functions as a driver it often intersects with religion and economic deprivation.

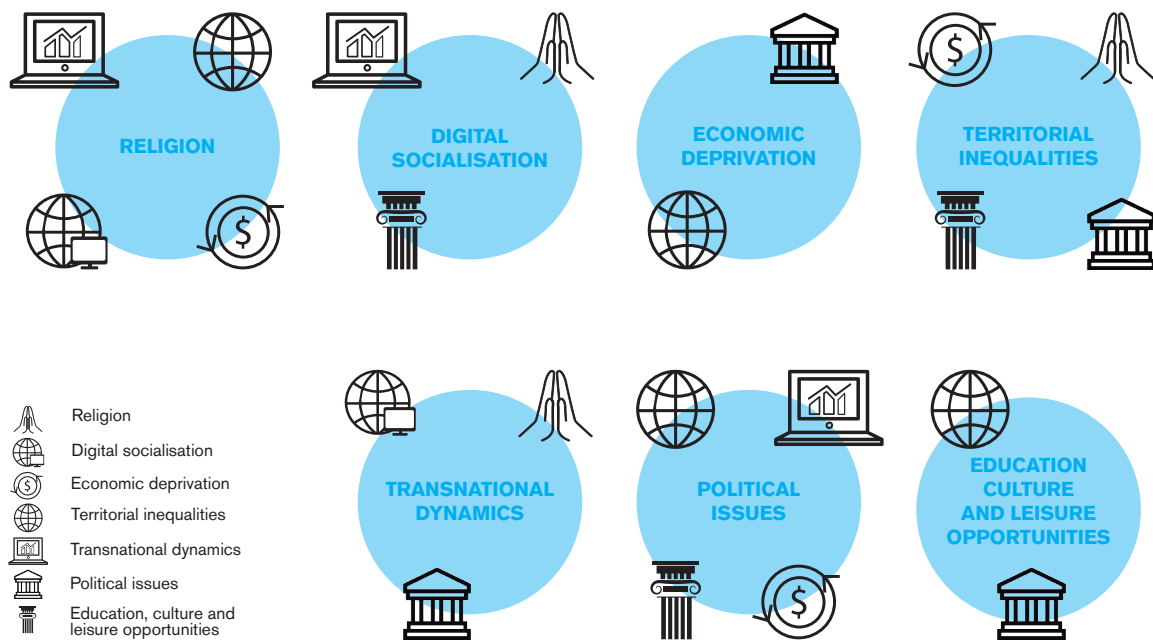
Culture, understood as social norms, has also been identified, particularly in the Balkans, where toxic masculinity or cultural racism appear to be embedded in extremist narratives. Indeed, meso level research carried out among football supporters in clubs in both regions demonstrates the intersection of political dissatisfaction, territorial rivalries, transnational networks and digital socialization with the leisure factor.

While in the Balkans digital socialization is considered a major driver at community level, in the MENA region, it is religious socialization that is seen as a factor to be taken into account

The political driver tests, at the macro level, show that states that do not offer political opportunity structures are more likely to experience violent episodes. Political exclusion of ethnic or religious groups is also seen in both regions as a potential grievance leading to radicalization. At the community level the issue of rulers/rules breach is observed, but in combination with other more prominent drivers. The general mistrust regarding political elites and state institutions observed in both regions can also be replicated in the case of the media. This leads young cohorts to resort to alternative sources of information which eventually might expose them to hate speech and violent and extremist content. In some cases, teenagers seem to

CHART 25

Macro-level Constellation of Drivers



Source: Author's own production.

replace offline leisure socialization with digital socialization.

The digital factor is undeniably linked to transnational dynamics, another driver tested in CONNEKT's empirical research. If the macro level analysis insisted on the penetration of external ideologies and the influence of diasporas as the main features of the transnational driver, coupled with the issue of terrorism funding and the return of foreign terrorist fighters coming from Iraq and Syria, at the meso level transnational dynamics stand out as a more complex driver. In both regions, foreign interference and influence are seen as negative dynamics, which intersect with perceptions regarding international conflicts. In this sense, the war in Ukraine has impacted on the results of the research. The issue of foreign fighters also relates to those joining the war in Ukraine, in 2014 and 2022. While not considered terrorists, the apparent rising numbers might pose a security challenge (Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), 2022). Exposure to violence, experience in combat, access to arms and transnational networking might turn them into threats when returning home (Kapidžić, 2021).

Political exclusion of ethnic or religious groups is also seen in both regions as a potential grievance leading to radicalization

It's Politics!... Or Is It the Extremist Flow?

The war in Ukraine has confirmed the centrality of transnational dynamics as a driver, coupled with political ideas and digital socialization. Some of the drivers that have been central in research and policymaking in recent decades, such as religion or economic deprivation, seem to diminish their relative weight in comparison to transnational dynamics, territorial inequalities and political issues. Digital socialization seems to fully deserve the attention it has been granted in recent years. There is a cross-cutting digital dimension that seems to feed on transnational dynamics, both as a channel for and creator of content. The constellation of drivers drawn by the research at the macro level is considerably reshaped at the meso level and will probably add several layers

of complexity when completed with CONNEKT's results from the upcoming micro research. Once the mapping of the drivers is complete, research will focus on the community level to design strategies for prevention that address enhancing community resilience.

The idea of cumulative extremism (Martínez Lorenzo, et al., 2020) contributes to the understanding of radicalization and extremist trends, particularly in the Balkans. Radical ethnonationalism, white supremacy, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-Muslim, far right, anti-feminism... Diverse strands of extremism circulate and converge in the same groups, which are sometimes apparently opposed (Clarke and Al Aqeedi, 2021). The crisis in institutional confidence just provides a fertile ground for conspiracy theories (present both in far-right and jihadi milieus), anti-status quo, anti-imperialist or more recently anti-vaccine narratives to take root. The fluidity of extremism is reflected in the narratives shared by very distant movements and in the relative ease with which certain individuals or groups circulate along the flow of extremism (Blackman & Gartenstein-Ross, 2019). As a recent example, the incel ("involuntary celibate") movement lexicon is replete with racist language, which attacks women and minority groups, like the 8chan platform, thereby proving the "seamless relationship between the incel movement's politicized misogyny and the far-right's hardline views on immigration and race" (Hoffman and Ware, 2019).

The fluidity of extremism is reflected in the narratives shared by very distant movements and on the relative ease with which certain individuals or groups circulate along the flow of extremism

As a matter of fact, connections among totally opposed extremist groups – such as far right anti-Muslim and jihadi groups – become existential. Both present the dichotomies Islam/West, white/non-white, male/female (or any other sexual identity for that matter) and status quo/anti-imperialism as un-

deniable clashes. They feed each other: the stronger one gets, the more recruitment the other obtains. This is how violent extremism and radicalization processes might be reshaping, amid the fluidity and cumulative complexity of the phenomenon. This is one of the main challenges in understanding trends and evolutions in radicalization and violent extremism: escaping the reactive tendency of policymakers in

As a matter of fact, connections among totally opposed extremist groups – such as far right anti-Muslim and jihadi groups – become existential. Both present the dichotomies Islam/West, white/non-white, male/female (or any other sexual identity for that matter) and status quo/anti-imperialism as undeniable clashes

dealing with P/CVE, i.e. not falling into the trap of rapid – and often doomed to little success – reactions to violent events, and investing in a greater knowledge of the processes that entail radicalization and the embracing of violent extremism. Only such a multidimensional understanding of the drivers and trends in radicalization will allow the design of effective, tailor-made and context-sensitive prevention strategies, involving the appropriate actors in the relevant stages of the process. One of the virtues of CONNEKT is precisely its cross-regional approach, which permits the identification of cross-cutting dynamics that contribute to a better understanding of the multiplexity and fluidity of extremism and engage in more effective intervention in radicalization milieus.

Bibliography

BLACKMAN, M. and GARTENSTEIN-ROSS, D. "Fluidity of the Fringes: Prior Extremist Involvement as a Radicalization Pathway." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 45 (7), 2019, pp. 555-578.

- CHERIF, Y. "Norte de África: Para Rusia 'con amor.'" *afkar/ideas*, Issue 65, 2022, pp. 32-35. Available at: www.iemed.org/publication/norte-de-africa-para-rusia-con-amor/?lang=es [Accessed July 2022].
- CHIRCHI, T. and JRAD, E. MENA: Regional Perspectives on Radicalisation and Violent Extremism [pdf] CONNEKT, 2021. Available at: <https://h2020connekt.eu/publications/radicalisation-and-violent-extremism-in-the-mena/> [Accessed July 2022].
- CLARKE, C. and AL AQEEDI, R. *What Terrorism Will Look Like in the Near Future*, 2021. Available at: <https://newlinesinstitute.org/nonstate-actors/what-terrorism-will-look-like-in-the-near-future/> [Accessed July 2022].
- DEMJAHA, A. and PECI, L. Balkans: Regional Perspectives on Radicalisation and Violent Extremism [pdf] CONNEKT, 2021. Available at: <https://h2020connekt.eu/publications/radicalisation-and-violent-extremism-in-the-balkans/>
- HOFFMAN, B. & WARE, J. *Are we entering a new era of far-right terrorism?* 2019. Available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/are-we-entering-a-new-era-of-far-right-terrorism/> [Accessed July 2022].
- KAPIDŽIĆ, D. (ed.). Drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism in the light of state dynamics in MENA and the Balkans [pdf] CONNEKT, 2021. Available at: <https://h2020connekt.eu/publications/country-papers-on-macro-level-drivers/>
- MARTÍNEZ LORENZO, L.; NILSSON, D. and ISAK, S. Baseline study on Cluster A: Cumulative Extremism (WP3) [pdf] PAVE, 2020. Available at: www.pave-project.eu/downloads-and-video-clips/_downloads-and-videoclips/PAVE_870769_D2-2_Baseline%20study%20on%20Cluster%20A%20-%20final.pdf
- MORCOS, P. *The War in Ukraine: Aftershocks in the Balkans*, 2022. Available at: www.csis.org/analysis/war-ukraine-aftershocks-balkans
- RADICALISATION AWARENESS NETWORK (RAN) Spotlight on Ukraine, 2022. Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/ran-media/ran-spotlight/spotlight-ukraine_en
- TORREKENS, C. and DE LE VINGNE, D. Concepts and Analytical Framework. Debating Notions and Approaches to Radicalisation and Violent Extremism [pdf] CONNEKT, 2020. Available at: <https://h2020connekt.eu/publications/concepts-and-analytical-framework-debating-notions-and-approaches-to-radicalisation-and-violent-extremism/>
- TORREKENS, C. and DE LE VINGNE, D. Country Reports on National Approaches to Extremism. Framing Violent Extremism in the MENA region and the Balkans [pdf] CONNEKT, 2021. Available at: <https://h2020connekt.eu/publications/country-reports-on-national-approaches-to-extremism/>

The Role of Social Media in the Fight for Women's Rights

Mireia Faro Sarrats

Communications Officer

European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),
Barcelona

The use of social media has become the main scenario of contemporary online communication and, therefore, it plays a key role in the process of creating a global identity. Thus far, it has been the place where new names, icons, slogans or mottos have been shared, and where the revolutionary narrative has shaped and created the basis for the emerging activism trends and collective actors that played a crucial role during certain social movements (Gerbaudo & Treré, 2015).

Digital activism or cyberactivism represents a new paradigm used to build up an online community, connect with other users and spread a message within and beyond country borders. Although, there is still a huge part of society that has no access to the online sphere, digital activism may provide a space and a platform to empower marginalized voices, giving them the chance for cross-boundary dialogue.

These platforms are the starting point for different types of social movements, for instance, the “Fridays for Future” (2018) campaign that the young activist Greta Thunberg started; or #Stayhome (2020), a campaign to create awareness about a global situation during the first lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, social media can also serve as a platform to mobilize people to seek justice for any human rights violations such as “HollaBack” (2005), “SlutWalk” (2011), “Bring Back our Girls” (2014), “Me Too” (2017) or “Black Lives Matter” (2020). It's through social media campaigns, online petitions, blogs, crowdfunding platforms etc., where people seek justice and solidarity. Therefore, these move-

ments grow, become viral and stronger. Nonetheless, it is clear that before these hashtags become viral, there's a reason behind them that goes beyond the action. For example, #BringBackOurGirls was not only a hashtag that sought justice for the 200 schoolgirls that were abducted by Boko Haram in Nigeria, but also served as a ground-breaking movement to advocate for social changes in the socio-cultural, political and economic fields in the country (Akpojivi, 2019); or #BlackLivesMatter, a social movement that started with George Zimmerman's acquittal regarding Trayvon Martin's death, back in 2013, which represented the cherry on the cake regarding the situation black people have to face in the US on a daily basis. These huge campaigns have reached millions of people and gathered other voices on the ground that have joined the movements.

For its part, feminist activism has jumped into the online landscape, aiming to achieve gender-based dialogue as well as expand its message and reach people beyond borders. In this regard, these spaces created by women activists are the starting point to building up identity discussions and online dialogue with a gender perspective. However, there is an existing gap, especially in the MENA region, where only women in the academy or in privileged situations are allowed to have a presence in the online world (Newsom & Lengel, 2021).

Women's Rights in the Digital Sphere

The #MeToo campaign can be understood as the zenith of the previous social media campaigns to denounce sexual harassment and gender violence, worldwide. Sexual violence has several stages, such as sexual harassment, gender violence, sexual assault, rape, incest, sexual abuse, etc. So, social me-

dia campaigns have been targeting these different scenarios by using different types of messages. For instance, several anti-street harassment campaigns have been launched online such as HarassMap in Egypt, Harasstracker in Lebanon, Tell Your Story in Turkey or Dear Catcallers in the Netherlands.

The #MeToo campaign, which took the world by storm in 2017, gathered female voices around the globe. Although this was a worldwide feminist movement, it especially empowered women in the MENA region (Basch-Harod, 2019). By 2021, with an estimated population of 440 million in the Arab states, only around 66% of people in MENA had access to the Internet,¹ a percentage that has been progressively increasing over the years. Even though it is a clearly increasing trend, there is still a huge existing gap between men and women, since women still have less access to the Internet (56%) than men (68%). Nonetheless, although the gap is still big, it has not prevented women's activism, which has increased.

Digital activism has become a mechanism within society to create awareness on both individual and collective levels

"You will never walk alone" or "I believe you" are some of the messages that this hashtag conveys, creating a community of solidarity and understanding. This campaign has become an intersectional feminist online movement that calls women to join, not only to support and to create community but also to share their testimonies of harassment and sexual assault, to draw a bigger picture of this never-ending situation. #MeToo is built on the many actions that feminist activism has previously undertaken, particularly in relation to the "naming and contestation of previously hidden forms of sexual violence (Loney-Howes et al., 2021)." Since the early 2000s, digital activism has been creating its own space through the different existing platforms such as Blogger (2003), Wordpress (2004),

Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), Sina Weibo (2009) or WeChat (2011). These platforms were – and still are – the key tool for communicating news, information and for mobilizing activism both online and offline for several women's rights movements. Digital activism has become a mechanism within society to create awareness on both individual and collective levels, always using that space for sharing and to show to other people around the world that they are not alone.

Women are challenging the regional and the national sphere by speaking out. According to some scholars, by bringing social issues into public contestation, the issues become "political" (Sreberny, 2015). A clear example is the online response after the attack a woman suffered in Egypt in a demonstration in Cairo's Tahrir square, back in 2015. The beating of the so-called Blue Bra Girl, who was a protester beaten up by the Egyptian military, was all over the Internet thanks to the many women and protesters that captured the moment and shared it on YouTube and Facebook. The protester became an icon of the fight against violence, and the hashtag #BlueBra was used to gather women to take to the streets. This happened to be one of the biggest demonstrations by Egyptian women. This is only one of the many more examples that have dyed the social media activism landscape during the first two decades of this century. In 2019, the Facebook page "My Stealthy Freedom" reached over one million followers. This campaign started in 2014, when an Iranian journalist posted a picture on Facebook of herself without a hijab. This led to a massive response of Iranian women doing the same, posting pictures of themselves without the chador, creating a huge community of women that spoke out against the obligation to wear this Iranian garment. In Morocco, back in 2013, #RIPAmina was a campaign against the Penal Code's Article 475, that allowed a rapist to avoid prosecution and jail if he married the victim. Thanks to mobilization and public pressure, this article was repealed in 2014.² Or when, in 2017, Lebanese women created the hashtag #Abolish522 or #Undress522, to protest against the decision of the Parliament to abolish the marriage loophole. Women activists filled social media with videos and photos sharing the same message: "A white dress

¹ ITU, www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx

² BBC News. "Morocco amends controversial rape marriage law." 2014: www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25855025

doesn't cover the rape."³ In August 2021, the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, and an even worse humanitarian crisis began. Women's rights disappeared. The initial reaction on social media was strong, condemning the action, condemning the violence and showing support to the people. However, the multiple tweets by institutions, governments and high-level politicians led to nothing but actions in accordance with the rules on diplomatic behaviour. Many people in Afghanistan, especially women, had to close their social media accounts for their own safety. By the end of the year, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan vanished from the majority of the world's agenda, but in the social media sphere it lived on. On 23 March, the Taliban banned girls from returning to school indefinitely and on 7 May, it banned Afghani women from showing their faces in public. #LetAfghanGirlsLearn and #FreeHerFace are some of the main hashtags that have become trending topics all over the Internet, and not thanks to government institutions, but rather because of the people and journalists. These trends have become viral, looking to seek justice for women in Afghanistan. Even though this may not have a short-term political impact, it is a constant reminder that girls and women in Afghanistan have no rights. And it has not been limited to the online sphere, but also went to the streets. Women, especially young women, in the country are facing the Taliban by taking to the streets to protest against the prohibition and to go to school, knowing what their fate may be. Furthermore, #FreeHerFace mobilized not only women but also a few men, something that has never been seen before in the country. Some men on Afghan television channels, such as Tolo News, joined the #FreeHerFace movement, and started to wear masks in solidarity with their female coworkers and to protest against the Taliban's decision (Joya, 2022).

Reporting gender violence on social media follows a similar pattern. Most of the time, as mentioned before, a hashtag linked to some specific case is supported by a vast social movement. One individual case is transformed into a broader problem within society. In other words, it questions and confronts the government's actions and its judicial system, e.g. the case of #Iamanada in Spain, where five men raped an 18-year-old woman in Pamplona, in 2016. When the

case was reported it grew stronger and a huge community was generated seeking justice for the victim and protesting against the system. Social media platforms also serve to shed light on investigations, which are not always transparent. Users use social media as a space to add extra non-official information, confronting governments or national authorities. #FindHinyUmoren was a campaign created by activists in Nigeria in 2020, due to the disappearance of a young woman on her way to work. This campaign sets the perfect example of the evolution of the changing narrative during the different processes in the investigation of a case involving gender-based violence. We can divide this campaign into three different stages. The movement started with the aim of finding her by sharing pictures of her using the hashtag. When she was found dead, the hashtag twisted and was used to find and add more information about the murderer. And in the last stage, the hashtag was also used as a space to grieve as well as to seek justice for her. These campaigns are in constant evolution, although their ultimate goals remain unchanged.

Digital Activism in the New Era

The old concept of activism has changed, along with the way younger generations in the region express and tell their stories. Older generations never had this chance. Social media and digital platforms have now become a useful tool within the feminist activism framework, not only for individuals but also for a large number of women's rights organizations. Many of these organizations in the Middle East and North Africa use these platforms to approach people, engage with them in conversations about women's rights and share reflections on current events, challenges and feminist issues. It has been proved that these online spaces are already quite accessible and cost-effective for feminist and women's rights organizations working towards social change and gender equality. It has clearly made their work more visible and facilitated the connection between communities as well as reaching their audiences. Online feminism has crossed borders, reached people, disseminated important information among women and has respond-

³ BBC News. "Lebanon rape law: Parliament abolishes marriage loophole." 16 August 2017. www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-40947448

ed to the continuous needs of women around the world (Qazzaz, 2021). In recent years, therefore, online feminist activism, especially in the region, has provided the possibility of engaging and creating a network of feminists from all over the globe, who can mobilize and practise solidarity (Qazzaz, 2021).

On another level, social media, especially Twitter, have been used not only to denounce gender violence but also as an information weapon. Activists act as barrier breakers bringing new information to specific cases, most of the time, non-official information, which is complementary to what can be found in the media. In some cases, this new information refutes fake news and disinformation. Ultimately, the role of activists is to shed light on the attempts at justifying gender violence, while creating awareness and social responsibility (UOC, 2021).

Online activism faces trolling and cyberbullying on a daily basis, and the fight for women's rights has been continually challenged with threats, harassment or discrimination. Digital campaigns and movements have brought the division of society into the online landscape. On the one hand, it has had a positive effect, gathering many women around the world and creating a massive community of feminism. But, on the other hand, it has been an open space for anti-feminist hate speech and perpetual intimidation. Despite all the hatred and disinformation, digital activism has served as the tool to not only spread a message, anger and discomfort, but also to empower and gather a powerful revolutionary movement, leading many women in the MENA region to take to the streets and stand up against violence, harassment and rape and fight for their rights.

References

AKPOJIVI, Ufuoma "I Won't Be Silent Anymore: Hashtag Activism in Nigeria." *Communication*, 45:4, 19-43, 2019. DOI: 10.1080/02500167.2019.1700292

BASCH-HAROD, Heidi. "#MeToo and the History of 'Hashtag Feminism' in the MENA Region." *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook*, 2019. IEMed, Barcelona, 2019. www.iemed.org/publication/metoo-and-the-history-of-hashtag-feminism-in-the-mena-region/

GERBAUDO, Paolo & TRERÉ, Emiliano "In search of the 'we' of social media activism: introduction to the special issue on social media and protest identities." *Information, Communication & Society*, 18:8, 865-871, 2015, DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2015.1043319

JOYA, Zahra. "Male Afghan TV presenters mask up to support female colleagues after Taliban decree." *The Guardian*. 2022: www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/24/male-afghan-tv-presenters-mask-up-to-support-female-colleagues-after-taliban-decree?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=tw_t_gu&utm_medium&utm_source=Twitter

LONEY-HOWES, Rachel; MENDES, Kaitlynn; FERNÁNDEZ ROMERO, Diana; FILEBORN, Bianca & NÚÑEZ PUENTE, Sonia "Digital footprints of #MeToo." *Feminist Media Studies*, 2021 DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2021.1886142

"My Stealthy Freedom." *Facebook*. Accessed 25 April 2019. www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/

NEWSOM, Victoria A. and LENGEL, Lara. "Arab Women, Social Media, and the Arab Spring: Applying the framework of digital reflexivity to analyze gender and online activism." *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(5), 31-45, 2012. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol13/iss5/5>

QAZZAZ, Hadeel "Fighting all demons: feminist voices on popular protests in Lebanon and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region." *Gender & Development*, 29:2-3, 431-446, 2021. DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2021.1978726

SREBERNY, A. "Women's Digital Activism in a Changing Middle East." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47(2), 357-361, 2015. doi:10.1017/S0020743815000112

"The Me Too Movement in the Middle East." *International Viewpoint*. 2019: <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5939>

TOOR, Sunita. Digital activism: empowering women, creating change and demanding human rights. 2020. *OpenGlobalRights*: www.openglobalrights.org/digital-activism-empowering-women-creating-change-and-demanding-human-rights/

UNIVERSITAT OBERTA DE CATALUNYA (UOC). *Webinar DDHH y democracia en el mundo africano, árabe y musulmán*, 2021 https://materials.campus.uoc.edu/cdocent/PID_00283001/

Climate Migration in the Eye of the Storm: A Future Challenge for the Mediterranean Region

Matías Ibáñez Sales

Programme and Research Officer
Department of Sustainable Development and
Regional Integration
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),
Barcelona

Climate Change: A Threat Multiplier in the 21st Century

Today, the Mediterranean region is one of the world's main climate change hotspots, and, according to numerous scientific studies and reports by international organizations, its accelerated effects are expected to worsen in the coming decades. The media are forever informing us about the natural catastrophes, such as hurricanes, droughts, floods and sudden-onset disasters, that occur frequently on both sides of the Mediterranean, and which feature on the front pages of our newspapers and in our television news programmes. This is a topic of growing concern within civil society and the international community, and especially within the borders of the *Mare Nostrum*. According to the First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) on Climate and Environmental Change prepared by the independent network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC), the region is warming 20% faster than the global average, sea-level rise may increase by between 20 and 110 cm by the end of the century, while annual precipitation rates will decrease considerably (MedECC, 2021). Moreover, the report stresses the need for urgent and drastic action if we are to limit global warming to 1.5°C and describes climate change as one of the greatest threats of the 21st century. The accelerated effects of climate change have posed significant environmental challenges with truly devas-

tating consequences in the short and medium term for marine and terrestrial ecosystems, but also to human well-being on both shores of the Mediterranean. In this context, climate change represents a modern and unparalleled threat to the Mediterranean region as it acts as a double-edged sword. Beyond presenting direct risks to human security in the form of drastic climate and environmental variations, climate change also has the capacity to interact with other political, social and economic factors and exacerbate instability, conflict and fragility, as well as the pressing issue of human mobility. Looking back, the UN Secretary-General (SG) Ban Ki-moon recognized climate change as a “*threat multiplier*” in the SG’s Report to the 64th Session of the General Assembly, titled “*Climate Change and its Possible Security Implications*” (UN General Assembly, 2009). This concept is now widely recognized among the international community, scientists, governments and civil society, and brings to the table the intrinsic link between environmental and climate effects and the realization of a wide range of human rights, including but not limited to the right to life, health, food, water and housing, among others. The key factor that makes climate change one of the greatest threats of the 21st century is that it negatively affects interlinked sectors (agriculture, industry, water, tourism, sanitation, health, energy, environment and biodiversity). This essentially means that climate change has the potential to exacerbate other drivers of insecurity such as water, food, energy or health insecurity, and ultimately lead to political tensions, development risks and migration challenges. Moreover, its negative effects are today hampering progress towards the effective delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and could even result in slowing down or reversing the development process in the Mediterranean region.

The Climate Crisis Is Also a Migratory Crisis

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2022 report has confirmed that "*climate change and weather extremes are increasingly driving displacement in all regions around the world*" (IPCC, 2022), including within the southern Mediterranean region. It is undeniable that some regions will be more severely affected by climate change than others due to geographic factors, population growth, states' operational and institutional capacity and other socioeconomic factors (IOM, 2019). For instance, in North Africa and the Sahel, extreme and unpredictable weather variations have already led to natural disasters with negative impacts on crop yields, fisheries and socioeconomic development at different levels. According to the 2019 Afrobarometer Policy Series on climate change, which represents the largest ever public opinion survey of Africans' perceptions on different issues, respondents from 34 African countries stated that climate conditions for agricultural production have worsened over the past decade, which has had a severe impact on their livelihoods and put their household food security at serious risk.

The region's vast deserts and dry lands are prone to dust storms, extremely high temperatures and droughts, which will certainly be exacerbated by climate change and negatively affect related agricultural and pastoral sectors, as well as air quality (World Bank, 2019). Water security is becoming a major challenge for North African countries, as rainfall and groundwater supplies decrease, and droughts intensify; while climate change heavily impacts soil degradation, desertification and deforestation, and exposes coastal populations to sea-level rise (World Bank, 2018). Moreover, within the southern Mediterranean region temperatures are expected to rise to 7°C in summertime and 4°C in the winter. These variations will be accompanied by longer heat waves and decreases in average precipitation during the wet season, particularly in Morocco and Algeria (Schilling et al. 2020).

In this regard, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, recently called for action to tackle climate change, one of the greatest factors contributing to the world's worsening forced migration crisis because of its negative impact on people's livelihoods and productivity in highly exposed locations. According to the World Bank's

Groundswell Report, in the most pessimistic scenario, climate change is expected to displace up to 216 million people across the globe by 2050, of which 13 million will be forced to leave their homes in North Africa because of severe weather conditions and associated food, water, health and human insecurity (Clement et al., 2021). In the report's worst-case estimates, climate-driven migration could escalate to up to 6% of the total population of the North African region, and nearly half of all internal migrants could be considered climate migrants.

Climate change has the potential to exacerbate other drivers of insecurity such as water, food, energy or health insecurity, and ultimately lead to political tensions, development risks and migration challenges

By 2050, within the southern Mediterranean region, climate out-migration hotspots, which have become as such due to serious water shortages and the impact of sea-level rise, will include coastal areas in Tunisia, Morocco – including Agadir, and the central Atlas surroundings –, Algeria and Egypt – especially across the Nile Delta and Valley. Climate-related migrants will be forcibly displaced towards urban areas such as Algiers, Tunis, Cairo, Tripoli, Casablanca, Rabat or Tangiers, which may lead to a disproportionate population growth (Clement et al., 2021), and serious pressures on cities' resources and planning. Furthermore, the neighbouring sub-Saharan and Sahel regions have also been portrayed as real hotspots of climate-induced migration due to severe desertification and droughts in arable and farming areas and the regions' high dependence on agriculture and pastoral movements (Rigaud et al., 2018). Most notably, the World Bank's 2018 Groundswell Report predicted negative scenarios in which as many as 86 million people could be forced to move within national borders by 2050. Given the region's proximity to North Africa, which often becomes a transit point to Europe, climate change adversities combined with increased demographic pressures on the sub-Saharan population, security outbreaks and political and socioeco-

conomic instability could lead to increased cross-border migration to southern Mediterranean countries in the upcoming decades (IOM, 2019). This could intrinsically generate associated problems in hotspots of inward migration such as Morocco, Tunisia or Algeria, particularly increasing the risk of resource scarcity.

The Climate-Migration Nexus: Migration Outcomes in the Southern Mediterranean Region

In this context of future projections, vulnerable human groups will be forced to flee from home seeking a better future that provides them with the basic elements of subsistence and human progress away from the negative effects of climate change. Climate-driven migration from areas with associated pressures on agriculture and water, and from towns affected by sea-level rise, heavy storms and floods, will continue to spread and intensify in the coming years, particularly increasing internal mobility in combination with other instability drivers. Indeed, most studies and foresight exercises on the topic predict that out of every four displacements induced by the negative effects of climate change and the exacerbation of instability drivers, three will take place within countries (Clement et al., 2021). Thus, climate change could be framed as a direct and powerful driver of internal migration, as it rarely takes place directly across borders and transnationally, mainly due to the lack of economic resources and because few people have the means to migrate for a longer period of time.

Today, the southern Mediterranean region is suffering from a variety of internal mobility outcomes induced by climate-related events, including the disruption of regular mobility patterns, as is the case of pastoralist movements, migration as an adaptation strategy and emergency displacement, the latter two being either permanent or temporary. The linkage between a sudden-onset natural disaster and forced displacement is clear, as extreme weather agents such as hurricanes or torrential storms quickly force large numbers of people to flee from the negative consequences of the catastrophe. This type of disaster-related migration is more easily observable, and often involves significant human and fund resource mobilization for appropriate emergency preparedness, disaster response and recovery.

Human mobility as a form of adaptation to the gradual and constant exposure to slow-onset climate variations and their negative consequences, for instance in the form of reductions in crop productivity due to long droughts or rising temperatures, is one of the most common forms of internal climate-induced migration. This occurs when vulnerable groups adapt in one way or another and over a number of years, to an array of slow, climate-related environmental stressors, and, ultimately, are forced to migrate once they have exhausted all feasible alternatives that made livelihood and habitability possible. This type of internal migration is often short-distance and occurs from rural areas to urban centres. How this type of climate-driven displacement interacts with an individual's capacity to make the decision to migrate presents more difficulties on the ground. This is because if vulnerable human groups have exhausted all possible ways to adapt to adverse climate events, and finally are being forced to flee from their homes as an ultimate adaptation resource, the voluntariness of their actions is called into question and should not be quantified as voluntary migration in official statistics (Mixed Migration Centre, 2020).

Likewise, it has been widely demonstrated by studies and analysis in which perceptions of worsening climate change effects are associated with a higher probability of migration that the interaction with other drivers of mobility stands out as highly necessary to ultimately induce human mobility. For instance, a study based on household surveys in North Africa demonstrated that up to 70% of respondents in Morocco and Algeria and 40% in Egypt stressed that, in recent times, temperatures have been higher and precipitation scarcer, and that these drastic weather conditions were indeed affecting crop productivity. However, when asked if these climate-related consequences were enough to make them migrate, the same respondents answered negatively and highlighted that other socioeconomic factors such as a lack of jobs or available services in their towns should be taken into account to force them to take this last-resort decision (Wodon et al. 2014). This same example was clearly demonstrated by the Mixed Migration Centre with a study carried out in West Africa in which just 2% of interviewed migrants claimed to have migrated solely for causes related to climate change. However, when asked whether cli-

mate change had affected their decision to a greater or lesser extent, nearly 47% of the same respondents affirmed that climate change had been a factor triggering their decision, but was not their exclusive consideration (Mixed Migration Centre, 2021).

However, despite the fact that climate-related displacement may often first translate into internal migration, climate-driven human mobility might be followed in the long run by cross-border migration in combination with other socioeconomic and insecurity drivers of mobility or the progressive gain of financial resources, for instance after some years of work in urban areas.

Moreover, conflicts across the Middle East and North Africa region and severe political instability and economic crisis periods will continue to be powerful drivers of sudden cross-border refugee flows. Similarly, and as demonstrated by the academic literature, adverse climate-related events can have a strong linkage with fragility and may increase the risk of conflict by interacting with other factors, such as limited state capacity and structural constraints (Mach et al., 2019). In addition, according to the IOM report titled *“Climate change and migration in vulnerable countries,”* it has been demonstrated that countries with a lower degree of socioeconomic development and weak governance structures will be most affected by the effects of climate change and will account for the majority of climate-driven emigrants. This is because their meagre financial resources to address emerging challenges and lack of institutional capacity will not be enough to cope with the challenge of the climate-migration nexus in the future (IOM, 2019).

Better Informing Future Migration and Development Policies

The annual World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Risks Report contains a multi-stakeholder survey that measures perceptions of global risks among the international community and global leaders in different domains. In its last edition, climate change was ranked among the “top five” perceived global risks, while other related risks such as food and water security, and migratory movements –which have a strong connection with climate change impacts– were also among the top ten chosen categories this

year (World Economic Forum, 2022). Migration is a top long-term concern for the survey’s respondents, and 60% of interviewees in the 2022 Report agreed the issue of migration is not adequately addressed by the international community and governments, despite its strategic importance and the world’s growing concern about it, especially in the wake of the intensifying effects of climate change.

Despite the fact that climate-related displacement may often first translate into internal migration, climate-driven human mobility might be followed in the long run by cross-border migration in combination with other socioeconomic and insecurity drivers of mobility or the progressive gain of financial resources

As previously outlined, framing climate change as just a primary and direct driver of climate-induced human mobility may obscure the complex reality of forced climate displacement and lead to the inadequate implementation of migration strategies, development policies and disaster responses. Climate change is a unique phenomenon not just because of the climate-related environmental stressors that it causes directly, but also because of its cross-cutting capacity to exacerbate interconnected risks within sectors that are intrinsically necessary for livelihood, socioeconomic progress and human development. In this context, if policymakers and civil society continue to address the issue of climate change simply from a unilateral perspective, based on its most direct and short-term environmental consequences, this situation will simply lead to underestimating the risks and scope of the challenge and ultimately to failing to develop appropriate policies. Disaggregating its adverse effects from other climate-driven risks such as water security, food security or human mobility is not a wise option if national leaders want to curb the adverse effects of climate change by 2030 and foster sustainable development at all levels in the Mediterranean region. As a matter of fact, the

need to incorporate a more cross-cutting approach that helps frame the threat multiplier nature of climate change remains crucial to better understand its socioeconomic, health, development, migration and security risks, which have devastating consequences for future generations and Mediterranean societies (Werrell & Femia, 2015).

The need to incorporate a more cross-cutting approach that helps frame the threat multiplier nature of climate change remains crucial to better understand its socioeconomic, health, development, migration and security risks, which have devastating consequences for future generations and Mediterranean societies

Moreover, this paradigm shift will enable decision-makers to implement policies in a more holistic manner and plan ahead, to interconnect different ministries and agencies to develop joint actions to properly address the climate-migration nexus, and to adapt international law to the new cross-cutting features of climate change, for example regarding climate refugees.

Along these lines, for instance, some examples and policy recommendations that take into account the climate-migration nexus from a holistic and inclusive point of view could include investing in better understanding the drivers of internal and cross-border climate-induced migration to inform future-ready policies, as well as embedding the climate-migration nexus in climate change adaptation and mitigation plans, disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and disaster response plans. By mobilizing funding and resources towards climate change adaptation and mitigation policies that consider forced migration as a climate-related consequence, governments would be able to take action in advance to help improve affected citizens' living conditions and livelihood and to prevent them from being forcibly displaced in the future. In the same vein, planning ahead future-ready integration and migration policies based

on scenario-based approaches would lead to internal climate migration as an adaptation strategy resulting in positive development outcomes (Clement et al., 2021). Lastly, climate migration drivers and consequences should also be considered in future development planning and European Union development cooperation frameworks with the Southern Neighbourhood, but also with the Sahelian countries, as the Sahel-North Africa-Europe axis is expected to become a direct witness of climate-induced migration flows in the coming decades.

Conclusion

The fact that climate change is not the main direct driver of cross-border and intra-regional migration today, does not imply that climate-related environmental stressors will not continue to increase over the next few years. By that time, the scenario could be dramatically different to what it is today, given the wide-scale and devastating effects of climate change in the southern Mediterranean region and Sahel. Thus, human mobility patterns and trends could see a dramatic increase at the cross-border level, as climate change significantly affects human and socioeconomic development and leads to more pronounced conflicts and instability, exacerbating drivers of insecurity and human mobility.

For all these reasons, there is an urgent need to adopt small changes that help plan ahead for more sustainable solutions for a precarious future. At this crossroads, framing climate change as a threat multiplier remains crucial to better understand and analyse its negative consequences as a direct exacerbator of security, migration and socioeconomic development risks in the Mediterranean region. In addition, this holistic knowledge will help to better inform evidence-based and future-ready migration, integration and development policies, and to truly integrate the migration focus into climate change adaptation and mitigation policies. Lastly, the climate-migration nexus should also be put on the table of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation to join forces in the fight against climate change from a people-centred perspective, avoid and anticipate the devastating consequences of future climate-driven mobility in the region, and foster sustainable development at all levels.

References

- CLEMENT, V., et al. *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*. World Bank, Washington, DC. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36248>
- INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM). *Climate change and Migration in vulnerable countries: A snapshot of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States*. IOM Headquarters, Geneva. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/climate_change_and_migration_in_vulnerable_countries.pdf
- INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC). *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [SHUKLA, P.R. et al. (eds.)]*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA. Doi: 10.1017/9781009157926
- MEDITERRANEAN EXPERTS ON CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE (MEDECC). *Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin: Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report [Cramer, W., Guiot, J., Marini, K. (eds.)]* Union for the Mediterranean, Plan Bleu, UNEP/MAP, Marseille, 2020. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4768833
- MIXED MIGRATION CENTRE, "Weak links: challenging the climate & mixed migration paradigm in the Horn of Africa & Yemen." *MMC Briefing Paper*, February 2020. https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/087_weak_links.pdf
- MIXED MIGRATION CENTRE "Migration drivers and decision-making of West and Central Africans on the move in West and North Africa: A quantitative analysis of factors contributing to departure." *MMC Briefing Paper*, June 2021. https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/174_Migration_drivers_and_decision_making_West_and_North_Africa.pdf
- RIGAUD, K., et al. *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*. Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2018. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461>
- SELORMEY, E.E., et al., "Change ahead: Experience and awareness of climate change in Africa." *Afrobarometer Policy Paper* n° 60, August 2019. www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Policy%20papers/ab_r7_policypaperno60_experience_and_awareness_of_climate_change_in_africa.pdf
- UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY. *Climate change and its possible security implications: report of the Secretary-General*, A/64/350 (11 September 2009). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/667264>
- WERRELL, E. C., & FEMIA, F., *Climate Change as Threat Multiplier: Understanding the Broader Nature of the Risk*, The Centre for Climate and Security, Briefing n° 25, 12 February 2015. https://climateandsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/climate-change-as-threat-multiplier_understanding-the-broader-nature-of-the-risk_briefer-252.pdf
- WERTZ, M., & HOFFMAN, M., "Climate Change and Migration in the Mediterranean: Challenges for the Future." *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2017*, IEMed, Barcelona, 2017. www.iemed.org/publication/climate-change-and-migration-in-the-mediterranean-challenges-for-the-future/
- WODON, Q. & LIVERANI, A. "Climate Change and Migration in the MENA Region." *MENA knowledge and learning quick notes series, N° 129*. World Bank, Washington, DC. 2014. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/22594>
- WORLD BANK *Beyond Scarcity: Water Security in the Middle East and North Africa*. MENA Development Report, Washington, DC. 2018. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/27659>
- WORLD BANK. (2019). *Sand and Dust Storms in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region: Sources, Costs and Solutions*. Washington, DC. 2019. www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/sand-and-dust-storms-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-mena-region-sources-costs-and-solutions
- WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *The Global Risks Report 2022*, 17th Edition, 2022. www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2022.pdf

Migration as a “Threat”

Blanca Garcés

Senior Research Fellow
CIDOB (Barcelona)

The instrumentalization of migration at the European Union’s external borders is starting to become commonplace. In February 2020, the Turkish government sent more than 13,000 people to the border with Greece. In May 2021, Morocco allowed more than 10,000 people to cross irregularly into Ceuta over the course of two days. In the autumn of 2021, it was the turn of the Belarusian regime, which helped thousands of people reach the Polish, Latvian and Lithuanian borders. In this context, Brussels has not hesitated to describe the arrival of thousands of people (including families and minors) as a serious “threat” to its “security.” Nor has NATO, which, in its new Strategic Concept, considers the “instrumentalization of migration” by “authoritarian actors” a form of “hybrid threat.”

The use of migration for political ends is not new. The American political scientist Kelly M. Greenhill (2010) coined the term “weaponization of migration” to refer to the use of migration as a weapon of political and military warfare. Taking a long-term historical perspective, Greenhill distinguishes between coercive intentions, i.e. when migration is used as a foreign policy tool to apply pressure to other states; dispossessive intentions, i.e. when the aim is to annex certain territories or consolidate power; and economic motivations, in which the goal is financial gain.

The intentions of Turkey, Morocco and Belarus in the aforementioned episodes were clearly coercive, as they were instrumentalizing migration to induce changes and obtain concessions from the EU. Turk-

ish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was seeking increased financial aid for refugee reception and support for Turkish military operations in northern Syria. Morocco was responding to what it considered an act of disloyalty, namely, the hospitalization in Logroño of Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali, and, ultimately, was demanding collusion on the issue of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. Belarus, with Russian backing, was pressuring the EU not to interfere in its internal affairs.

The EU has been shocked by each of these instances of “blackmail.” On the one hand, it has blanched at the “indecent” and “cynical” use of refugees for political ends by third countries. On the other, it has wasted no time in referring to the arrival of thousands of people (again, including families and minors) as a serious “security threat” and, thus, declaring itself “at war,” in terms of both its rhetoric and the deployment of national armies to the border. The EU has responded forcefully, and even with unusual unity, without realizing that, ultimately, it is dealing with the consequences of its own actions... in multiple ways.

First, the EU is a victim of its overreaction; its almost obsessive fear of another “migration crisis” is what ensures the blackmail’s success. In the end, it does not matter how many people there are. What matters is the fear: fear of migrants by part of the electorate, and fear by governments of the division and chaos the EU and its Member States display each time. There are experts¹ who claim that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was also intended to destabilize the EU with a fresh “wave” of refugees. Only this time, there was no overreaction, even as the number of people fleeing the war quickly swelled from thousands to millions. The refugees’ proximity and, espe-

¹ <https://aspensiaonline.it/solidarity-and-strategic-resilience-the-eu-facing-the-ukrainian-exodus/>

cially, the fact that the EU has experienced this war as its own (with the perception of a common enemy) explain why, this time, the tactic failed.

Second, the instrumentalization of migration is simply the other side of the EU's policy of outsourcing migration control and international protection to its neighbours. By forcing neighbouring states to control our borders and host those refugees we are no longer willing to take in, the EU and its Member States have automatically placed themselves in their hands. They were offered incentives in exchange for control and containment, from development aid funds to potential trade or visa agreements. Europe drove the geopoliticization of migration, subordinating international relations to certain migration-control objectives. Now, the third countries are looking to impose their terms, this time conditioning migration policy to their foreign policy goals. In this sense, and though few are willing to admit it, it was the EU and its Member States that initiated the instrumentalization of migration. And the way they did it is hardly trivial.

The EU is a victim of its overreaction; its fear of another “migration crisis” is what ensures the blackmail’s success

In recent years, the EU has resorted to increasingly informal formulas. Bilateral agreements have given way to other more flexible, ad hoc forms of agreement, which are inserted into broader cooperation frameworks. Unsurprisingly, these negotiations have been conducted mainly by the Member States, rather than at the EU level, which invariably requires much more standardized formulas. This has resulted in greater flexibility and bargaining power, but also less transparency. This should not prejudice the necessary control by the legislative and judicial powers of each country and at the European level. The misnomered EU-Turkey deal of 2016, which sought to contain the irregular arrivals to Greece, is the best example of the risks of this informality: the Court of

Justice in Luxembourg declared that it lacked jurisdiction to rule on it, as it was an informal agreement between Turkey and the Member States.

Third and finally, the EU is its own worst enemy when, for all of these reasons, it is willing to renounce its own foundations. Declaring itself at war with the instrumentalization of migration by neighbouring countries opens the doors to exceptions. In late 2021, Poland declared a state of emergency, with everything that entails in terms of the suspension of fundamental rights, unlimited use of force by the army, and the militarization of large areas to which the press and NGOs are denied access. This is not new. The same thing happened in Greece with pushbacks, which, although blatant violations of the law, have been a constant in recent years. Every time, the political use of migration by third countries has been the justification for limiting fundamental rights recognized under domestic, European and international law.

This drift is not exclusive to certain border countries. In December 2021, the European Commission published a proposal for a regulation to equip the Member States with a legal framework to respond to such situations. The document² defines the instrumentalization of migrants as “a situation where a third country instigates irregular migratory flows into the Union (...), where such actions are indicative of an intention of a third country to destabilize the Union or a Member State, where the nature of such actions is liable to put at risk essential state functions, including its territorial integrity, the maintenance of law and order or the safeguard of its national security.” The proposed measures include limiting the number of border crossing points, extending deadlines, increasing migration control measures and facilitating expedited return at the EU's external and internal borders. As noted by numerous international organizations (ECRE,³ Amnesty International, etc.), these measures could normalize the state of exception and thus undermine the fundamental rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

In his book *After Europe* (2017), Ivan Krastev notes that migratory crises could well be the harbingers of the beginning of the end of European liberalism, not because of what they are but because of what they produce. Since 2015, our fear of another migration

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:890:FIN>

³ <https://ecre.org/ecre-comments-ec-proposal-on-situations-of-instrumentalisation-in-the-field-of-migration-and-asylum/>

crisis has made us willing to accept the unacceptable. And that is the real problem. Internally, we could end up accepting the normalization of states of exception and, thus, the violation of fundamental rights. In this regard, the instrumentalization of migration by third countries has merely provided the perfect narrative. Even if migrants are perceived as victims, their role as “weapons” of pressure in the hands of the governments of neighbouring countries also makes them the main “enemy.” It does not matter how many there are, nor, ultimately, whether their arrival is used as a form of pressure by neighbouring countries. Even when it is not, the talk of a “threat” continues. The lives lost at the Melilla border fence in June 2022 attest to this. Under the “threat” narrative, no one doubts that the response should be as forceful as possible.

The political use of migration by third countries has been the justification for limiting fundamental rights recognized under domestic, European and international law

Externally, the instrumentalization of migration – first from Europe and now from abroad – has made us hostages (and, thus, stripped us of our voice) in the face of pressure from third countries. Therein lies the main surprise and fear. This, perhaps, is what is truly new. The asymmetry of power – or conditionality in Cassarino’s (2007) words – has been inverted: today, it is the neighbouring countries that impose their terms. Because the number of irregular arrivals depends on them. Most recently, this subordination was on display in the Spanish government’s recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. One wonders to what extent this was the ultimate goal of Moroccan cooperation. The problem is only compounded by the fact that, in complex regional contexts, responding to the demands of some can mean raising the suspicions of others. Hence, Algeria’s response to the change in the Spanish govern-

ment’s position was not long in coming. Not only is it difficult to decide which comes first – Morocco or Algeria, migration or petrol prices – but also migration is fluid: those who do not arrive in one place will eventually arrive in another.

This does not mean that there is no alternative. There is, but for that to happen, the underlying conditions have to change. That means no longer overreacting every time. The Ukrainian refugee crisis is instructive in this regard. The alternative also means reversing the process of outsourcing migration control, in order to de-geopoliticize migration so that it ceases to be a bargaining chip in international relations. We need a foreign policy that is not purely transactional, that does not impose the interests of some over others, and that works to achieve common medium – and long-term goals. We also need migration policies that address the causes and regulate the flows, beyond mere containment measures. Otherwise, these policies will always be doomed to fail, because containment only reduces arrivals at a given time and place. As long as the push and pull factors driving migratory flows remain, a passage will always be found. In the end, the alternative cannot be stripping away the rights of those who, despite it all, do eventually arrive. This is true for two main reasons: because compliance with the rule of law is the *sine qua non* for any democracy, and because today’s exclusion is tomorrow’s conflict. Contrary to what the far right would have us believe, “our” security depends on “their” rights.

References

- CASSARINO, Jean-Pierre. “Informalising Readmission Agreements in the EU Neighbourhood.” *The International Spectator*, Vol. 42 No. 2, p. 179-196, 2007. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01232695/document> [accessed 9 August 2018].
- GREENHILL, Kelly M. *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010.
- KRASTEV, Ivan. *After Europe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

Brain Drain in South Mediterranean Countries

Mohamed Saib Musette

Research Director

Centre de Recherche en Économie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD), Algiers

In a study on brain drain using 2012 data from three Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) in the South Mediterranean, we highlighted the migration of doctors, alongside that of engineers, particularly to France. Ten years later, how has this phenomenon evolved? Recent data indicate that (i) brain drain has been extended into a race for talent; (ii) the global health crisis (Covid-19) has contributed to exacerbating the flight of doctors to northern countries; and (iii) mechanisms are being put in place to reduce brain waste and share the costs of skills training.

These findings herald a new chapter in the compensation of losses generated by brain drain from southern Mediterranean countries to countries of the North. There is still a long way to go to move towards the circulation of skills and accelerate the co-development process of the two shores of the Mediterranean.

From Brain Drain to the Race for Talent

Brain drain is understood as the departure of highly qualified workers (HQW) having completed their higher education in the countries of the South to work in the countries of the North. This migration is structured around supply and demand on the global labour market: there is an excess of supply in South shore countries and a shortage of skills in the countries of the North (Mehtap, Alcidi, & Salvo, 2020). In-

deed, the unemployment rate of higher education graduates has been on the rise over the last decade in the three central Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia). This market also functions according to the attraction capacities of the northern countries, accentuated by the facilities offered by the European Union blue card or the United States green card.

TABLE 12	Evolution of Brain Drain Rates in North Africa			
	1990	2000	2010	2015
DZA	8.2	19.5	13.3	10.8
EGY	8.6	9.3	4.7	4.3
MAR	15.5	15.3	18.3	18
TUN	14.6	17	10.9	12
LYB	11.9	11.6	4.7	4.3

Source: OECD Database.

According to OECD data, North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia) experienced a decline in brain drain rates between 2010 and 2015, while Morocco experienced a constant rate in recent years (Cha'ngom, 2020, p. 62).

However, the exodus train is gaining speed with the talent attraction schemes implemented by countries of the North. This train no longer only carries higher education graduates but also tries to attract as many internationally mobile students as possible, as well as artists, athletes, investors and start-up entrepreneurs (Tuccio, 2019).

The shift from brain drain to the race for talent is being organized by the countries of the North. The EU's new migration pact,¹ for instance, provides mechanisms to attract talent that would otherwise be more likely to go to other OECD countries or even to the Gulf States.

¹ Legal migration: Attracting skills and talent to the EU. (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2654). Consulted: April 2022

The Migration of Doctors from the South Has Accelerated

The global health crisis has hit every country in the world, but there are inequalities in the response capacities of countries. The example of France is interesting because it is the main country of attraction for skills from Maghreb countries, particularly because of the language of work. According to OECD data, the share of doctors trained in developing countries was continuously increasing between 2011 and 2019, before the pandemic.

These data indicate a 50% increase in the share of doctors from North Africa in France alone during the observation period.² The share of doctors from Tunisia more than doubled, while those trained in Algeria increased by 47% between 2011 and 2019.

The number of doctors coming from the countries of the South is likely to experience a record high. According to news sites, out of 1,993 admitted to competency testing (*épreuves de vérification des connaissances*, EVC) in 2021, there are 1,200 practitioners trained in Algeria, some of whom were already living in France.

Reducing Waste and Sharing Education Costs

Two elements suggest a reduction in the waste of skills. First, there is a near alignment of university education on both sides of the Mediterranean, with the introduction of the Bachelor's – Master's – Doctorate (BMD) system in the EU countries and the countries on the South shore (Algeria, Morocco and Tun-

sia). The implementation of this system, combined with *cotutelle* (international joint supervision) courses, contributes to the reduction of problems related to university degree equivalencies.

The evolution of international student mobility towards northern countries is a perfect illustration of this trend. With 2.4 million international students in degree mobility in 2018, Europe is by far the most important study destination in the world. The EU alone hosts 1.8 million international students. Student mobility from the Maghreb countries remains polarized towards France, although a diversification of destinations can be observed, according to UNESCO data. The overall growth in student mobility from the central Maghreb countries was estimated at an average of 56% from the beginning of this millennium to 2019. The most significant growth is in Tunisia, where the volume more than doubled between 2000 and 2019.³

According to French data in 2020, students from Morocco are in pole position, with 12% of all foreign students; Algeria is in 3rd place and Tunisia in 6th place. These three countries thus account for 23% of foreign students in France, i.e., 86,064 Maghrebi out of a total of 370,052 foreigners in 2020 (CAMPUS France, 2021, p. 58).

What is also interesting to underline in this mobility is the retention capacity of the host countries and the return migration of students studying abroad. The retention rate of mobile students at the end of their studies is estimated to be 70% on average (Felbermayr & Reczkowski, 2012). For the Maghreb countries, the rate of intention to return for Algerian students in France seems to be quite low (22%), according to the results of our survey (Musette, Zelaci,

TABLE 13 Evolution of the Share of Foreign-Trained Doctors in France (2011-2019)

Country / Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Algeria	2,646	2,749	2,866	3,073	3,301	3,490	3,703	3,803	3,882
Egypt	118	120	126	126	130	130	128	130	133
Morocco	750	763	797	844	876	887	897	911	923
Tunisia	316	370	406	518	644	709	778	830	873
North Africa (NAfr)	3,830	4,002	4,195	4,561	4,951	5,216	5,506	5,674	5,811
Africa	4,580	4,808	5,064	5,572	6,097	6,454	6,841	7,068	7,242
NAfr/Africa Ratio	83.6	83.2	82.8	81.9	81.2	80.8	80.5	80.3	80.2
Total	17,625	18,842	20,082	21,569	22,920	24,096	25,039	25,675	26,355

Source: excerpts from the OECD database, (2022).

² The share of doctors trained in Egypt is larger in the UK and the US.

³ Cf. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/?lang=en>), Consulted: May 2022.

& Lahouel, 2020), against 57% who envisage settling down. The remaining fraction is divided between those who do not respond and those who are thinking of leaving for a new destination.

Attempts to share the costs of training can be observed in EU mobility programmes. EU actions towards third countries, including North Africa, have seen progress in the field of university education, in particular with the extension of the Erasmus programme to also encourage mobility of students from third countries. Since 2015, the Erasmus+ programme has extended higher education mobility beyond Europe to so-called partner countries through agreements signed between higher education institutions through the International Credit Mobility programme.

More operational education cost-sharing schemes are the university course twinning programmes and co-supervision courses (*cotutelle*), particularly in post-graduate studies. In short, between 2015 and 2019, the three Maghreb countries account for 38% of inter-university projects, not counting the Erasmus Mundus programme.⁴

Conclusion

This review indicates certain probabilities. The race for talent is accelerating, following the pause observed during the health crisis. The pandemic has exposed the weakness of the health sector worldwide. A resumption of the flight of doctors is thus expected. There are signs of convergence in degree equivalencies under the BMD system, which also encourages international student mobility.

In the countries of the North, there is a shortage of certain skills required to win the digital revolution battle. Graduate unemployment is persistent in the countries of the South. Bridges are being put in place to fill the gap in the North while reducing the tensions on the labour market in the South. The consolidation of these mechanisms is necessary for a triple win approach: for the host country, the country

of origin and the migrants concerned. Ultimately, the circulation of talents, including Highly Qualified Workers (HQW), remains one of the important ways to share prosperity between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

Bibliographic References

- CAMPUS France. *Chiffres clefs de la mobilité étudiantes dans le monde*. Consulted: 10/12/2021. https://ressources.campusfrance.org/publications/chiffres_cles/fr/chiffres_cles_2021_fr.pdf
- CHA'NGOM, N. *African countries and the brain drain: Winners or losers? Beyond remittances*. 2020. Consulted: 04/01/2022. https://aercafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/D8-NARCISE_CHANGOM-WIP.pdf
- FELBERMAYR, G. J., and RECZKOWSKI, I. "International Student Mobility and High-Skilled Migration: The Evidence." *Ifo Institute – Leibniz Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich*. 2012. Consulted: 12/01/2021. www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/73806/1/IfoWorkingPaper-132.pdf
- MEHTAP, A; ALCIDI, C.; and SALVO, M. D. *Brain drain in southern mediterranean countries : evidence, challenges and policies*. EMNES, 2020. Consulted: 15/06/2021 www.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2020-02/emnes_pp_012-brain_drain_in_southmed_countries.pdf
- MUSETTE, M. S., ZELACI, C. E., & LAHOUEL, F. "Migrations estudiantines vers et à partir de l'Algérie." *Accés I (U. d. 2, Éd.) Afak wa Afkar*, 8(1), 2020. 247-263. Consulted: 12/04/2022. www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/article/122694
- TUCCIO, M. *Measuring and Assessing Talent Attractiveness in OECD Countries*. OECD, 2019. Consulted: 03/04/2022. www.oecd.org/migration/mig/Measuring-and-Assessing-Talent-Attractiveness-in-OECD-Countries.pdf

⁴ "EU-Southern Mediterranean cooperation through Erasmus+." European Commission, January 2020, (https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/south-med-regional-erasmusplus-2019_en.pdf).

Implications of the Conversion of Hagia Sophia into a Mosque, Inside and Outside Turkey

Louis Fishman

Associate Professor
Brooklyn College,
City University of New York

This July marks two years since Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan issued a decree to transform the Hagia Sophia museum back into a mosque, leaving another mark on this edifice's long history.

Established in 537 during the reign of the Byzantine Roman Emperor Justinian I, the Hagia Sophia's first identity was as a cathedral, then the largest in the world, designed to symbolize the power of the Eastern Roman Empire. During the Fourth Crusade, the Hagia Sophia encountered the first of many transitions when it was turned into a Roman Catholic place of worship (1204-1261), only to be returned to its original status decades later as the Episcopal See of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. However, it would forever lose its official status as a church following the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. During the Ottoman years, the Hagia Sophia stood as one of the main mosques serving the city.

The building maintained its status as a mosque after the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923. However, in 1934, the nation's revolutionary leader, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, issued a decree to transform it into a museum. This was seen as a way of defusing tension with Greece and the Orthodox Christian world. The decree also made the Hagia Sophia a relic to marvel at, an object belonging to the past and thus separate from the politics of the present. Ataturk's decision would also eventually grant Turkey important international recognition. In 1985, UNESCO declared the Hagia Sophia a World Heritage Site. It seemed to Turkey and to the world that the building's status as a museum was set in stone.

For the Islamists in Turkey, however, this was not at all a done deal. Even as Istanbul's mayor in the 1990s, Erdogan longed to see the day when Muslims could once again pray under the Hagia Sophia's holy dome. The charismatic Erdogan understood too well that turning it back into a mosque could only fit into a long-term plan, such as realizing his goal of making Turkey a more Islamic place. However, the path ahead was much harder than Erdogan, or his AKP party, could have ever imagined.

While Erdogan transformed Turkey into an economic powerhouse and strengthened regional relations during his first decade in power, the 2013 Gezi Park protests showed the level of discontent among the country's youth. Erdogan's hope of making this new generation more pious failed. Another blow came when Erdogan lost political hold of the government during the first round of the 2015 elections. He was left without a majority and was forced to abandon support for liberal policies in order to form a coalition with the ultra-nationalist MHP. Erdogan's troubles continued with the failed coup of 2016, which proved he needed to shore up more power in the 2018 presidential elections. All these changes would have implications for regional relations, causing neighbours to begin seeing Turkey more as a rival than a friend.

When Erdogan announced his plans in the summer of 2020 to change the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque, Turkey had hit rock bottom in its international position. He was no longer the popular leader that Europe and the US courted (save for some brief moments during Trump's term). While he remained popular among estranged Islamists, he had long burnt all bridges with Arab governments in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Israel too had changed course, understanding that Turkey would need to court it, not vice-versa as had been

Even as Istanbul's mayor in the 1990s, Erdogan longed to see the day when Muslims could once again pray under the Hagia Sophia's holy dome

the case in the past. By 2020, Israel had left Turkey behind, joining Greece, Cyprus and Egypt – among others later – in forming a regional gas forum. If this was not enough, Turkey also remained at odds with Greece and the EU with respect to the ongoing refugee crisis. It remained steadfast in maintaining military relations with Russia, culminating in Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defence system. In short, Turkey had never been so isolated within the region.

Erdogan did manage to show some deft manoeuvring. During the Syrian Civil War, he was able to consolidate control over the country's northern regions following an agreement with Russia. Turkey also came out on top in the Libyan conflict. As much as the US and EU might have wanted to toss him aside, Erdogan showed that he could still make and break the rules. This is where the Hagia Sophia comes into the picture.

Erdogan was wise enough to understand domestic political dynamics. He understood that any protests against the Hagia Sophia decision from Europe – especially Greece – would be seen as interference in Turkish politics by the nationalist CHP, his main opposition party, and by Turkey's electorate. In other words, European pushback would immediately snap opposition forces into "defence mode." Even if the CHP opposed transforming the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque, perhaps seeing such a change as stomping on Ataturk's legacy, this would be overshadowed by concern that foreign powers were dictating to Turkey what it can and cannot do.

With Turkey already playing the "rebel" on the international scene, Erdogan correctly assessed that his play for the Hagia Sophia would not create a crisis at home. Protests from Greece, the US and Europe went almost unnoticed and the opposition remained

quiet. Once converted into a mosque, Erdogan could claim that he had succeeded in punching another "notch in his belt," which would fortify his political base – both the Islamists and nationalists from his MHP coalition partner.

Despite wall-to-wall international condemnation, this was a lost battle from the start. Truth be told, Europe knew that Erdogan controlled the levees managing the flow of Syrian refugees. Should they protest too strongly, Erdogan could allow hundreds of thousands of Syrians into the EU.

The Hagia Sophia's conversion can also be seen as marking Turkey's reemergence in regional politics. Now seeking to reconcile more than to bully, Turkish policy has turned in the last two years toward mending ties with Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Even before the Russia-Ukraine crisis, Turkey desperately needed to diversify its energy sources. It also recognizes that Israel's growing ties with Greece will pose new challenges for its long-term strategy to act as the main regional representative of the Palestinians. This also brings us to the point that for all of Turkey's attempts to make better, it still seems set to challenge Greece on numerous fronts.¹ The conversion of Hagia Sophia also provided Erdogan with important soft power among Islamists. Who could deny Erdogan as the leader of the Islamic world after he could be heard chanting Quranic verses at the opening of the Hagia Sophia Mosque? Or last spring, when he opened its doors to thousands of Muslims from all over the world to say their Holy Ramadan prayers, *tevarih*, following the lifting of Covid restrictions? Erdogan certainly sees himself now enshrined in Islamic memory as the leader who defied Europe and reestablished the historic right of the *ummah* to pray there.

Erdogan understood that any protests against the Hagia Sophia decision from Europe would be seen as interference in Turkish politics by the opposition and by Turkey's electorate

¹ www.reuters.com/world/turkeys-erdogan-says-greek-pm-mitsotakis-no-longer-exists-him-2022-05-23/

Unfortunately, this has come at a cost. With thousands of worshippers and tourists visiting the site daily, and without the proper supervision formerly ensured by the Ministry of Culture, the building is suffering not only from wear and tear but also from malicious acts. Just this month, it was reported that the 1400-year-old imperial gates were vandalized. In response, specialists in both Turkey and Greece voiced concerns that the Department of Religious Affairs' mismanagement of the site may lead to permanent structural damage.² Shortly after this report, other worrying incidents of vandalism of its walls were reported.³

UNESCO has continued to voice its concerns for the holy site; just recently, the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis also voiced his concerns to UNESCO.⁴ However, it seems clear that international pressure of this type will have little or no effect on Turkey's approach. The only way to effect any real change will be through the status quo, wherein international organizations continue working with Turkey toward some mutual understanding with respect to heritage sites. This, however, is where the good news can be found.

Over the last two decades, Turkey has embarked on the restoration of numerous churches and synagogues in Istanbul and throughout Anatolia and Thrace.⁵ While local municipalities have sponsored some projects, they have been mostly sponsored by the State, often in collaboration with international organizations like UNESCO or co-sponsored by the European Union, the United States and neighbour-

ing countries like Bulgaria. In some cases, individual actors in academia and the arts have taken it upon themselves to preserve the memory of the past and initiated the restorations.

Based on this record, one analyst seemed to correctly assess that the bleak state of affairs at the Hagia Sophia is related not to neglect of its historical and religious significance, but to the building falling under the purview of the Department of Religious Affairs.⁶ Thus Turkey should do its utmost to calm fears and implement measures to control unchecked crowds.

One can only hope that the building will be protected and that it will continue to capture the minds of believers from all faiths and tourists, as it has for centuries

It should be noted too that even if the Turkish opposition wins in the 2023 elections, the Hagia Sophia will likely remain a mosque. In any case, one can only hope that the building will be protected and that it will continue to capture the minds of believers from all faiths and tourists, as it has for centuries. Unfortunately, however, with Turkey and Greece still greatly at odds with each other, it is likely that the Hagia Sophia will continue to be a source of conflict.

² www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/05/experts-warn-istanbuls-iconic-hagia-sophia-risk-ancient-gate-damaged

³ www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/ayasofyada-sok-goruntu-kapidan-sonra-duvarlar-hedefte

⁴ <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-statement-hagia-sophia-istanbul>; <https://greekreporter.com/2022/04/22/greece-unesco-turkey-hagia-sophia-vandalism/>

⁵ FISHMAN, Louis. "Creating [Jewish] Sites of Memory in Turkey Where Jews No Longer Exist: From Physical Sites to Virtual Ones." *Turkish Jews and their Diasporas*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2022. 169-193.

⁶ www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/05/experts-warn-istanbuls-iconic-hagia-sophia-risk-ancient-gate-damaged

Strategic Sectors | **Culture & Society**

Arab Series: Between the Globality of Netflix and Local Specificity

Pilar Garrido¹

Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies
University of Murcia

Pedro Rojo

Arabist
President
Al Fanar Foundation for Arab Knowledge

The phenomenon of global series as we know them today is unprecedented in recent times... in the West. In the Arab world, *musalsalat ramadaniya*, the television series produced for the month of fasting, have been bringing families together around the television screen for decades, especially since the advent of satellite dishes in the 1990s. Culture, confession, civilization... These series inject entertainment, current events, controversy into the religious framework of Ramadan, when the bulk of Arab series are produced. Premieres are anticipated across generations, their viewing shared like any other ritual. As a family, with friends, whether traditional, trendy or new... all have their place in this month, and the social expectation they generate, in particular, is outstanding.

Beyond this sense of co-existence and religious seclusion, the *musalsalat* have also become a huge business, burgeoning from a handful of series to the 172 Arab productions released in Ramadan 2022, led by the Egyptians, with 36 series. The problem goes beyond the eternal debate over what to watch in the traditional television session after *iftar*, the breaking of the fast, as one would need 86 hours a day to watch all the episodes. First satellite channels and now online pay TV platforms have made it possible for the productions to reach many more homes, causing advertising and

subscription businesses to proliferate. Of course, critical voices have been raised, as they have with other religious celebrations, such as Christmas, in which a religious holiday has been transformed into a consumerist free-for-all. The advertising spots shot and interspersed throughout the series during the month are basically for three types of products: food, as, it is worth recalling, Ramadan is one of the culinary highlights of the year; consumer goods, such as cars or homes, often luxury ones, which, in turn, has spawned an array of memes and parodies on social media; and religious and charitable causes seeking to convince viewers to fulfil their obligation to pay zakat with them, although some question this strategy given the high cost of these slots. According to a report by the magazine *Al Mal*, in Egypt, for example, one minute of advertising time costs between 25,000 and 62,000 euros, depending on the series or programme in which it is aired. The actors' salaries are also high, ranging from the 45 million Egyptian pounds (2.3 million euros) earned by Mohamed Ramadan or the 27 million (1.3 million euros) commanded by the indefatigable actress Yousra to the 20 million taken home by the stars of *Al Ikhtiyar* (راييت خيال). The stratospheric figures for the Egyptian series, which have an enormous Arab market, stand in sharp contrast with local productions, such as the season's breakout success in Morocco, *L'Maktoub* (لبوت كمل), whose total budget amounted to one million euros.

Controversy Compounded by the Boundlessness of Social Media

In the past, it was the censorship of the iron-fisted Arab regimes that forced screenwriters to use eu-

¹ Both authors are members of GTC FAMA, the Audiovisual Fiction and the Arab World Knowledge Transfer Group.

phemisms and metaphors to talk about certain topics. Today, in addition to these institutions, the public at large and powerful opinion-shaping groups can push censorship bodies to redouble their zeal to avoid not only political but social controversies. Hence the return to the concept of *al-sinima al-na-zifa* (نفيظنلا امنيسلا), or “clean cinema,” which triumphed in the 1980s and 1990s and consists of not filming any scene featuring contact or kissing between men and women. Interestingly, these decisions are made in response to the demands not of the script but of A-list actors, such as Ahmed Zaher or Ahmed Helmy, who explained he would no longer shoot such scenes so as not to make viewers uncomfortable and so his series could be watched by the whole family together. On screen, this results in contrived moments in which not even married couples touch or kiss each other. This puritanical trend runs counter to the massive access the Arab population has to all kinds of international audiovisual content with explicit sex scenes.

Transcending the fluctuations of these trends, the controversy seems to be stoked each season, especially as both healthy debate and noise are infinitely amplified in the digital ecosystem. Anything can become the focus of debate, including how history is told, as happened this year with the series *Fath al-Andalus* (سلا دنال احاتف), about the conquest of Al-Andalus. This series perfectly exemplifies the Arab globalization of such projects, with Syrian screenwriters, a Kuwaiti director, Middle Eastern leads, and a viewership that stretches across the Arab world. The dispute reached the Moroccan courts, where it was claimed that the series offers a distorted and negative image of the Amazighs’ role in the conquest compared to the leading role played by the Arabs, with detractors noting that Tareq Ibn Ziyad’s Amazigh origins were ignored. However, there is also an ongoing debate surrounding the attempts to rewrite more recent history, such as the Egyptian intelligence services’ project, via their audiovisual company Synergy, the series *Al Ikhtiyar*. Whilst the last two seasons in a certain sense sought to whitewash the human rights violations committed by the security forces during the years of the Egyptian Revolution (2011-2013), the third season, which premiered in Ramadan 2022, can easily be interpreted as propagandistic praise of the current Egyptian President and the process that culminated in his

2013 coup, which, as is well known, has kept him in power ever since.

This controversy also extends to social issues, as with the 2021 Tunisian hit *Harga* (فقرح), which offers a view of illegal immigration from the South. Other topics that have been subject to heated debate this Ramadan include polygamy and sexual relations in Tunisia, as a result of *Baraa* (فءارب), or, in Egypt, the relationships between teenagers and their parents in *Meen qal* (لاق نيم). The Moroccan public channel 2M’s success with *L’Maktoub* (with an average daily viewership of 7 million, plus 5 million more on *You-Tube*), about a *sheikha* (folk singers and dancers who perform at parties and weddings) likewise came under fire on social media, with some questioning whether it was appropriate fare for the holy month. In another country, Algeria, the provocative sexual content of *Hab Mlouk* (كلملما بح) was deemed inappropriate for this time of purification. About women and religion, the Egyptian show *Faten Amal Harby* (نتاف_فءالاولا#), which trended on social media (يبرح لماري), also sparked controversy due to its indictment, in which it included Al Azhar, the highest religious institution, of the legal hurdles faced by divorced women as a result of an unfair family law, especially when it comes to obtaining custody of children.

Powerful opinion-shaping groups can push censorship bodies to redouble their zeal to avoid not only political but social controversies

Enter the Platforms

Just as it seemed like the offer of hundreds of Arab satellite channels had exceeded the ceiling of the Arab market, Netflix appeared with a new business and production model to incorporate even more diversity into the Arab series market. The forecasts ran the full gamut, from those who predicted the end of Arab channels in the face of the American platform’s Westernized globalizing offer to those who augured its utter failure, assuring that it lacked both the room and enduring products to cater to the idiosyncrasies of the Arab market. Ultimately, neither was true. To-

day, Arab series produced for the Arab world co-exist alongside series created by Netflix from the Arab world for its globalized market.

Although the Arab market of subscription platforms is still a small minority, with just 10 million subscribers, it is expected to reach 30 million by 2026, according to estimates by the consulting firm Dataxis,² in keeping with the 30% growth registered between 2020 and 2021.

Although the Arab market of subscription platforms is still a small minority, with just 10 million subscribers, it is expected to reach 30 million by 2026

The two subscription platforms competing for most of the market are Netflix and the Saudi Shahid VIP, which has more than two million subscribers. The impact of the entry in the Arab world of Disney+, which made its debut there on 8 June 2022, has yet to be quantified. The aforementioned Saudi platform belongs to the MBC media holding group, which first began to explore this line of business in 2010 but found that neither the technology nor the market was mature enough. It was not until its remodelling in 2020 that it was able to compete with the international platforms, swiftly emerging as the favourite for *musalsalat*. Other important regional candidates, albeit with less reach, are the Emirati-American Starz Play and, recently, the Bahraini OSN, which has launched a paid online version called OSN Streaming. These internationally oriented brands are joined by other subscription platforms more focused on local productions, such as the Egyptian WATCH IT! or the Tunisian Artify.

What seems clear is that, with this new profit model, these platforms have an audience with a specific profile. As the critic Aml Megdy explained, writing in *Raseef 22*: “The Saudi platform’s managers understand

that the audience for this type of service is different from that for traditional television. The content shown to each audience is thus different, too, at both the screenwriting and production level. These managers tend to push beyond the boundaries imposed by social censorship or the competent authorities.”³

And it is this specificity that has made room for groundbreaking series that have sparked debate, clearly depicting at least two conflicting realities in the Arab world: on the one hand, the old conservative patriarchal structure, fuelled by authoritarian regimes backed by the West and the religious establishments most opposed to change, and on the other, the emergence of an eminently young society, open to change and connected to the globalized world, that actively participates in the interconnected online arena. The commitment by a company such as Shahid, with Saudi capital and, on the face of it, considered conservative on issues such as women’s emancipation or sexual relations, to producing certain series is especially striking. Examples include *Nimratitnin* (نيرتيتن), which deals with subjects such as homosexuality or romantic relationships between people of different religions, or, more recently, the Saudi series *Jameel Jedan* (أدمج), which, with a meticulously kitsch production and cinematography, offers an unflattering view of all participating men via caustically humorous criticism of gender violence and women’s lack of economic independence, whilst at the same time showing the new paths that young Saudi women are exploring in a society full of contradictions. Nor have the two seasons of the Egyptian series *Leh Laa?!* (الهاي!)⁴ been exempt from controversy. In the first season, Amina Khalil, currently one of the most sought-after women actors, takes us to Cairo to explore, in a kind but critical way, thorny and highly topical dilemmas, such as women’s emancipation without the need to go through the vicarage or, in the second season, the adoption of children by single mothers. The Saudi platform has also embraced independent productions, such as the Emmy-nominated miniseries *Beirut 6:07* (6:07 توريب), with its stand-alone

² NÉBIÉ, Sa Eva “Can newcomers topple Shahid VIP, Netflix and Starz Play in MEAN?” Dataxis, 2 March 2022. <https://dataxis.com/researches-highlights/536173/can-newcomers-topple-shahid-vip-netflix-and-starz-play-in-mena/>

³ “بيدجيم لم أ...؟ برعلل ل لضفالا اماردلا رفوي نم... نيرخال فنالك دمدهت “هاي نزيدي” 2022. <https://raseef22.net/article/108799>

⁴ MUJTAR, Wiam “Leh la’, el drama de irse de casa.” Fundación Al Fanar, 9 March 2022. www.fundacionalfanar.org/leh-la-el-drama-de-irse-de-casa/

ten-minute episodes about the explosion that rocked the Lebanese capital's port on 4 August 2020.

The platforms have made room for groundbreaking series that clearly depict at least two conflicting realities in the Arab world: on the one hand, the old conservative patriarchal structure and on the other, the emergence of a young society, open to change and connected to the globalized world

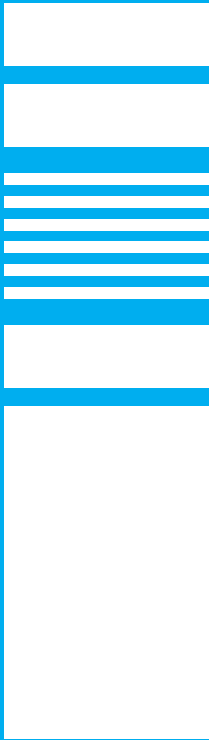
The entry, in 2016, of Netflix MEAN (Middle East and North Africa) mainly brought its vast international catalogue; it was not until 2018 that it truly began to create its own content. Its first steps included a stand-up comedy show by the Lebanese actor Adel Karam, who would return in other in-house productions, such as *Dollar* or the platform's first Arab film *Perfect Strangers*. In 2019, the platform produced its first in-house Arab series *Jinn*, with a teenaged theme and atmosphere. The show immerses viewers in a well-woven adventure plot with a touch of fantasy and a hint of romance and relationships between the young people that gave rise to a series of controversies that have, for now, made a second season impossible. Naturally, not all Netflix productions have been controversial. In addition to the aforementioned *Dollar*, the Egyptian *Paranormal* or the Saudi *Whispers* have streamed on the Arab version of the platform without raising the hackles of those who accuse it of seeking to impose Western values and evade the traditions of Arab societies. Notwithstanding these

accusations, it is clear that the two platforms' idiosyncrasy gives them a number of specificities or advantages vis-à-vis their rivals. Although Netflix does not capture the dimension of Arab historical and cultural heritage reflected in local productions, it has nevertheless achieved a balance between Arab specificity and the international dimension through the work of brilliant directors such as Tima Shomali in *AlRawabi School for Girls* or Hend Sabry in *Finding Ola*, whose series, in addition to topping the charts in many Arab countries, have been dubbed into more than 30 languages to be offered on Netflix's local platforms in more than 190 countries. As the critic Joseph Fahim has pointed out, one of the keys may be that, by steering clear of the battle over the Ramadan series, they have also freed themselves of the constraints imposed by the format. According to Fahim, "The 30-episode format – one for each day of Ramadan – remains a major hindrance for those forced to write, shoot and edit the equivalent of two American seasons in less than a year. As a result, shows suffer from fluctuating tempos, lop-sided writing, and discernible clumsiness."⁵

For audiovisual fiction, and art in general, gives rise to universal human thoughts and feelings. Thus, when they are artistically transformed with local means, with original stories and home-grown fictional realities, they elicit a response of, on the one hand, curiosity regarding what is different and, on the other, the empathy of identification, of feeling seen. Every space (and every time) has a story to tell as well, to break paradigms and cross red lines, often based on comedy, and thus generating smiles, closeness and complicity. A path that, despite the controversies and media noise, is expanding horizons one season at a time. Linking entertainment such as *musalsalat* with the month of fasting and reflection in Islam is an updating of customs that clearly results in one of the essential values: sharing.

⁵ FAHIM, Joseph. "Six things we learned from Arab TV shows this Ramadan." *Middle East Eye*, 6 May 2022. www.middleeasteye.net/discover/ramadan-arab-tv-shows-six-things-learned

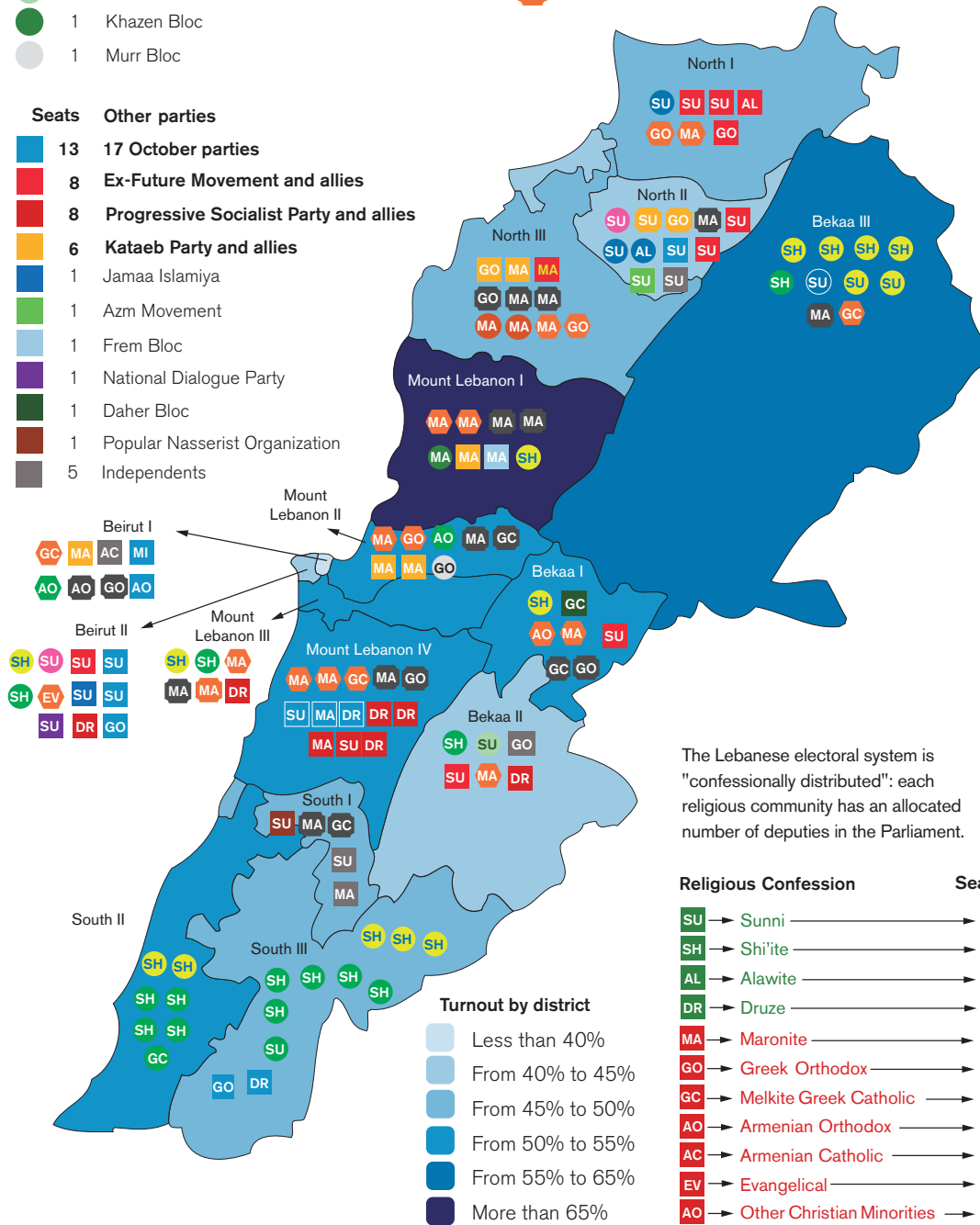
Appendices



MAP A.1 | 2022 Lebanese General Election (15 May 2022)

Seats	Party	Seats	Party
41	Amal - Hezbollah and allies	20	Free Patriotic Movement and allies
15	Amal & Pro-Amal independents	17	Free Patriotic Movement & Pro-FPM independents
15	Hezbollah & Pro-Hezbollah independents	3	Armenian Revolutionary Federation
4	March 8 Affiliates	21	Lebanese Forces and allies
2	Marada Movement & Pro-Marada independents	18	Lebanese Forces & Pro-LF independents
2	Al-Ahbash	2	Rifi Bloc
1	Union Party	1	National Liberal Party
1	Khazen Bloc		
1	Murr Bloc		

Seats	Other parties
13	17 October parties
8	Ex-Future Movement and allies
8	Progressive Socialist Party and allies
6	Kataeb Party and allies
1	Jamaa Islamiya
1	Azm Movement
1	Frem Bloc
1	National Dialogue Party
1	Daher Bloc
1	Popular Nasserist Organization
5	Independents



The Lebanese electoral system is "confessionally distributed": each religious community has an allocated number of deputies in the Parliament.

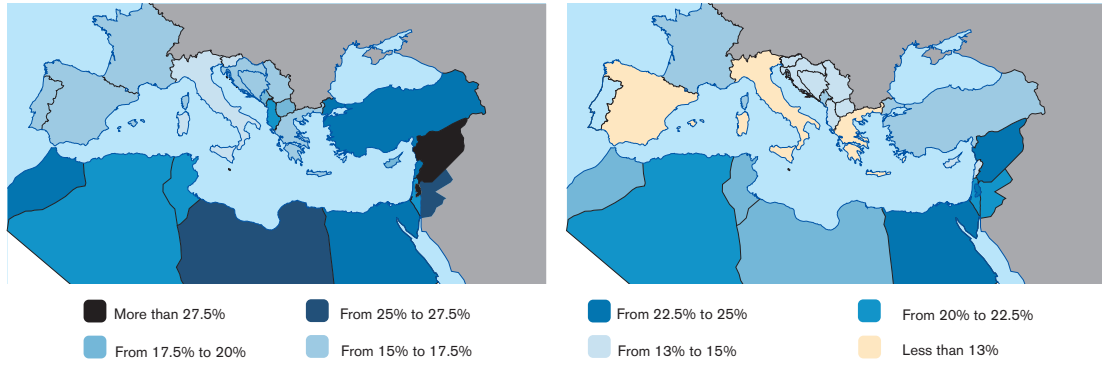
Religious Confession	Seats
SU → Sunni	27
SH → Shi'ite	27
AL → Alawite	2
DR → Druze	8
MA → Maronite	34
GO → Greek Orthodox	14
GC → Melkite Greek Catholic	8
AO → Armenian Orthodox	5
AC → Armenian Catholic	1
EV → Evangelical	1
AO → Other Christian Minorities	1

Turnout by district	
Lightest blue	Less than 40%
Light blue	From 40% to 45%
Medium-light blue	From 45% to 50%
Medium blue	From 50% to 55%
Dark blue	From 55% to 65%
Darkest blue	More than 65%

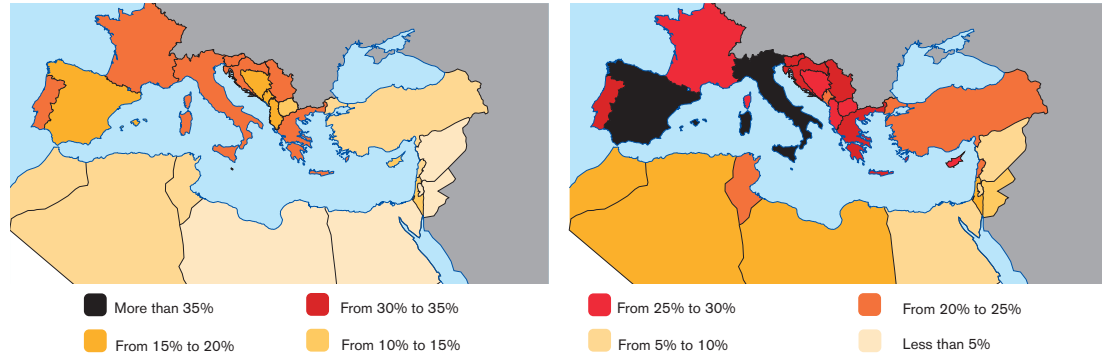
Own production. Source: Lebanon Elections <https://elections.gov.lb/>; Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_Lebanese_general_election; L'Orient le Jour, Législatives 2022 www.lorientlejour.com/elections/

MAP A.2 | Population, Age Structure and Projections

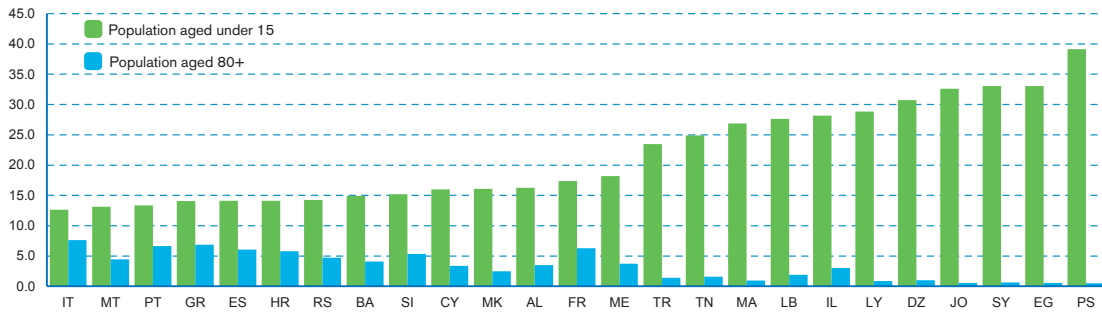
Percentage of Population Aged 15-29 (2022 & 2050)



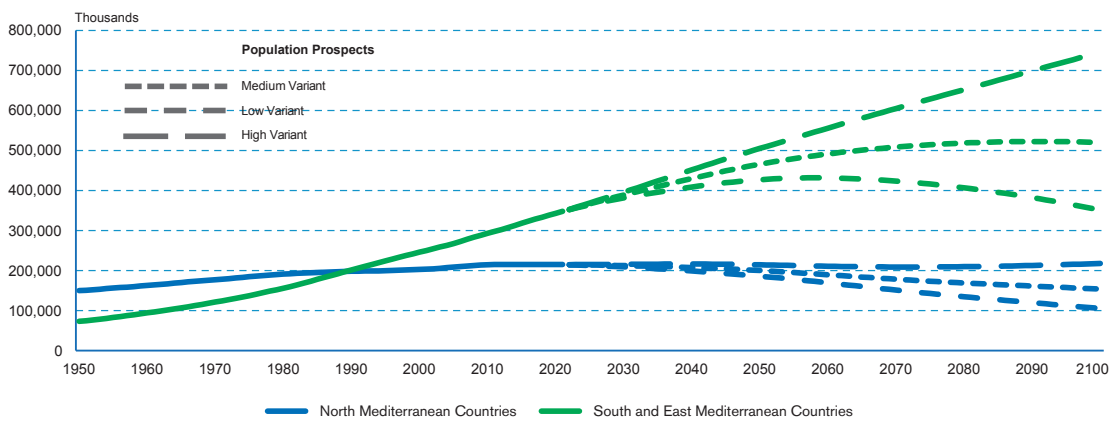
Percentage of Population Aged 65 and More (2022 & 2050)



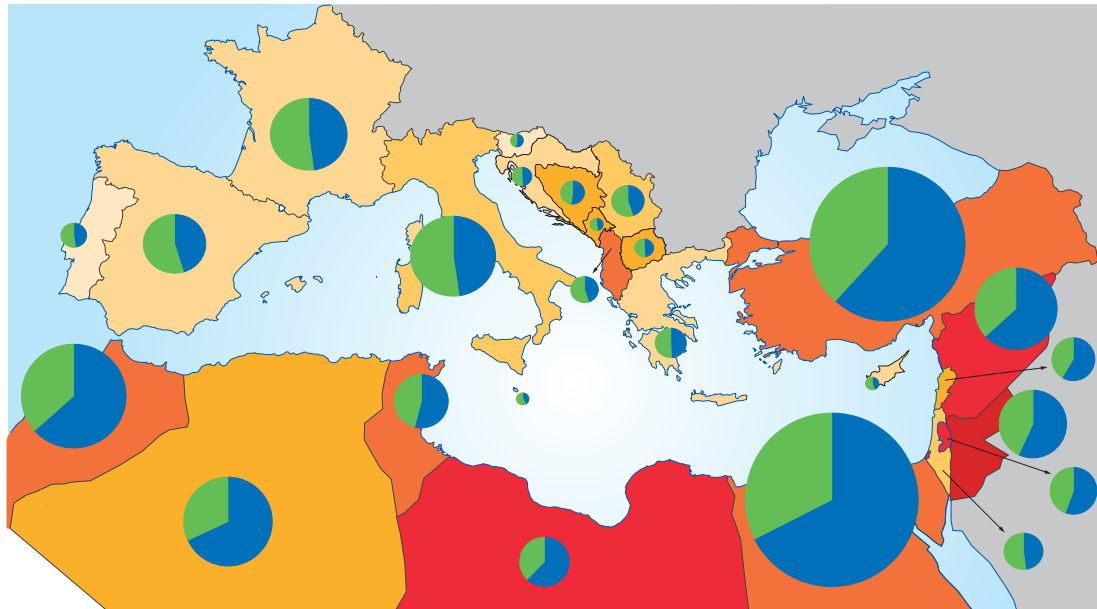
Percentage of the Population Aged under 15 and over 80 Years of Age



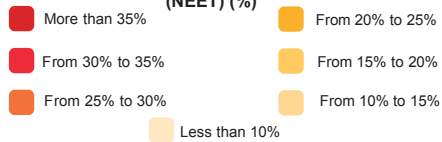
Evolution and Prospects of Population in Mediterranean Countries (1950-2021-2100)



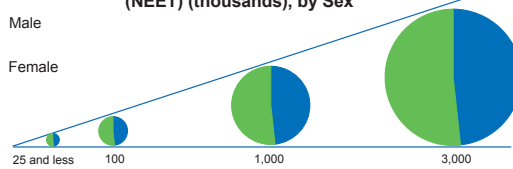
Own production. Source: United Nations Population Division.



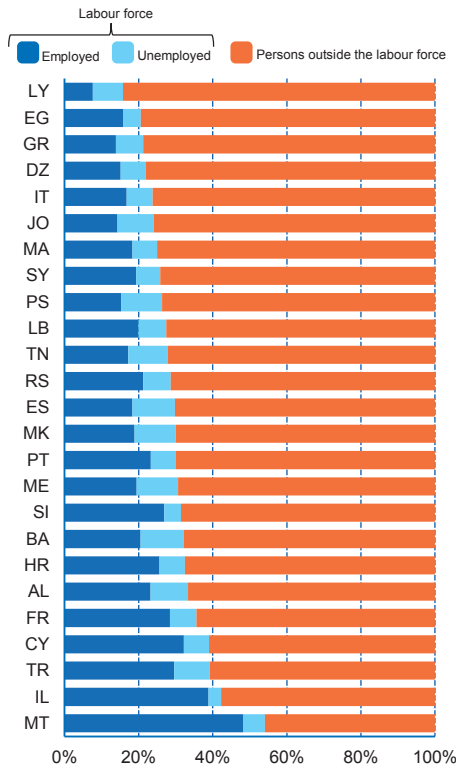
Share of Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) (%)



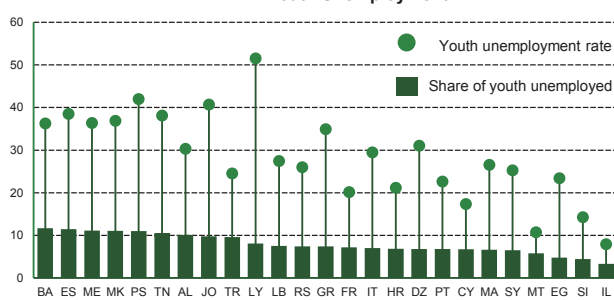
Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) (thousands), by Sex



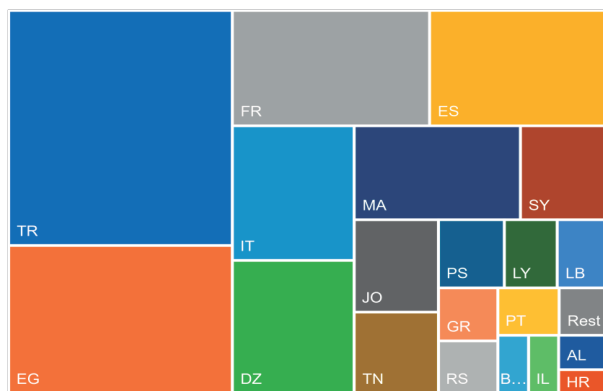
Youth and Labour Force



Youth Unemployment

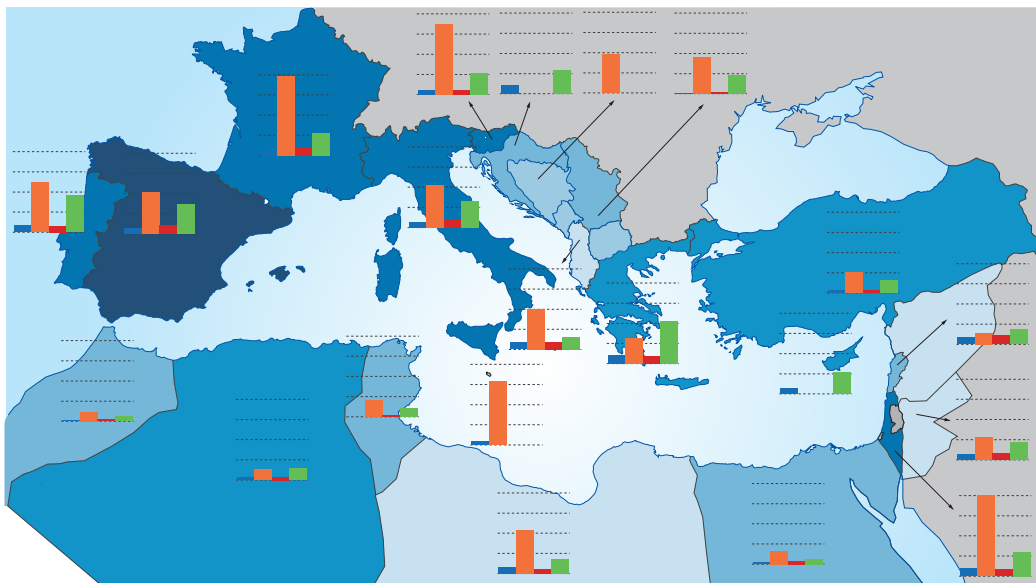


Number of Youth Unemployed in Mediterranean Countries

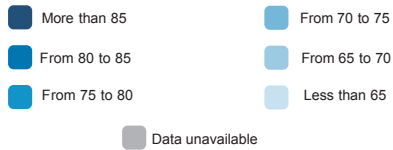


Own production. Source: ILO - ILO Modelled Estimates.

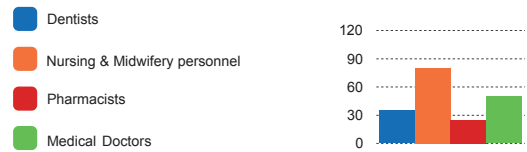
MAP A.4a | Health, SDGs: Goal 3. Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages. (3.3.1/3.4.1/3.8.1/3.c.1)



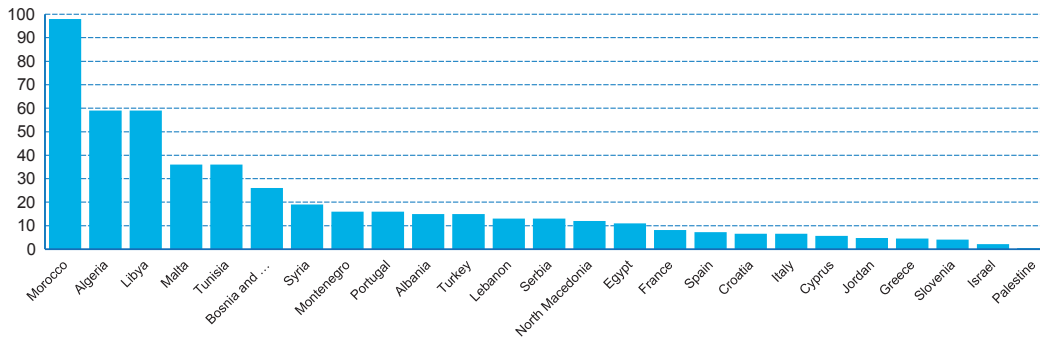
Universal Health Coverage Index* (2019)



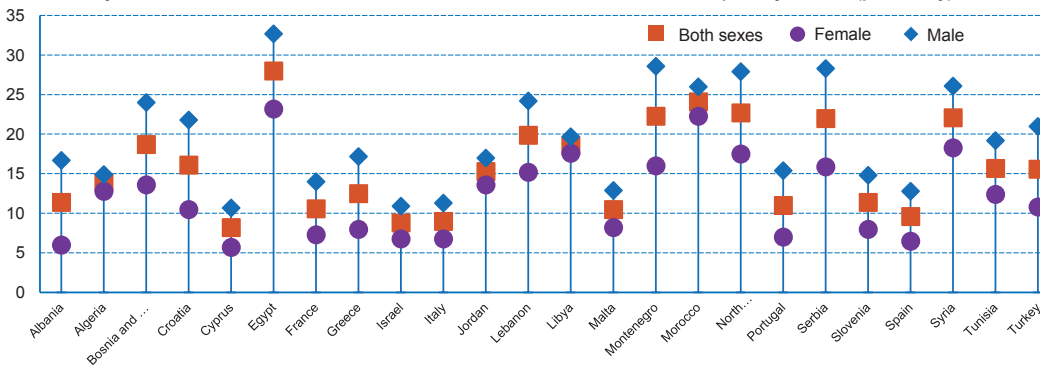
Health Worker Density, by Type of Occupation (per 10,000 population)



Tuberculosis Incidence (per 100,000 population)



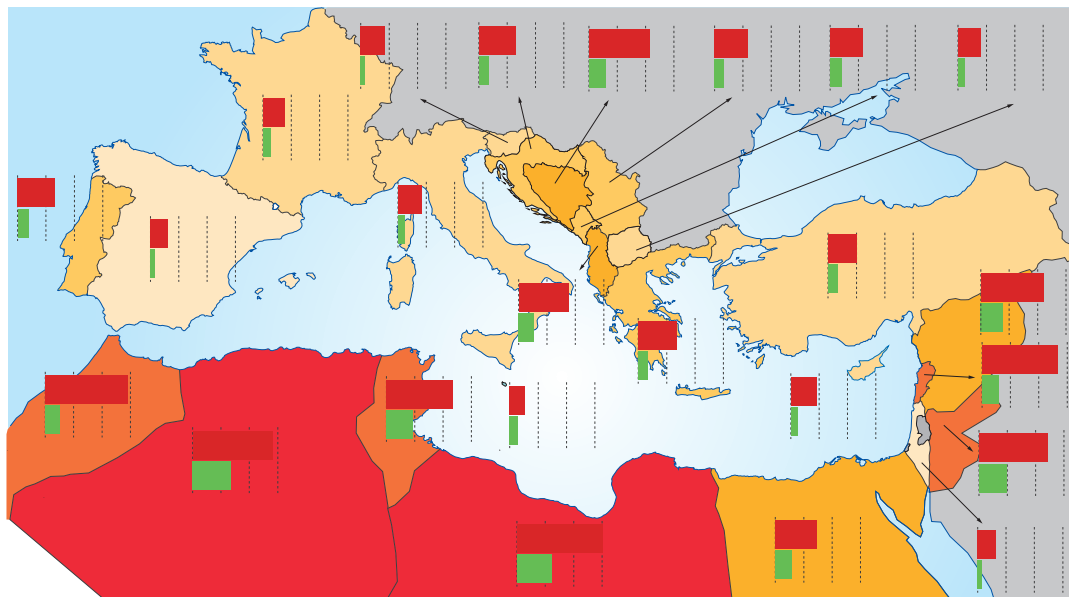
Mortality Rate Attributed to Cardiovascular Disease, Cancer, Diabetes or Chronic Respiratory Disease (probability)



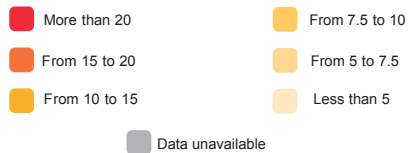
*Coverage of essential health services. The indicator is an index reported on a unitless scale of 0 to 100, which is computed as the geometric mean of 14 tracer indicators of health service coverage.

Own production. Source: United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. SDG Indicators Database. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>

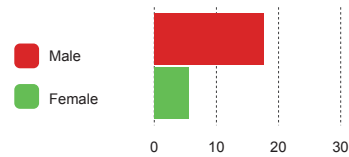
MAP A.4b | Health. SDGs: Goal 3. Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages. (3.4.2/3.6.1/3.a.1)



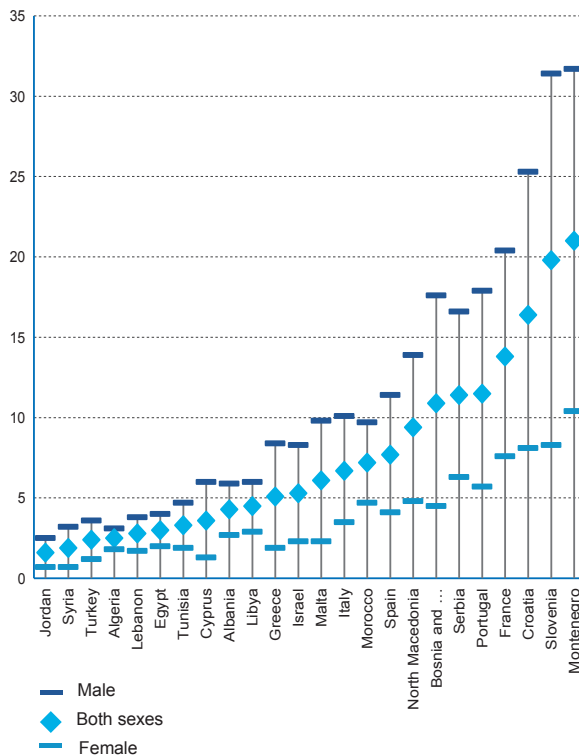
Death Rate Due to Road Traffic Injuries, 2019 (per 100,000 population)



Death Rate Due to Road Traffic Injuries, by Sex



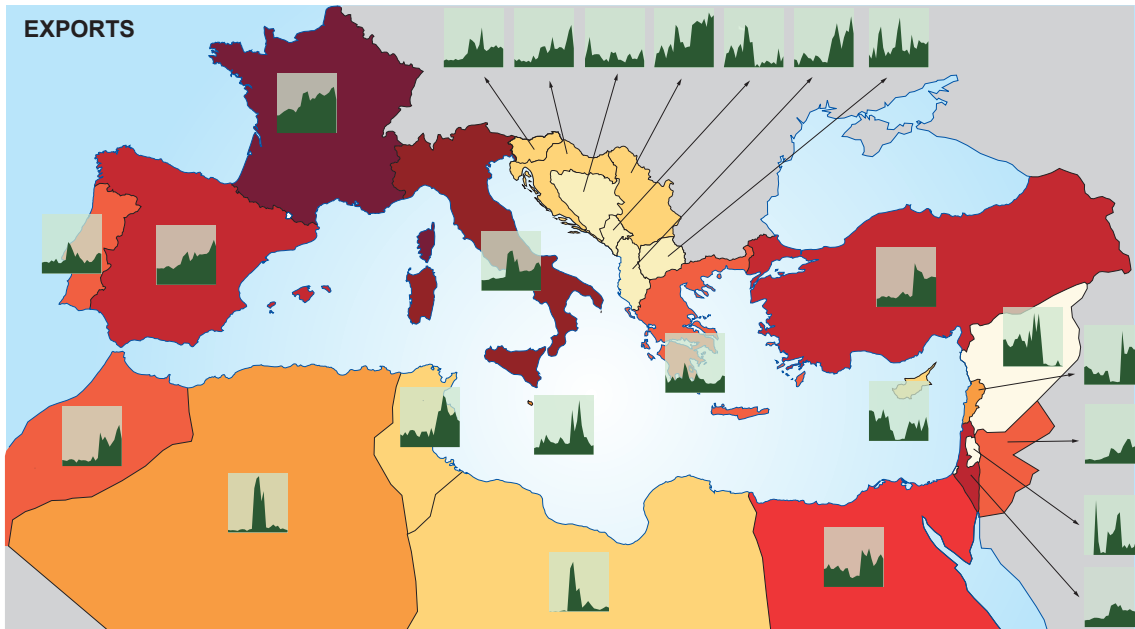
Suicide Mortality Rate, by Sex (deaths per 100,000 population)



Age-standardized Prevalence of Current Tobacco Use among Persons Aged 15 Years and Older, by Sex (%)

	Male		Female
Jordan	56.8	Serbia	39.1
Egypt	48.1	Croatia	36.1
Lebanon	47.5	France	31.9
Tunisia	47.2	Montenegro	31.1
Cyprus	47.0	Greece	30.5
Turkey	42.1	Lebanon	28.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	42.0	Bosnia and Herzegovina	28.0
Algeria	41.3	Spain	26.7
Serbia	40.5	Cyprus	23.2
Albania	38.8	Malta	21.6
Croatia	37.6	Portugal	20.2
Greece	36.5	Slovenia	19.6
France	34.9	Italy	19.5
Montenegro	31.6	Turkey	19.2
Portugal	30.5	Israel	13.5
Israel	28.9	Jordan	12.8
Spain	28.6	Albania	6.0
Morocco	28.2	Tunisia	2.0
Italy	26.6	Morocco	0.8
Malta	26.4	Algeria	0.7
Slovenia	24.4	Egypt	0.4

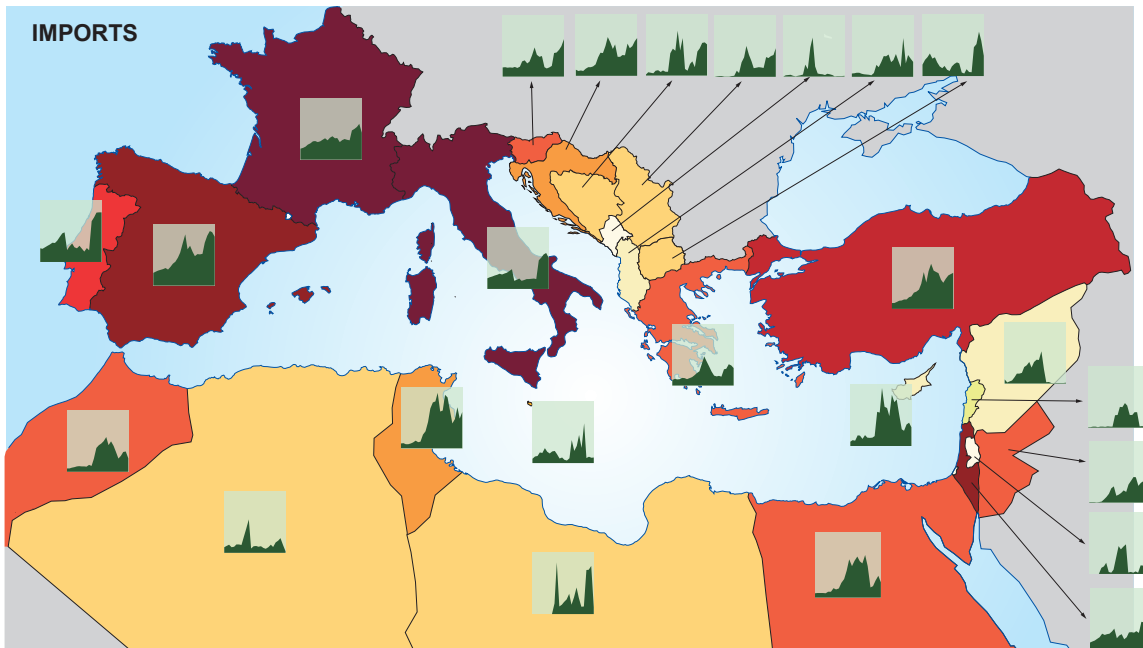
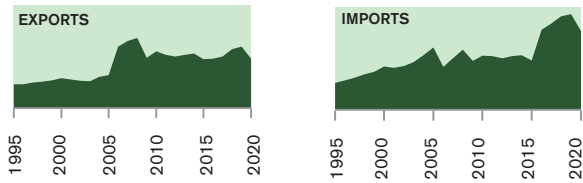
MAP A.5 | US Trade with Mediterranean Countries



US Trade with Mediterranean Countries (in millions USD) 2020

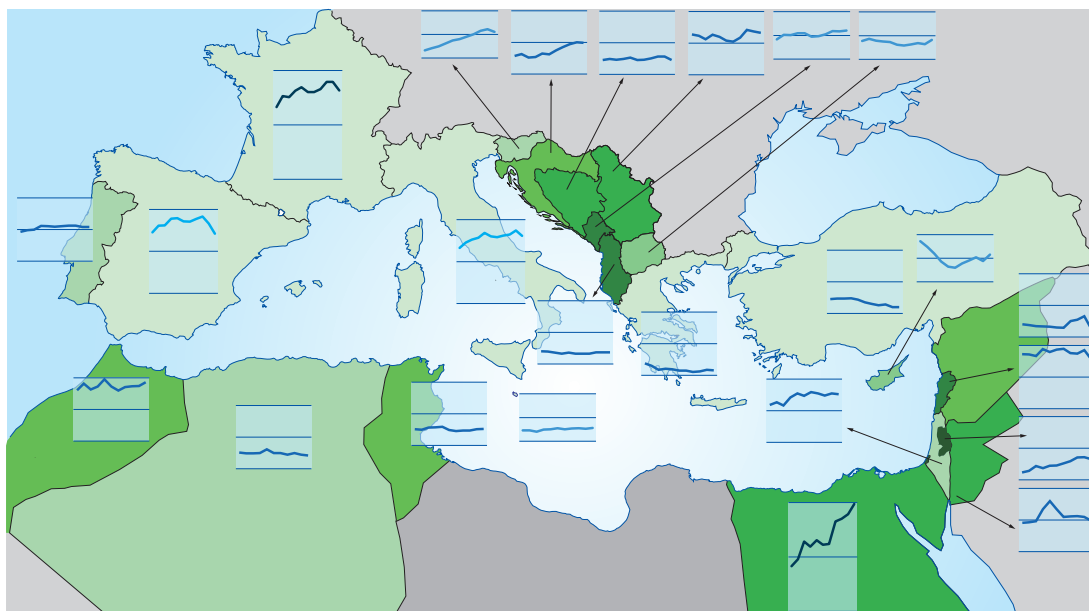


Evolution Trends of US Trade with Med Countries (1995-2020)

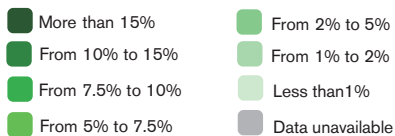


Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

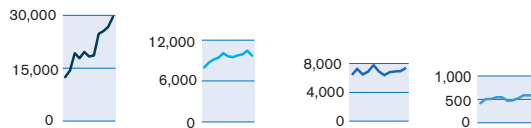
MAP A.6 | Personal Remittances. Receipts and Payments



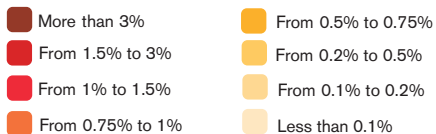
Receipts in Percentage of GDP



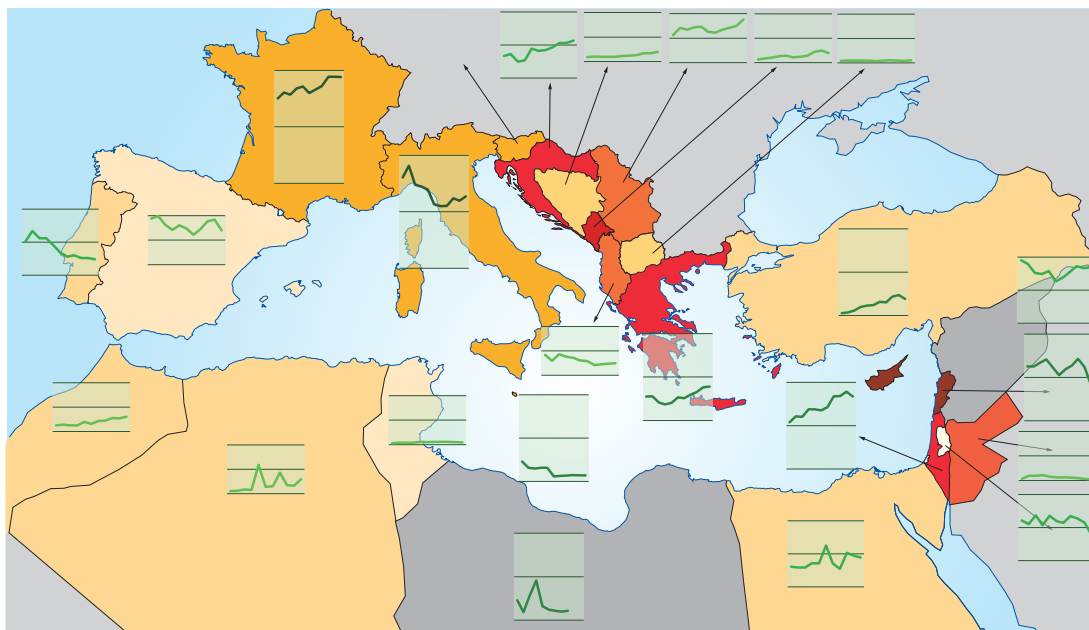
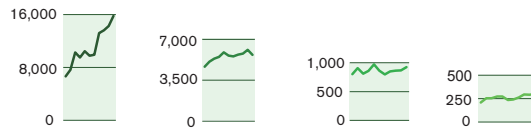
Evolution of Receipts 2010-2020 (millions \$)



Payments in Percentage of GDP

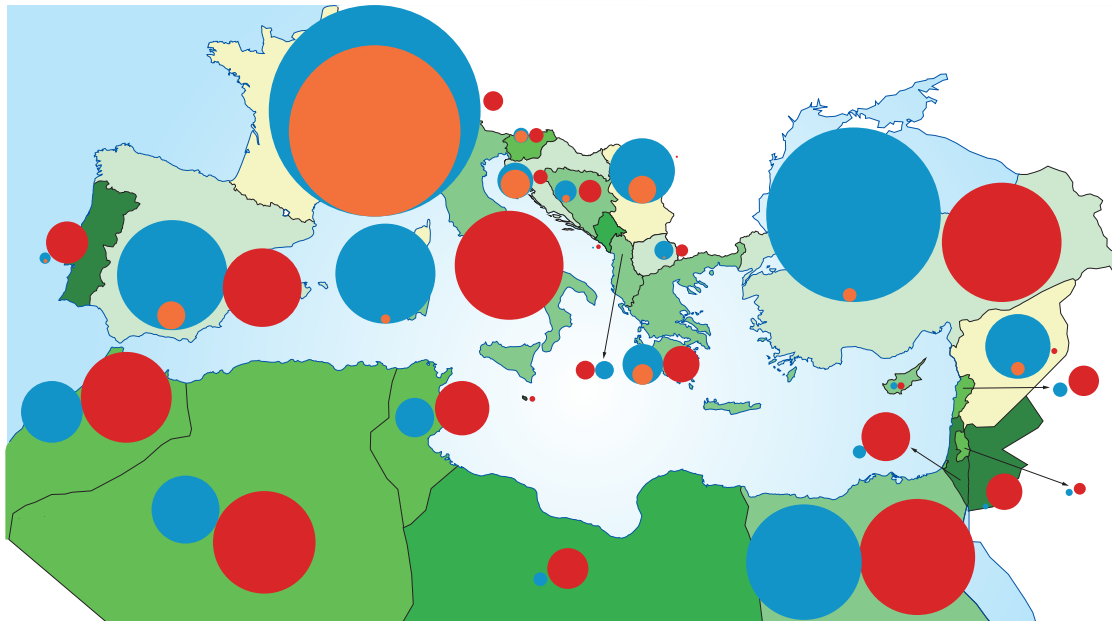


Evolution of Payments 2010-2020 (millions \$)

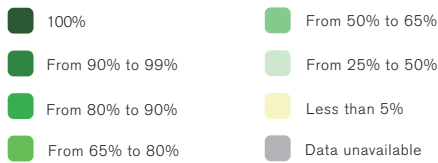


Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

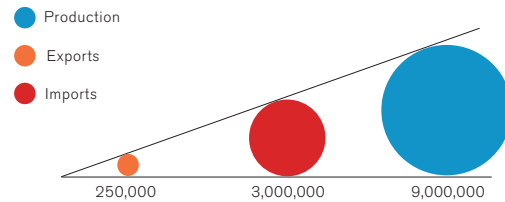
MAP A.7 | Wheat Production and Trade in Mediterranean Countries



Share of Imports in Total Wheat Available (2020) (in %)
 $[\text{Imports}/(\text{Production}-\text{Exports}+\text{Imports})]*100$



Quantity of Wheat (in tonnes)

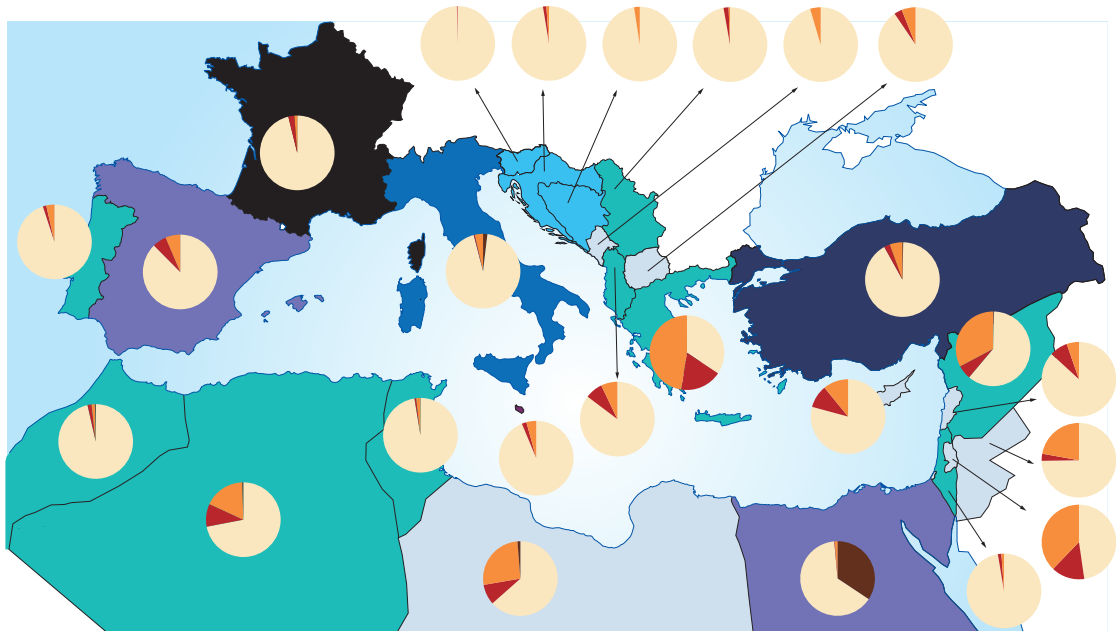


Imports of Wheat: Main Suppliers* (2020)

ALBANIA		ALGERIA		BOSNIA & H.		CROATIA		CYPRUS		EGYPT	
Russian Fed.	64%	France	55%	Hungary	54%	Hungary	83%	Romania	31%	Russian Fed.	60%
Serbia	23%	Germany	13%	Croatia	26%	Austria	10%	Austria	29%	Ukraine	26%
Ukraine	9%	Latvia	6%	Serbia	20%			Russian Fed.	16%	France	7%
		Lithuania	6%					Italy	9%		
		Canada	6%					Bulgaria	6%		
		Poland	5%					Greece	5%		
FRANCE		GREECE		ISRAEL		ITALY		JORDAN		LEBANON	
Germany	50%	Bulgaria	47%	Russian Fed.	33%	Canada	21%	Romania	75%	Ukraine	81%
Belgium	13%	Russian Fed.	16%	Ukraine	20%	Hungary	18%	Ukraine	18%	Russian Fed.	15%
Spain	8%	Ukraine	10%	Hungary	17%	France	14%	Russian Fed.	7%		
Romania	7%	France	8%	Lithuania	10%	USA	11%				
Italy	5%	Romania	6%	Bulgaria	8%	Austria	6%				
				Romania	5%						
LIBYA		MALTA		MONTENEGRO		MOROCCO		NORTH MACEDONIA		PORTUGAL	
Ukraine	48%	Russian Fed.	42%	Serbia	99%	France	33%	Serbia	84%	France	54%
Bulgaria	17%	Slovenia	23%			Canada	20%	Hungary	10%	Spain	10%
Russian Fed.	15%	France	20%			Ukraine	17%			Denmark	9%
Romania	12%	Hungary	15%			Russian Fed.	8%			Poland	5%
						Germany	7%				
SERBIA		SLOVENIA		SPAIN		TUNISIA		TURKEY			
Hungary	58%	Hungary	53%	France	32%	Ukraine	49%	Russian Fed.	67%		
France	13%	Croatia	17%	Bulgaria	15%	Canada	16%	Ukraine	11%		
Italy	8%	Serbia	15%	Lithuania	10%	Spain	13%	Canada	5%		
Croatia	8%	Austria	12%	Ukraine	9%	Russian Fed.	6%				
				Sweden	7%						
				Denmark	6%						

*Only countries accounting for more than 5% are shown

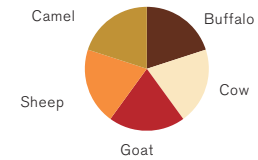
MAP A.8 | Whole Fresh Milk Production and Trade in Mediterranean Countries



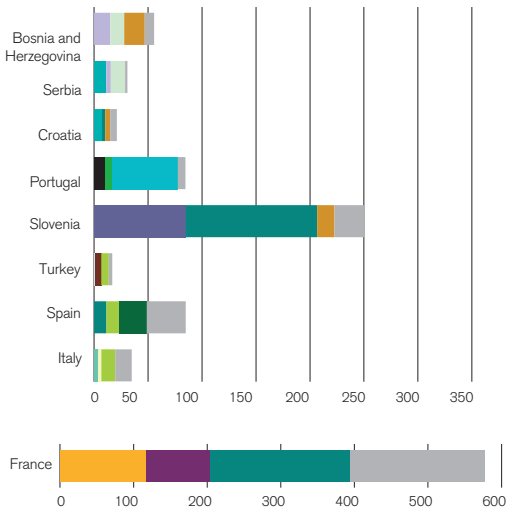
Whole Fresh Milk Production (thousands of tonnes) (2020)



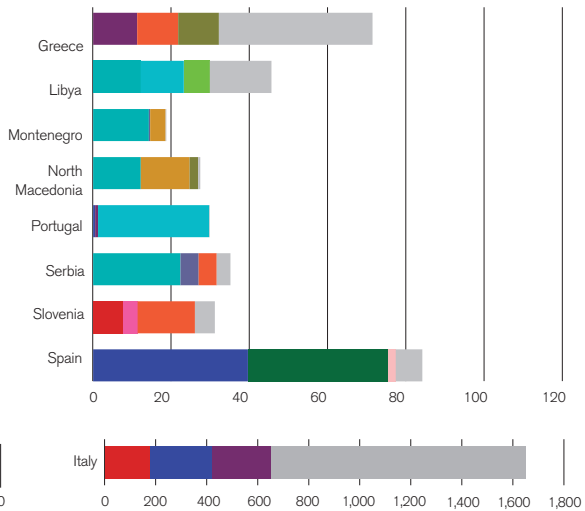
Diversification of Whole Fresh Milk Production, % (2020)



Whole Fresh Cow Milk Main Mediterranean Exporters (thousands of tonnes) (2020)



Whole Fresh Cow Milk Main Mediterranean Importers (thousands of tonnes) (2020)

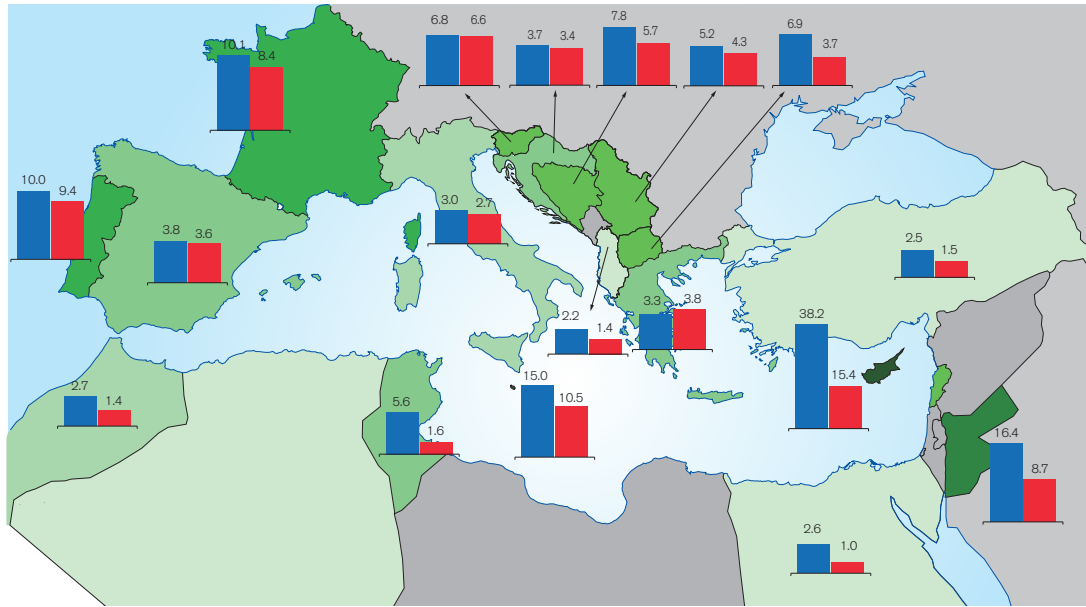


Partner Countries



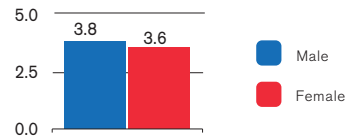
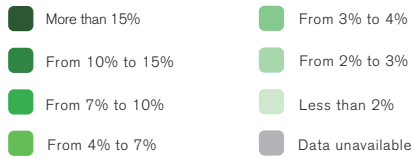
Own production. Source: FAO.

MAP A.9a | International Tertiary Student Mobility (Inbound)



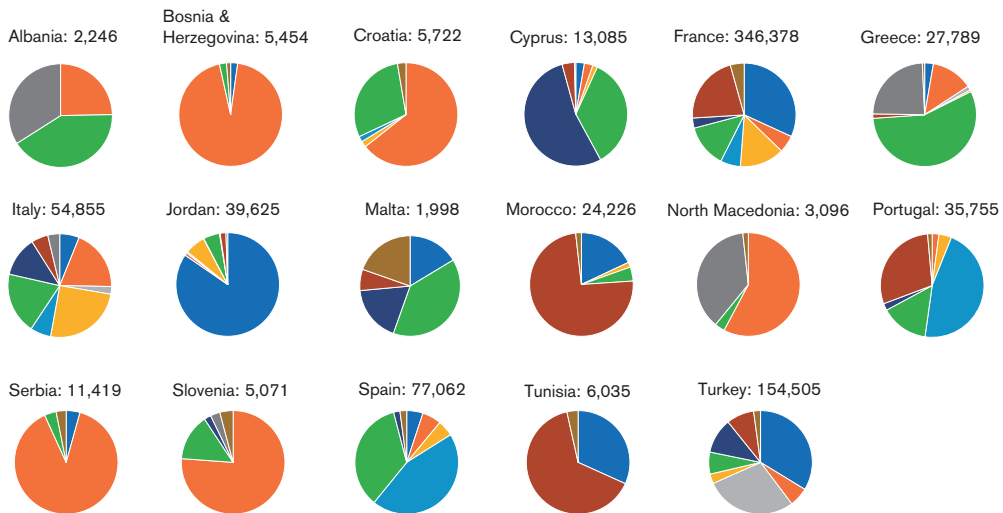
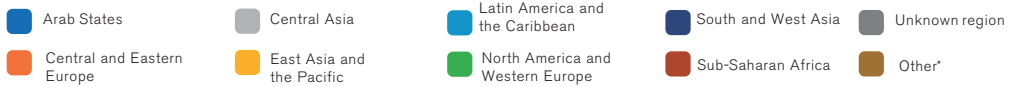
Inbound Mobility Rate (%)

Inbound Mobility Rate by Sex (%)



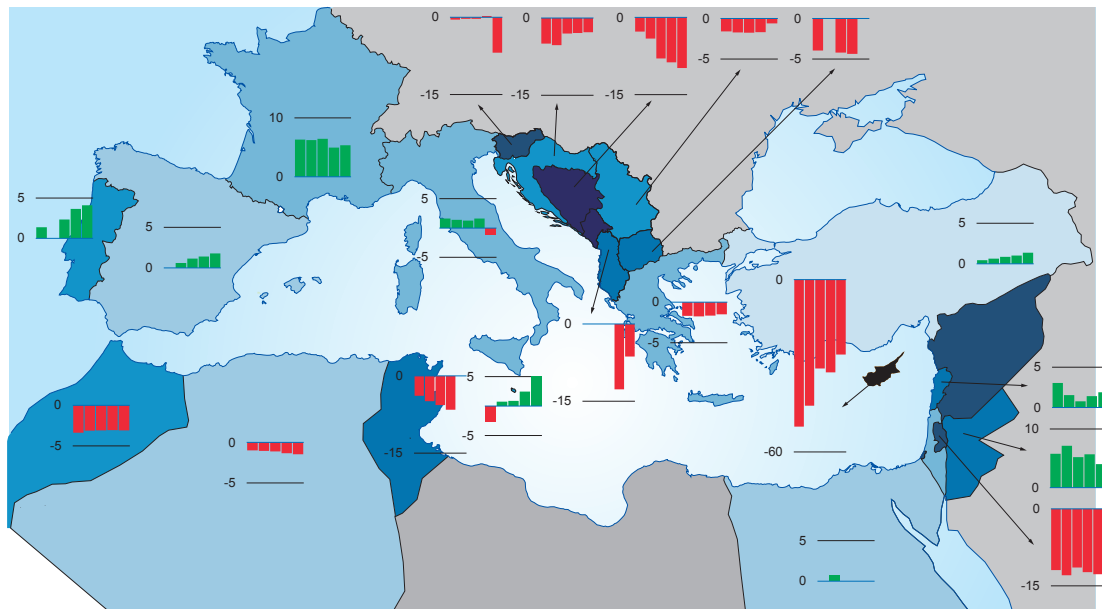
Inbound Internationally Mobile Students, by Region of Origin

Regions



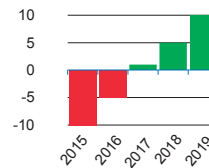
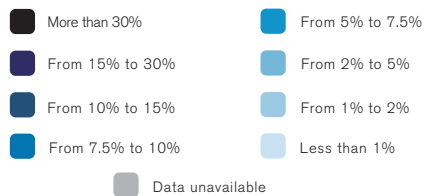
* The category "Other" includes data from regions which, despite having their own category, do not reach 1% in that particular country. Own production. Source: UNESCO.

MAP A.9b | International Tertiary Student Mobility (Outbound)



Outbound Mobility Ratio (%)

Net Flow Ratio of Internationally Mobile Students (inbound-outbound), 2015-2019 (%)



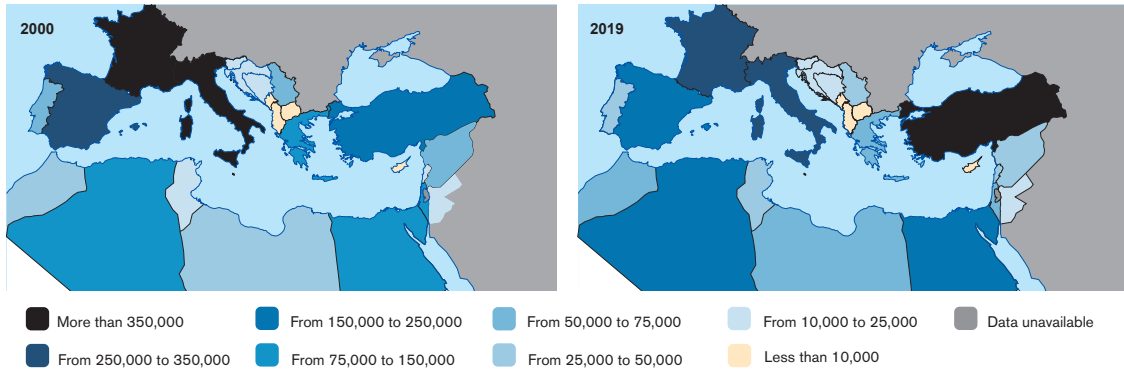
Outbound Internationally Mobile Students, by Host Region



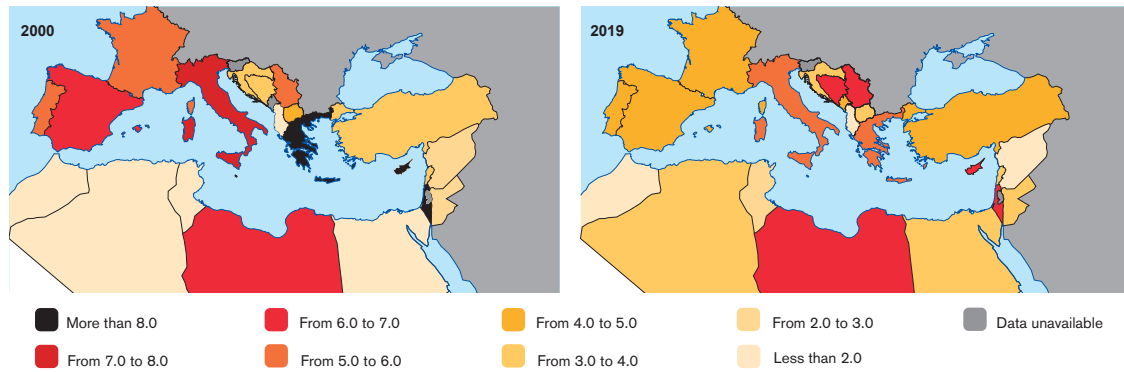
* The category "Other" includes data from regions which, despite having their own category, do not reach 1% in that particular country. Own production. Source: UNESCO.

MAP A.10a | CO₂ Emissions in Mediterranean Countries

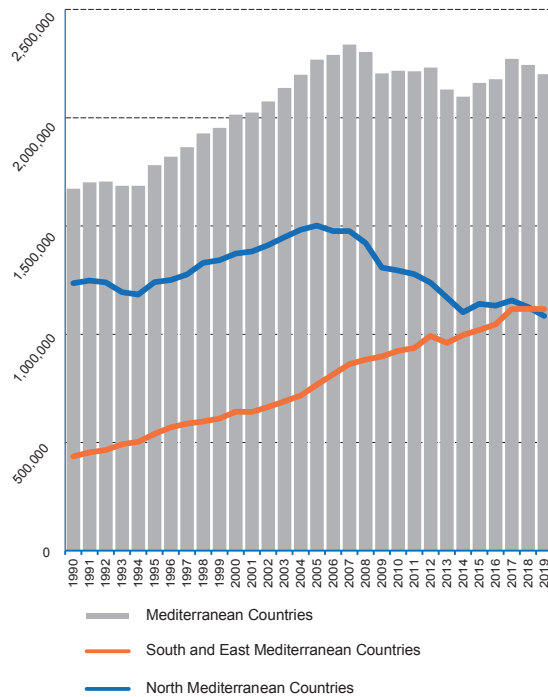
CO₂ Emissions (kt) (2000 & 2019)



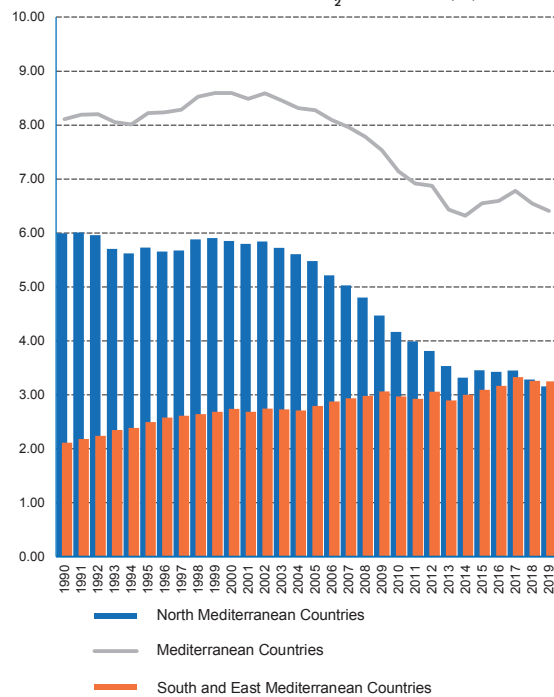
CO₂ Emissions per Capita (t) (2000 & 2019)



CO₂ Emissions from Mediterranean Countries (kt)

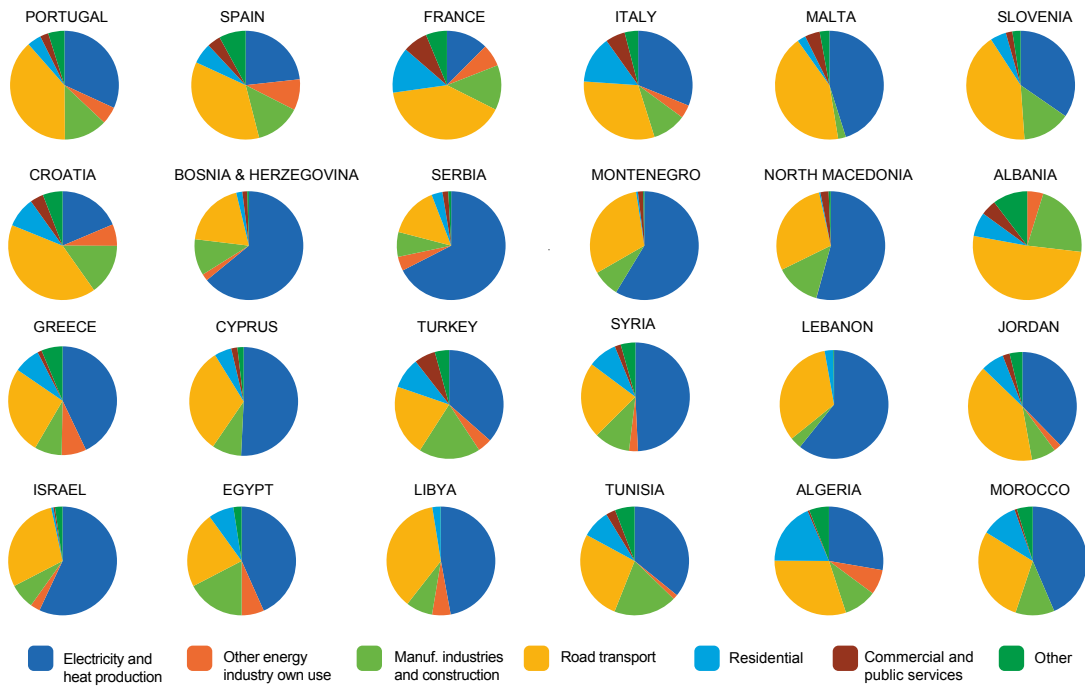


Share of CO₂ Emissions from Mediterranean Countries over World CO₂ Emissions (%)

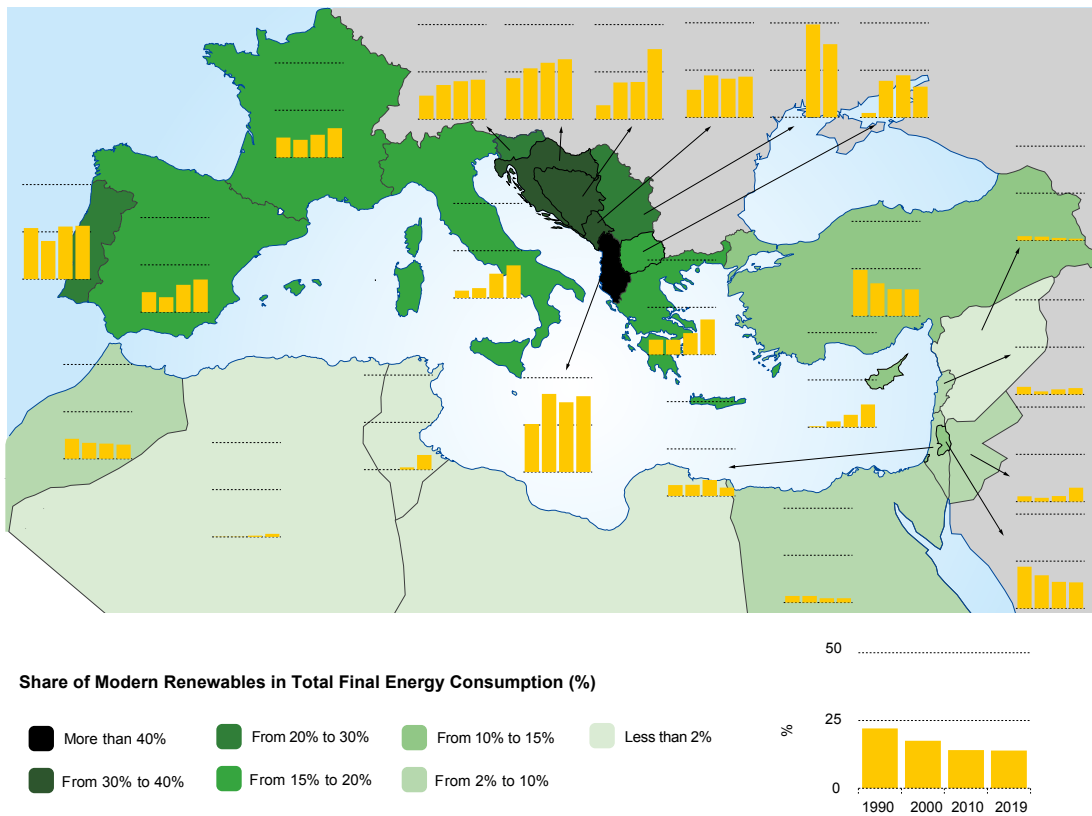


Own production. Source: IEA and WB.

CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion by Sector, in 2019



Share of Modern Renewables in Total Final Energy Consumption

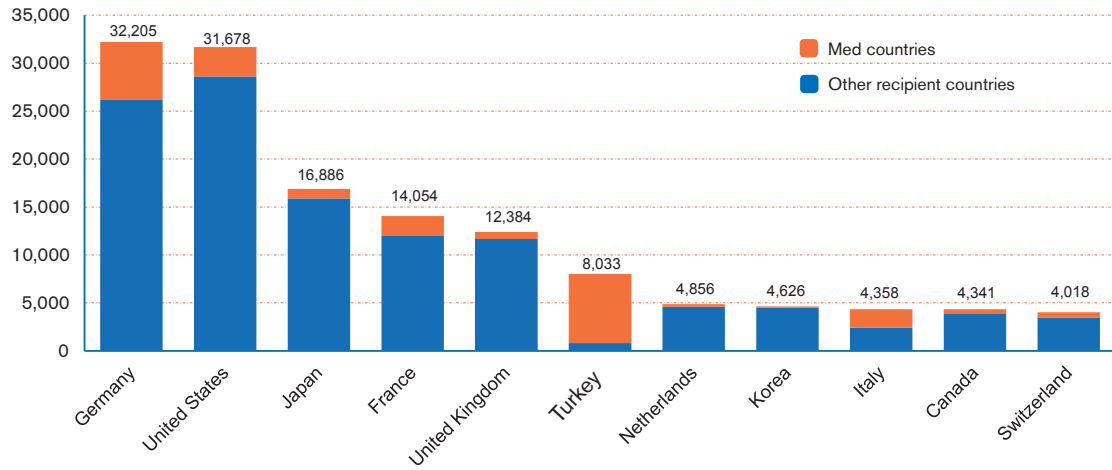


Own production. Source: IEA and WB.

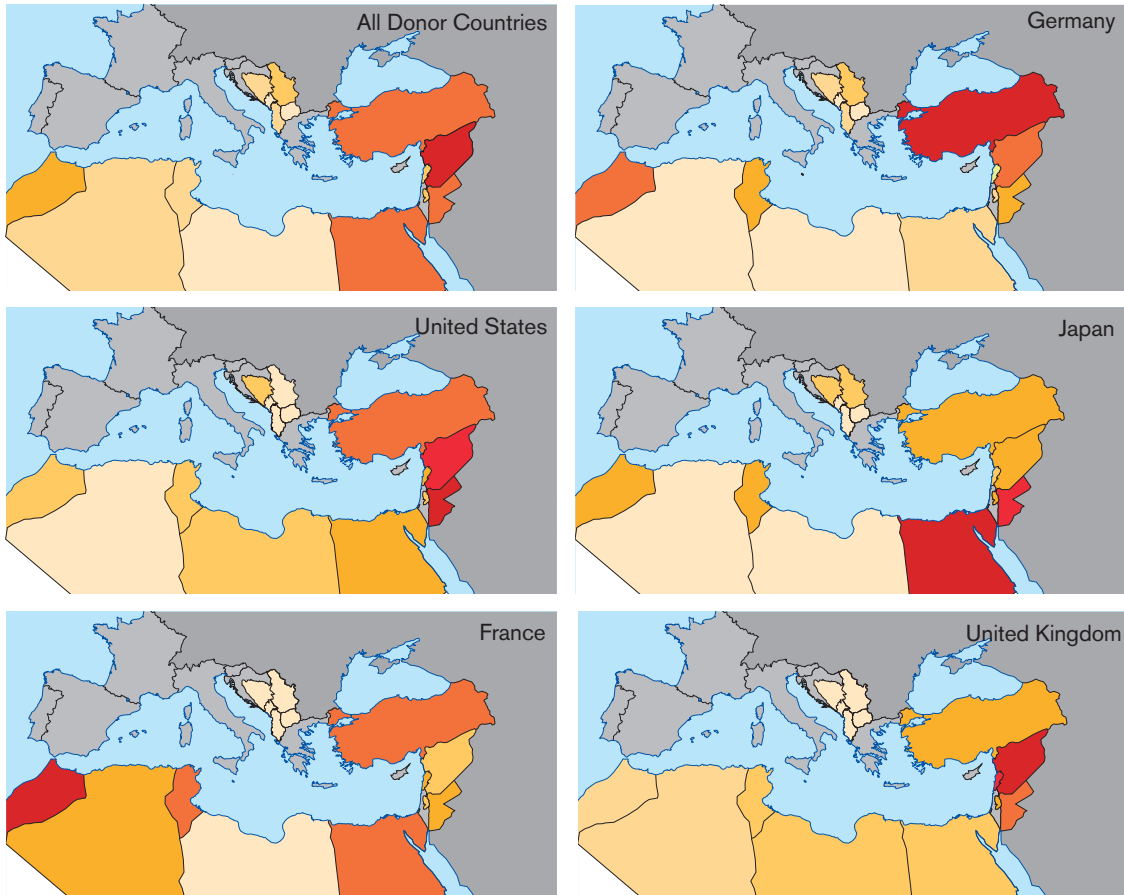
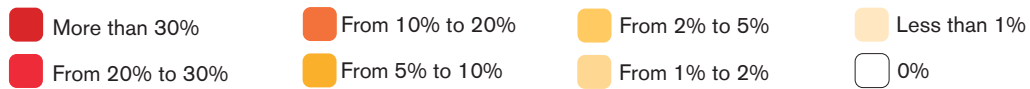
MAP A.11a | Bilateral Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries

Total (Gross) Disbursements by the Official Sector (ODA+OOF) at Large to the Recipient Country

Countries with Highest Disbursements by the Official Sector in 2020 (in millions \$)



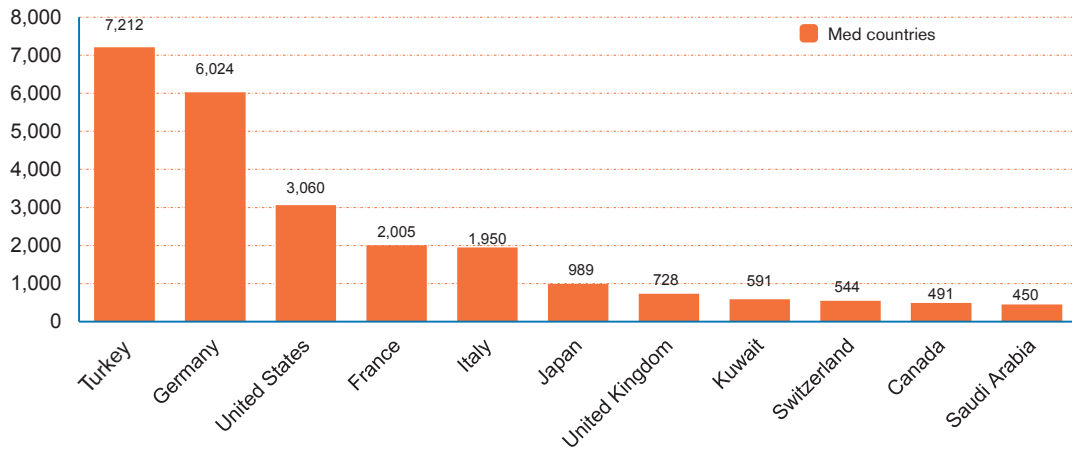
Distribution of Disbursements among Mediterranean Countries in 2020, in Percentage (main world donors)



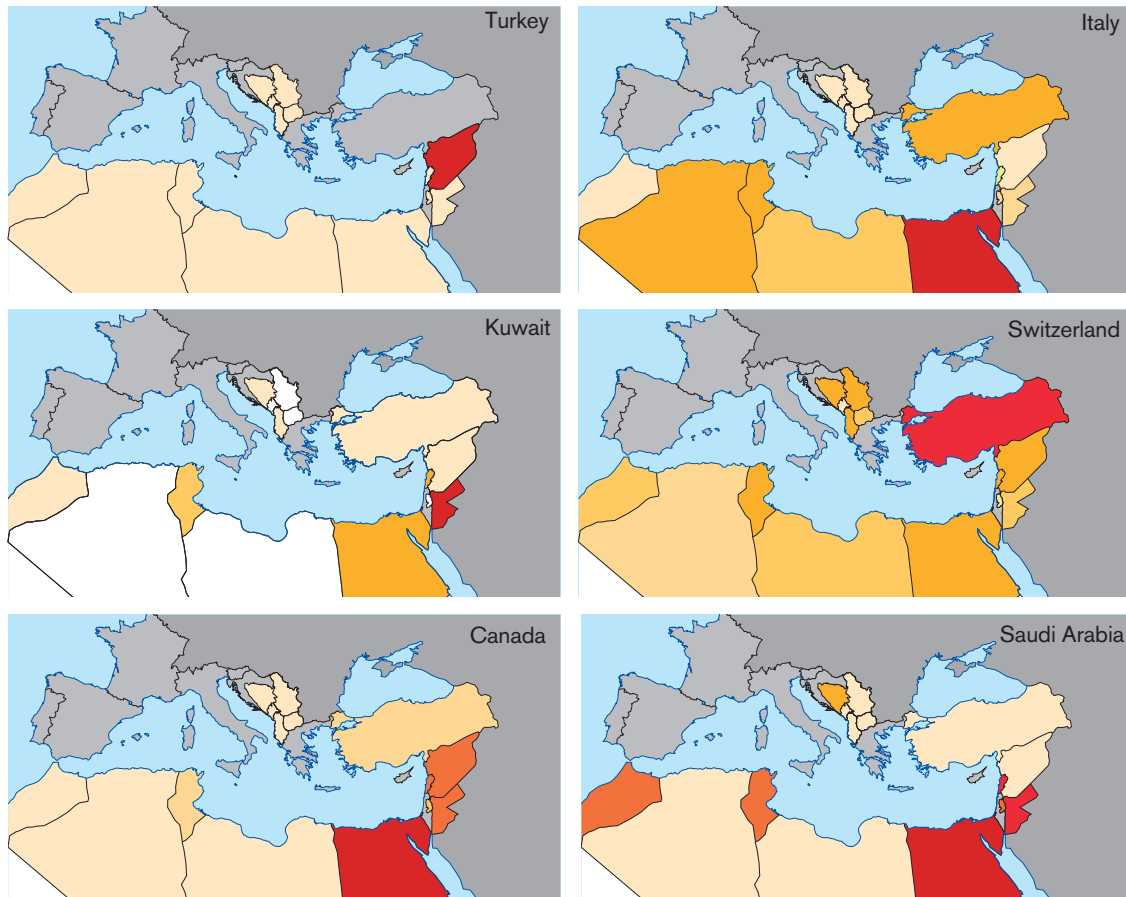
MAP A.11b¹ Bilateral Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries

Total (Gross) Disbursements by the Official Sector (ODA+OOF) at Large to the Recipient Country

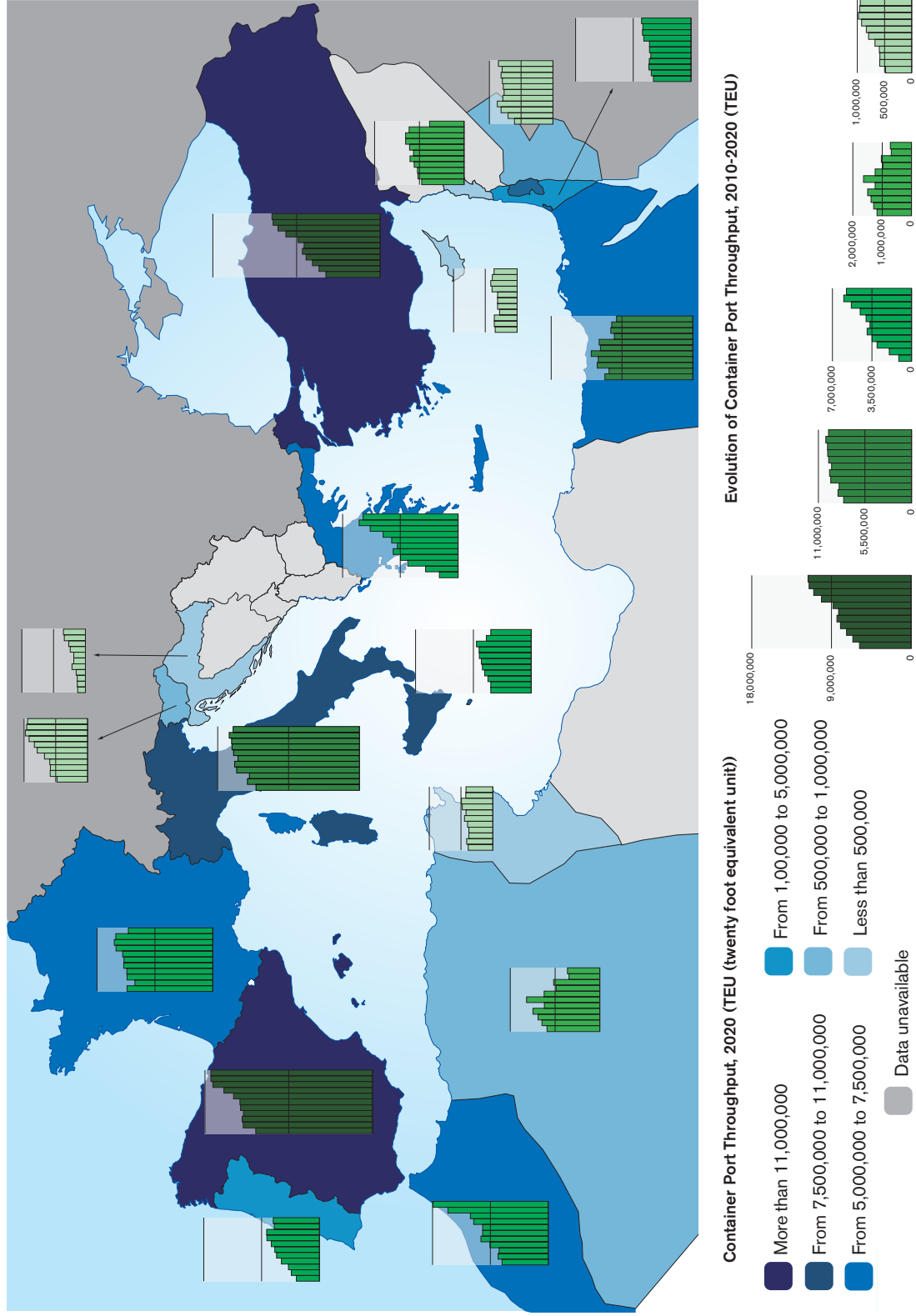
Countries with Highest Disbursements to Mediterranean Countries by the Official Sector in 2020 (in millions \$)



Distribution of Disbursements among Mediterranean Countries in 2020, in Percentage (main Mediterranean donors)



MAP A.12 | Container Port Throughput



Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events

January 2021

The year begins with the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic which, in parallel to the start of the vaccination campaigns, gives rise to tougher preventive measures. Portugal takes over the six-month European Presidency and holds presidential elections. Spain is affected by heavy snowfall and approves the economic recovery plan in response to the pandemic. The Italian government resigns. Montenegro amends the Religious Freedom Law. Kosovo calls early elections. Greece reshuffles its cabinet and extends its territorial waters. There are new arrests in Turkey of members of the network of the preacher Fethullah Gulen, and tougher laws on public order are introduced. Cyprus extends its defensive connections. In Lebanon, there is unrest in Tripoli. In Libya, the warring parties move forwards towards an agreement for a new government. In Tunisia, citizen protests lead to a government reshuffle. In Algeria, senior officials close to the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika are convicted.

Portugal

- On 1 January Portugal takes over the six-month European Presidency with the challenges of combating the Covid-19 pandemic, progressing on a health union within Europe and on the Union's social pillar, refocusing relations with the United Kingdom, leading a recovery of global multilateralism and addressing Europe's economic recovery.
- On 15 January, after Covid-19 infections surpass half a million, a month-long nationwide lockdown enters into force.
- On 24 January Portugal holds presidential elections. The conservative Mar-

celo Rebelo de Sousa is reelected with 60.7% of the vote.

- On 29 January the Parliament approves legalizing euthanasia.

Spain

- From 6-11 January Storm Filomena causes the heaviest snowfall in Spain since 1971, which is especially intense in Madrid, the two Castiles and Aragon, causing millions of euros of damage and leaving at least six dead.
- On 23 January the Chief of Defence Staff Miguel Angel Villarroya resigns after it is revealed that he and other military commanders had been vaccinated for Covid-19, despite not forming part of the priority immunization groups.
- On 27 January Miquel Iceta takes over as Territorial Policy Minister to replace Carolina Darias, who in turn succeeds Salvador Illa as Health Minister, who leaves the ministry to run in February's elections in Catalonia.
- On 28 January the Parliament approves the 140-billion-euro economic recovery plan presented in October 2020 by the government, funded by the European NextGenerationEU support package.

France

- On 14 January the government announces that as of 16 January and for two weeks the curfew between 6 pm and 6 am will be extended to halt the third wave of Covid-19.

Italy

- On 6 January the Open Arms, a search and rescue vessel, disembarks 265 migrants in Porto Empedocle.

- On 7 January Italy reopens its education centres for face-to-face teaching.
- On 13 January the former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, leader of Italia Viva (social liberal), withdraws the party's two ministers – of Agriculture and Family – from the coalition cabinet, over disagreements with decisions made by the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's, leaving the government on the brink of collapse.
- On 13 January the large-scale trial begins of 355 members of the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta clan, the biggest criminal proceedings since the trial opened by the judges Falcone and Borsellino in 1986 against 475 members of Cosa Nostra.
- On 18 January Giuseppe Conte survives a confidence vote in the Parliament thanks to the support of the government coalition parties – the 5 Star Movement (M5S, populist), Democratic Party (PD, social democrat) and Free and Equal (LeU, leftist) – and the Mixed Group.
- On 21 January Operation "Low Profile" ends with the arrest of 48 people for collaborating with the 'Ndrangheta clan, among them the secretary of the Union of Christian and Centre Democrats (UDC) party Lorenzo Cesa and Calabria's Councillor for the Budget Francesco Talarico.
- On 26 January the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigns in a bid to form a new government, the third since 2018, which will give him the support needed to implement the 222.9-billion-euro plan to reactivate the economy in the wake of the pandemic, which was unveiled on 13 January.

Malta

- On 14 January the National Statistics Office reports that tourist arrivals to Malta fell by 75.2% in the first 11 months

of 2020 as compared with the same period in 2019, as an effect of the pandemic.

Slovenia

- On 13 January the Prime Minister Janez Jansa announces that the measures against Covid-19 will remain in place until the end of spring.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 15 January the European Commission (EC) warns of consequences in its membership process if Bosnia and Herzegovina does not fulfil its international obligations to solve the humanitarian crisis in the Lipa migrant camp.
- On 20 January serious unrest erupts at the Blazuj migrant camp in Sarajevo, which plays host to over 3,000 people.

Montenegro

- On 20 January in a vote boycotted by the opposition Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), the pro-Serbia parliamentary majority approves the Law on Religious Freedoms, which halts the nationalization of assets belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church in the country. Thousands gathered in Podgorica to protest against the Law, which was rejected on 2 January by the President Milo Djukanovic in a first reading and which has been causing protests and clashes for the last year.

Serbia

- On 19 January vaccination against Covid-19 begins after, on 16 January, Serbia becomes the first European country to receive the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 6 January the acting President Vjosa Osmani announces early elections to be held on 14 February, following a ruling by the Constitutional Court that considers the current government of Avdullah Hoti to be illegitimate having been elected with the help of an invalid vote cast by an MP with a criminal record.

- On 19 January the former Prime Minister Agim Ceku and another 11 defendants are acquitted on charges of falsifying a Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK) veterans' list to enable non-combatants to claim benefits as war veterans.

- On 26 January the Electoral Committee bars the former Prime Minister and leader of Vetëvendosje (leftist, pro-independence), Albin Kurti, from running in the parliamentary elections due to his suspended prison sentence from 2018 for firing tear gas in the Parliament.

Albania

- On 11 January Albania begins its vaccination against Covid-19 with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.
- On 29 January the Special Prosecutor against Corruption and Organized Crime begins an investigation into wiretaps by the Anti-mafia Prosecution Office in Catanzaro, Italy, which have revealed 'Ndrangheta bribes of Albanian senior officials.

Greece

- On 4 January the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis reorganizes his government with the aim of improving its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the same day, strict lockdown measures enter into effect, which are eased on 18 January and defied by the Orthodox Church.
- On 20 January the Parliament approves extending the territorial waters in the Ionian Sea from six to 12 nautical miles.
- On 25 January Greece signs a deal with France for the purchase of 18 fighter jets for 3 billion dollars, in a bid to strengthen ties between Athens and Paris amid tensions with Turkey.
- On 25 January talks resume at the NATO headquarters between Turkey and Greece to establish a dialogue that can ease tensions in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey

- On 7 January the law enters into force that empowers the police and the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) to use military equipment and heavy arms

against demonstrations and terrorist attacks. The legislation comes in response to the student protests against the appointment, on 1 January, of a member of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP, Islamist) as rector of the Bogazici University.

- On 12 January the televangelist Adnan Oktar is sentenced to over a thousand years' imprisonment for heading a criminal organization, abuse of minors, espionage and collaboration with the organization of the preacher Fethullah Gulen.

- On 14 January Turkey begins Covid-19 vaccination with China's Sinovac vaccine.

- On 19 January Turkey orders the arrest of 238 army members with alleged ties to Fethullah Gulen and the failed coup attempt in 2016.

- On 19 January the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemns Turkey for violating the right to freedom of expression and liberty and security of the European Convention on Human Rights over the terrorism-related conviction handed down to the singer and columnist Atilla Tas.

- On 26 January there are 71 new arrests of people suspected of having ties with the network of Fethullah Gulen and the 2016 attempted coup.

Cyprus

- On 12 January the UAE and Cyprus sign a defence cooperation agreement which adds to those signed by Nicosia with Greece, Israel, Jordan and Egypt, amid tensions with Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean.

- On 28 January Cyprus begins a campaign of mandatory testing for Covid-19 for those people returning to face-to-face work.

Syria

- On 4 January the death toll rises to 15 from an attack attributed to Daesh on a convoy of fuel tankers and passenger buses in Hama.

- On 4 January new protests in the governorate of Deir ez-Zor condemn the lack of services, arbitrary arrests and discrimination by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic forces (FDS). The protests,

which continue throughout the month, have been taking place since 2019.

- On 13 January according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), at least 57 people have been killed in the second Israeli airstrike in less than a week on targets of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard on the Syrian-Iraqi border.

- On 15 January flights resume between Aleppo and Beirut after a 10-year interruption.

- On 15 January the European Council adds the Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad to the list of persons subject to European sanctions.

- On 3 and 16 January the Ansar Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Brigade, created in September 2020 as an independent militia, are blamed for attacks on Turkish army targets in Kafraya and Batbu.

- On 21 January four civilians are killed during Israeli airstrikes, which are responded to with Syrian anti-aircraft fire in Kuzu, Hama, where Hezbollah and Iranian weapons stores have been found.

- On 24 January clashes break out between the Syrian army and Islamist fighters in Daraa in the fiercest fighting since the regime took control of the governorate in 2018.

- On 25 January a fifth round of UN-mediated talks begins in Geneva between the Syrian regime, the opposition and representatives of civil society, to draft a new constitution.

- On 29 January the SOHR warns of an intensification of Daesh activity in the Aleppo-Hama-Raqa triangle and in areas of Homs and Deir ez-Zor, at the same time as the Syrian army and Russia step up operations to quash the terrorist presence.

- On 30 January at least six people are killed on the outskirts of Afrin in a truck-bomb attack, responsibility for which goes unclaimed but which is attributed by Turkey to the People's Protection Units (YPG), the Syrian branch of the PKK terrorist organization.

Lebanon

- On 14 January a new lockdown with a 24-hour curfew comes into effect until 25 January, following the state of health emergency decreed on 11 January in response to the third wave of Covid-19.

- On 27 January clashes during anti-government protests in Tripoli over the crisis and its worsening because of the lockdown measures leave one dead and over 220 injured. The unrest continues over the following days.

Jordan

- On 13 January Jordan begins vaccination against Covid-19 with the Sinopharm and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines.

Egypt

- On 3 January Egypt authorizes the Sinopharm vaccine against Covid-19. On 24 January vaccinations begin.

- On 4 January a commercial ship docks at the al-Arish port for the first time in years due to the suspension of activity there in the context of the military offensive against Daesh in Sinai. The reopening is part of the plan to connect this port, under military control since July 2019, with the Suez Canal.

- On 21 January a Daesh attack kills an Egyptian official in North Sinai, where the Egyptian army has been carrying out an offensive against the jihadist insurgency since 2011.

Libya

- On 15 January Libyan political dialogue, under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva, advances towards an agreement for a new transitional government to oversee the period in the run-up to the elections scheduled for December 2021.

- On 18 January the European Operation IRINI and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) agree to expand cooperation to exchange information in relation to the supervision of the arms embargo in Libya.

- On 19 January 43 people are killed in Libyan waters while trying to reach Europe, in the first shipwreck reported in the Mediterranean in 2021.

- On 21 January the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) praises the decision taken at a meeting in Hurgada, Egypt, by the Constitutional Committee, comprising the House of Representatives from Tobruk and the High Council of State from Tripoli, to

hold a constitutional referendum ahead of the general elections scheduled for December 2021.

- On 21 January the Ocean Viking search and rescue vessel, belonging to the NGO SOS Méditerranée, rescues 120 migrants off the Libyan coastline.

Tunisia

- On 15 January days of protest begin throughout Tunisia which, over the course of the following days, call for greater socioeconomic and democratic improvements, forcing a reshuffle on 25 January of Hichem Mchichi's government. On 25 January, the President Kais Saied expresses his disapproval of Mchichi's government reorganization in view of the dismissal of the Interior Minister Taoufik Charfeddine a close ally of Saied, who accuses Mchichi of appointing ministerial posts with possible conflicts of interest and not following the basic law stipulating that the Head of State must be consulted for any changes. In the absence of a Constitutional Court, which has yet to be formed, the confrontation between the Presidency and the government threatens to become a serious institutional crisis.

Algeria

- On 2 January Said Bouteflika, brother of the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the generals Mohamed Mediene and Athmane Tartag and the general secretary of the Workers' Party (PT), Louisa Hanoune, are cleared on appeal of charges of conspiracy against the army, for which they were convicted in September 2019. Bouteflika and Tartag will remain in prison awaiting a decision regarding other charges of which they have been accused. On 25 January, the former internal security director Smail Serhoud is arrested in Algiers, in relation to the cases that affect Tartag.

- On 30 January Algeria begins vaccination against Covid-19 with vaccines from Russia and China.

Morocco

- On 28 January Mohammed VI authorizes the start of the country's Covid-19

immunization campaign with batches of AstraZeneca and Sinopharm.

EU

- On 1 January the Trade and Cooperation Agreement of 24 December 2020 between the EU and the United Kingdom comes into force, which establishes the absence of customs duties and import quotas on agricultural and industrial goods; regulations on state aid, mechanisms for settling disputes, reciprocal access to territorial waters and a 25% reduction on the Union's fishing quotas in British waters for 2026.
- On 8 January Frontex reports that the number of illegal entries into the Union saw a 13% reduction in 2020, as compared with 2019, standing at 124,000.
- On 11 January the Council approves the extension of the European civil mission EUCAP-Sahel-Mali for the period ending in January 2023.
- On 12 January the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) announces the opening of an investigation against Frontex over allegations that they colluded with migrant pushbacks in the Aegean Sea.
- On 12 January the Commission reaches an agreement with the European company Valneva on the purchase of 60 million doses of a possible Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 21 January the European Parliament votes to continue to make additional resources available to provide basic assistance to those most affected by the pandemic, allowing Member States to continue to use additional funds under the REACT-EU initiative in 2021 and 2022.
- On 26 January the Commission adopts the Union's humanitarian aid budget for 2021 which stands at 1.4 billion euros, a 60% increase with respect to 2020.
- On 29 January the European Medicines Agency (EMA) recommends marketing for the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, as the third authorized vaccine after Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna.

February 2021

In Spain, Catalonia holds regional elections. In France, the law on reinforcing

respect for the principles of the Republic is approved and, like in Greece, several cases of sexual abuse affecting senior officials come to light. Italy approves the national unity government of Mario Draghi. In Malta, the first sentence is handed down for the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia. In Slovenia, the government survives a confidence motion. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, repeat local elections are held in Srebrenica. Kosovo holds early legislative elections. In North Macedonia, the sentences handed down in the Monster case ignite interethnic tensions and the former secret police chief is jailed. In Greece, an historic snowfall brings Athens to a halt. In Cyprus, there is unrest over the government's handling of the pandemic. In Syria, the US launches its first military operation under the Biden Administration. Lebanon begins vaccination against Covid-19. There are ministerial dismissals in Jordan and Tunisia. The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) elects the head of the Presidency Council and the prime minister of the future government. Algeria calls early elections.

Spain

- On 14 February Catalonia holds regional elections in which the Socialists' Party of Catalonia (PSC) wins most votes, but obtains 33 seats, on a par with the Republic Left of Catalonia (ERC, pro-independence). Noteworthy is the break through of VOX (far-right) with 11 seats and the collapse of Citizens (Cs, socioliberal) which drops from 36 to 6 MPs.

France

- On 4 February the leader of the Popular Republican Union (UPR, Eurosceptic) and former presidential candidate François Asselineau is placed under police custody in an investigation into sexual harassment and sexual assault. On 18 February, the former Secretary of Public Affairs Georges Tron is sentenced to three years' imprisonment for sexual abuse and rape. The conviction coincides with revelations since October 2020 of other sex scandals affecting political figures like Olivier Du-

hamel, accused of incest and sexual abuse, and the Parisian councillors, Maxime Cochard, Christophe Girard and Pierre Aidenbaum.

- On 16 February the parliamentary majority of the Republic on the Move (LREM, social liberal) in the National Assembly approves the bill to "reinforce respect for the principles of the Republic" and combat radical Islamism.
- On 19 February the manager of a refugee reception centre in Pau is stabbed to death by a Sudanese asylum seeker.

Italy

- On 1 February the President Sergio Mattarella asks Mario Draghi, the former head of the European Central Bank (ECB) to form a government. On 18 February, the new pro-European and Atlanticist government receives parliamentary approval. It comprises eight technocrats in the key ministries and a further 15 representatives from across the broad spectrum of parliamentary parties. Worthy of note are Vittorio Colao in Technological Innovation and Digital Transition; Roberto Cingolani in Ecological Transition and Daniele Franco in Economy and Finance. Renewing their ministerial posts are Luciana Lamorgese as Interior Minister, Lorenzo Guerini in Defence and Luigi Di Maio as Foreign Minister.
- On 18 February the M5S announces the expulsion from its party of MPs that have opposed Mario Draghi's government. These expulsions, added to the parliamentary defections arising from internal dissension, brings the number of M5S senators down from 92 to 20 and M5S MPs from 190 to 36.

Malta

- On 23 February Vince Muscat, one of the men charged with the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia in 2017, is sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment after pleading guilty.

Slovenia

- On 15 February the government of Janez Jansa from the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, conservative) sur-

vives a confidence vote proposed by the parties of the Constitutional Arch Coalition (KUL).

- On 26 February the government suspends January's financing of the Slovenian Press Agency (STA) as it also did for October and November's funds in 2020, which were eventually authorized on 15 January.

Croatia

- On 27 February the mayor of Zagreb Milan Bandic passes away. Jelena Pavić Vukicević takes over as mayor until the local elections in May.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 21 February Srebrenica holds repeat local elections after the Election Commission annulled the results of the November 2020 elections due to irregularities. The Bosniak parties boycott the vote, claiming that there are still not the minimum guarantees to ensure a fair vote. The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD, Bosnian Serb nationalist) of Milorad Dodik wins the election.
- On 12 February vaccination begins against Covid-19, a week after the delivery of the first Russian Sputnik-V vaccines.

Montenegro

- On 4 February the police arrest the former head of the Investment Development Fund Zoran Vukčević and three others for misuse of a loan for agricultural development, from the Abu Dhabi Development Fund (ADFD).
- On 5 February the Appeal Court annuls the first instance verdicts issued in May 2019 for the 2016 coup plot citing procedural violations, and orders a retrial.
- On 15 February the State Prosecutor Zivko Savović accuses the Special State Prosecutor Milivoje Katnić of halting an investigation into the former Transport Minister Ivan Brajović, suspected of corruption.

Serbia

- On 4 February the police close the Red Star and Partizan football stadiums

as part of an operation in Belgrade that ends with 17 arrests of members of a powerful criminal organization.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 1 February Israel and Kosovo establish diplomatic ties.
- On 14 February Kosovo holds early legislative elections which Vetevendosje wins with 41% of the votes.

North Macedonia

- On 14 February Serbia delivers the first 4,680 doses of the 8,000 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines it has promised North Macedonia, which is struggling to secure supplies.
- On 23 February three Albanian Macedonians are handed down life sentences for terrorism for the murder of five Slav Macedonians in 2012, in a case that has inflamed interethnic tensions in the country. Another two defendants are sentenced to 15 and nine years' imprisonment. The ruling provokes protests and unrest in the Macedonian Albanian community.
- On 26 February the former secret police chief Saso Mijalkov begins serving his 12-year prison sentence for massive illegal wiretapping between 2008 and 2015.

Albania

- On 11 February the judge Enkeleida Hoxha and another 12 people are arrested for reducing or lifting sentences in exchange for bribes.

Greece

- On 16 February Greece temporarily halts vaccination against Covid-19 in Athens faced with the severe snowfall affecting Attica, the heaviest in a decade.
- On 18 February Greece protests against the presence in Greek waters of the Turkish research vessel *Cesme*.
- On 20 February the former director of the National Theatre Dimitris Lignadis is arrested on charges of raping at least two under-age girls. The arrest comes amid a wave of cases that began in

January when the Olympic medalist Sophia Bekatorou reported having been raped by the vice-president of the Greek Sailing Federation in 1998. Other athletes like Mania Bikoff, Rabea Iatridou, Marina Psychogiou and Niki Bakoyianni also reported having suffered sexual abuse.

- On 23 February a nationwide strike by healthcare and maritime workers calls for salary hikes, unemployment benefits and the reinstatement of the social benefits that were suspended during the pandemic.

Turkey

- On 14 February Turkey accuses the PKK of the murder of 13 abducted Turkish soldiers, whose bodies are found during a military operation in Gara, northern Iraq, against the terrorist organization, which ended with the death of at least 48 of its members. On 15 February, the Interior Ministry reports the arrest of 718 members of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) and Ankara condemns the US' support of Kurdish terrorism.
- On 24 February Turkey begins mass vaccination of its teachers with the Chinese Sinovac vaccine, ahead of the return to face-to-face teaching scheduled to begin on 1 March and coinciding with the start of the gradual lifting of restrictions.

Cyprus

- On 13 February the police disperse a protest in Nicosia against the government's handling of the pandemic and corruption, after the country suspends its programme for issuing passports in exchange for million-dollar investments, following a newspaper investigation into alleged kickbacks affecting senior officials, among them the Parliament Speaker Demetris Syllouris.

Syria

- On 2 February the Syrian army and the SDF allied with the Syrian Kurdish Federation of Northern Syria, agree under Russian mediation to put an end to a 20-day siege imposed by the SDF on regime-controlled areas in Hasakah and

Aleppo, amid increasing tensions between the groups.

- On 15 February airstrikes attributed to Israel on positions of the Syrian army and pro-government militias in Rif Dimashq leave nine dead according to the SOHR. The action coincides with an Israeli air force drill along the Blue Line.
- On 25 February the US carries out its first military operation in Syria under the Biden Administration, targeting Iranian-backed militias, in response to recent attacks on International Coalition personnel.

Lebanon

- On 5 February Hezbollah condemns the murder of the intellectual and activist Loqman Slim, whose body was found the previous day in southern Lebanon. Slim had for many years been an outspoken critic of the Shiite movements and its allies.
- On 14 February Lebanon begins vaccination against Covid-19 with Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines.
- On 18 February, due to a possible conflict of interests, the judge Fadi Sawan is removed from the investigation into the Beirut port explosion in 2020.

Jordan

- On 28 February the Interior Minister Samir Mobaideen and Justice Minister Bassam Talhuni are dismissed for breaching preventive measures against the pandemic, put in place on 24 February.

Egypt

- On 4 February Mahmoud Hussein, an al-Jazeera journalist in detention since December 2018 for "spreading fake news," is released.
- On 9 February the governor of South Sinai Khaled Fouda announces the end of the construction of a 36-kilometre security fence around Sharm el-Sheikh.
- On 16 February despite the Biden Administration's commitment to adopt a tough stance towards its partners in the Middle East on human rights abuses, the US announces plans to sell missiles to Egypt, hours after the Egyptian authorities arrest two relatives of the Egyptian-American activist Mohamed Soltan, who

had already been detained in 2020 and then released following Biden's election in the US. Soltan, the son of a jailed Muslim Brotherhood leader, filed a lawsuit in June 2020 against the former Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi in a US federal court for his alleged involvement in the torture Soltan underwent while under arrest in 2013, following the downfall of Mohamed Morsi.

Libya

- On 1 February el LDPF meets to elect the members of the interim executive council tasked with leading the country to elections scheduled for December. On 5 February, Mohammad Younes Menfi is elected head of the Presidency Council of the future government and Abdulhamid Dbeibah as Prime Minister.
- On 4 February the UN Security Council requests the deployment of observers in Libya to monitor compliance with the ceasefire.
- On 21 February the Interior Minister Fathi Bachagha escapes an assassination attempt near Tripoli.

Tunisia

- On 6 February some 2,000 people demonstrate in Tunis to condemn a repressive security policy.
- On 12 February the army arrests a group of demonstrators trying to block supplies from the el-Kamur oil field in Tataouine, in protest against the government breaking its promises to create thousands of new jobs and increase development in the governorate.
- On 15 February the Prime Minister Hichem Mchichi announces the dismissal of five ministers from his new government, who are yet to be named, following criticism from the President Kais Saied and the surge in citizen protests.
- On 19 February Tunisair workers go on strike to demand that the government save the airline from bankruptcy following the decision by its Turkish partner company TAV-Tunisia to freeze its accounts in light of a report on the airline's unpaid debts.
- On 27 February the country's largest political party, the Islamist Ennahda (Renaissance), leads a large-scale rally in

support of Hichem Mchichi's cabinet and his standoff with the President Kais Saied.

Algeria

- On 15 February Algeria announces the reopening of mosques and bars, restaurants and hotels, as part of the progressive easing of measures to contain Covid-19.
- On 16 February a mass demonstration in Kherrata marks the second anniversary of the Hirak movement street protests, which ended with the fall of Abdelaziz Bouteflika.
- On 18 February the President Abdelmajid Tebboune calls early legislative elections.
- On 19 February a presidential pardon affecting 59 prisoners includes the release of Khaled Drareni, a prominent journalist in the coverage of the fall of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who has been in jail for 11 months.
- On 21 February Abdelaziz Djerad reshuffles his government. Mohamed Bacha replaces Ferhat Ait Ali as Industry Minister; Mohamed Arkab replaces Abdelmadjid Attar as Energy Minister; Moustapha Kamel Mihoubi replaces Arezki Berraki as Water Resources Minister; Mohamed Ali Boughazi replaces Mohamed Hamidou as Tourism Minister; Kamel Nacéri replaces Farouk Chiali as Public Works and Transport Minister; and Dalila Boujemaa replaces Nassira Benharrats as Environment Minister.

Morocco

- On 5 and 12 February protests over the closure of the border with Spain due to the pandemic lead to the deployment of riot police.
- On 14 February Nasser Zafzafi, an activist from the Rif Movement (Hirak) arrested and sentenced in 2017 to 20 years' imprisonment, begins a hunger strike that ends on 23 February after his success in bringing Hirak prisoners out of isolation.

EU

- On 3 February the Commission Vice-President Maros Sefcovic and British Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove

debate the application of customs checks in Northern Ireland, after the Commission announces the withdrawal of EU staff in charge of controlling the Northern Irish border due to safety concerns.

- On 9 February the Commission approves a joint statement to relaunch and strengthen the partnership between the Union and its southern partners to address common challenges, through a revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the next Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

- On 13 February the Portuguese Presidency and the Commission reach an agreement on the European Regional Development and Cohesion Funds for a total of 240 billion euros for investments until 2027.

- On 15-16 February the EU and the countries of the G5-Sahel agree on increasing Europe's military presence in the Sahel, in view of the rise in jihadist activity, which, in 2020, left 6,000 people dead.

- On 22 February the European Foreign Ministers agree to extend sanctions imposed against Russia in 2014 over the persecution and jailing of the opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

- On 26 February the European Council commits to strengthening the Union's defensive capabilities, while maintaining its special relationship with NATO.

Arab League

- On 28 February the Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmed Aboul Gheit reiterates his backing of Saudi Arabia after the country's Crown Prince, Mohamed Bin Salman, is implicated by the US in the murder of the journalist and dissident Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018.

March 2021

During March, several countries introduce tougher Covid-19 restrictions. In Spain, there is a government reshuffle. In France, the former President Sarkozy is sentenced in the Bismuth case. In Italy, the Democratic Party (PD) elects

its secretary general. In Slovenia, the Parliament Speaker survives a confidence vote. In Kosovo, Albin Kurti is appointed Prime Minister. The North Macedonian Prime Minister survives a confidence vote. Turkey withdraws from the Istanbul Convention and the President sacks the governor and deputy governor of the country's central bank. Anti-government protests take place in Lebanon, Jordan and Tunisia. In Egypt, passage through the Suez Canal is blocked. In Libya, the Parliament approves a new government.

Portugal

- On 15 March Portugal begins the first phase of lifting lockdown in view of the drop in Covid-19 infections.

Spain

- On 8 March the European Parliament votes in favour of lifting the immunity of three of its members, Carles Puigdemont, Antoni Comin and Clara Ponsati, who are facing charges in Spain for their responsibility in the unilateral referendum on Catalan independence in 2017.

- On 12 March the government approves 11 billion euros to support businesses affected by the pandemic.

- On 10 March the President of Madrid Isabel Diaz Ayuso calls early regional elections for 4 May, thereby breaking the pact between the People's Party (PP, conservative) government and the Citizens party (Cs), the same day that the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and Cs propose two confidence votes against the PP-led regional government of Murcia, which are unsuccessful as a result of three Citizens MPs moving over to the PP. On 15 March, the second Vice-President and Social Rights Minister Pablo Iglesias announces his withdrawal from the government to contest the Madrid elections for United We Can (UP, leftist). Ione Belarra (UP) takes over as Social Rights Minister and the Economy Minister Nadia Calviño (PSOE) assumes the second Vice-Presidency, leaving the third Vice-Presidency in the hands of the Labour Minister Yolanda Diaz (UP).

- On 18 March, despite right-wing MPs vetoing the bill, the Parliament ap-

proves the new euthanasia law, which will come into force in June.

France

- On 1 March the former President Nicolas Sarkozy is sentenced to one year of house arrest and given another two years' suspended sentence for corruption and influence peddling in the Bismuth case. On 17 March, the trial begins against Sarkozy in the Bygmalion case for the illegal financing of his 2012 election campaign.

- On 4 March the CJR acquits the former Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, for crimes of corruption and influence peddling in the sale of arms to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. However, the court hands down a two-year suspended prison sentence to his former Defence Minister François Leotard for the same crimes in the Karachi case.

- On 18 March the National Union of Students of France (UNEF), the main student union close to the Socialist Party (PS), admits it held meetings "for white students only," sparking a national controversy over possible "anti-white racism."

- On 27 March the official report prepared by the commission led by the historian Vincent Duclert at the request of the Elysee Palace concludes that François Mitterrand's foreign policy bears an "overwhelming" responsibility for the crisis in Rwanda in 1994, which led to the genocide of 800,000 people.
- On 31 March the President Emmanuel Macron announces a four-week nationwide lockdown, faced with the rise in Covid-19 infections.

Italy

- On 14 March the former Prime Minister Enrico Letta is elected secretary general of the PD after Nicola Zingaretti's resignation on 4 March.

- On 15 March Italy returns to a strict nationwide Covid-19 lockdown.

- On 19 March the Prime Minister Mario Draghi approves 32 billion euros in stimulus measures to address the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus.

- On 30 March an Italian Navy officer is arrested after being caught delivering secret Italian and NATO documents to a Russian military attaché from the Rus-

sian embassy in Rome. On 31 March, the Foreign Minister Luigi Di announces the immediate expulsion of two officials from the Russian embassy.

- On 31 March Italy extends restrictions against the pandemic until 30 April.

Malta

- On 30 March Karol Aquilina resigns as the shadow Justice Minister, pending a court case over a driving incident from 2019.

Slovenia

- On 30 March the Parliament Speaker Igor Zorcic survives a confidence vote proposed by the SDS of Prime Minister Janez Jansa, New Slovenia (NSi) and the Modern Centre Party (SMC) after Zorcic and two other MPs left the SMC on 26 March over differences regarding the party's role in the government. The result of the motion prompts opposition parties to call for early elections.

Croatia

- On 16 March Austria, Croatia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Latvia ask the EC for a "correction mechanism" for EU vaccine distribution.
- On 31 March Croatia introduces tighter Covid-19 restrictions.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 10 March the Parliament of the Republika Srpska calls for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, the international body overseeing the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Montenegro

- On 4 March Montenegro receives a first batch of the Chinese Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 11 March the ECHR rules that Montenegro's Special Police Unit used excessive force in the repression of opposition protests in October 2015.
- On 14 March the President Milo Djukanovic's DPS party loses the local elections in Niksic against the coalition headed by the pro-Serbian Democratic Front (DF).

Serbia

- On 27-28 March almost 20,000 citizens from neighbouring countries are vaccinated against Covid-19 in Serbia.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 12 March two suspects charged with electoral fraud and bribery are detained in a case involving the husband of the Foreign Minister Meliza Haradinaj Stublla. On the same day, the mayor of Klokot Bozidar Dejanovic is arrested in connection with the case.
- On 22 March Albin Kurti is sworn in as Prime Minister.
- On 29 March Kosovo begins vaccination against Covid-19 after receiving its first AstraZeneca vaccines through the Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access Fund (COVAX).
- On 29 March Srpska Lista (Serbian nationalist) brings the government of Albin Kurti before the Constitutional Court, demanding their ministers in the cabinet be increased from one to two, in accordance with the representation guarantees laid down in Kosovo's Constitution.

North Macedonia

- On 3 March the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev survives a confidence vote that he requested himself, faced with declarations by the opposition Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE, conservative), that it would soon have enough support to defeat the current government led by the Social Democratic Union of North Macedonia (SDSM).

Albania

- On 1 March the EC asks the EU27 to call the first intergovernmental conference to formally begin accession negotiations with Albania.

Greece

- On 16 March exploratory talks between Greece and Turkey continue in Athens, following on from those held in

Istanbul in January, to normalize the situation in the eastern Mediterranean.

- On 20 March Greece, Spain, Italy, Malta and Cyprus sign a joint statement in Athens asking the EU to ensure the fair distribution among states of the responsibility for managing migration. On 29 March, the Commission allocates 155 million euros to Greece to build new reception centres in Lesbos and Chios.

Turkey

- On 4 March the trial in absentia resumes against the 26 suspects charged with the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.
- On 8 March Levent Gultekin, a host at Halk TV, is attacked in Istanbul in what has become a series of assaults against journalists critical of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, far-right).
- On 10 March Turkey and Russia inaugurate the construction works of the third reactor of Turkey's first nuclear plant in Akkuyu.
- On 17 March the Chief Prosecutor files a case with the Constitutional Court to outlaw the pro-Kurdish HDP. On the same day, the Parliament strips the HDP deputy Omer Faruk Gergerliglu of his seat, after the court decides to uphold his two-year prison sentence for spreading terrorist propaganda.
- On 20 March Turkey withdraws from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).
- On 20 March Recep Tayyip Erdogan sacks the governor of the central bank, Naci Agbal, after four months in the post. On 29 March the deputy governor Murat Cetinkaya is also sacked. The two dismissals lead the Turkish lira to drop sharply against the dollar.
- On 23 March more than 150 people are arrested suspected of ties with the cleric Fetullah Gulen.
- On 24 March President Erdogan announces that drafting will begin of the new Constitution in mid-2022.

Cyprus

- On 10 March the government approves the bill for the creation of a Min-

istry of Culture separate from the Education Ministry.

Syria

- On 1 March Israel attacks Iranian positions close to Damascus after the Israeli Prime Minister accuses Iran of being behind an explosion on 26 February on an Israeli ship in the Gulf of Oman. On 16 March, Syria reports more Israeli missile attacks close to Damascus, fired from the Golan Heights.
- On 12 March the European Parliament votes by an absolute majority to maintain the programme of sanctions on Syria while there are no noteworthy advances towards peace or democratization in the country.
- On 15 March it is 10 years since the beginning of the civil war, which has already left almost 400,000 people dead and six million internally displaced people and refugees.
- On 26 March the 5th International Conference on Syria begins, which ends on 30 March with a commitment from the international community to donate 5.3 billion euros.
- On 28 March Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria conduct a raid on the al-Hol camp, home to some 62,000 people, some of whom are linked, to differing degrees, to Daesh. They arrest the jihadist leader Saad al-Iraqi.

Lebanon

- On 3-4 March new protests condemn the failure of the political system to revert the country's worst economic crisis in 30 years. The protests intensify during the month with the devaluation of the Lebanese lira to all-time lows.
- On 17 March the activist and outspoken Hezbollah critic Kinda Khatib is released after nine months in prison on charges of collaborating with Israel.

Jordan

- On 15 March the in Amman police disperse demonstrations against the severe measures in place since 9 March to address the sharpest increase in Covid-19 infections since the beginning of the pandemic and following the death of six people due to oxygen shortages

in Salt Hospital, which led to the dismissal on 13 March of the Health Minister Nathir Obeidat.

- On 17 March the State Security Court sentences six people to death after finding them guilty for the kidnapping and torture in October 2020 of a young man in Zarqa, as revenge for a confrontation between gangs.

Egypt

- On 2 March coinciding with the signing of a bilateral military cooperation agreement, Egypt announces its support for Sudan's proposal to develop a Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiation mechanism through an international quartet, aimed at getting Ethiopia to sign a binding agreement and avoid an imminent and unilateral filling of the dam. The EU and UAE offer to mediate.
- On 4 March Egypt begins its Covid-19 immunization campaign with Sinopharm and AstraZeneca vaccines.
- On 10 March Egypt announces its intention to sign an agreement with Libya and Chad to build a road that links the three countries, as part of a multi-sectoral cooperation strategy with its neighbours which counterbalances Turkish influence.
- On 12 March Turkey and Egypt resume diplomatic ties, which have been frozen since the fall of Mohamed Morsi.
- On 23 March traffic through the Suez Canal is blocked after the Taiwanese container ship Ever Given runs aground. On 29 March, the ship is freed, thereby ending the canal's worst crisis since the Yom Kippur war.
- On 30 March an Egyptian court drops charges against 20 NGOs accused in 2011 of illegal foreign funding. The decision follows another similar ruling in favour of 20 NGOs in December 2020.

Libya

- On 10 March the Parliament approves the Government of National Unity (GNU) of the Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, which succeeds the Government of National Accord (GNA) of Fayez al-Sarraj.
- On 10 March around 120 migrants are released, most of them Egyptian, af-

ter being held and tortured by traffickers in Bani Walid.

- On 24 March the military commander and Khalifa Haftar ally Mahmoud al-Werfalli, wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), is assassinated in Benghazi.

Tunisia

- On 13 March Tunisia begins vaccination against Covid-19 with the Russian Sputnik-V vaccine.
- On 22 March Tunisia becomes the first Maghreb country to launch its own satellite, Challenge-1, from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.
- On 31 March there are clashes in Tataouine during protests calling for the implementation of clauses in the 2017 el-Kamur agreement and the resignation of the provincial governor.

Algeria

- On 2 March the French President Emmanuel Macron recognizes that the Algerian national leader Ali Boumendjel was "tortured and murdered" by the French army in 1957, during the Algerian War of Independence, following a report drafted by the historian Benjamin Stora, at the request of the Elysee.
- On 12 February Algeria announces that it will receive 40 million doses of the Sputnik-V vaccine and that it has reached a deal with Russia to manufacture the vaccine on Algerian soil.

Morocco

- On 14 March the newspaper Akhbar al-Yaoum, which was critical of the Royal Palace, shuts down, citing difficulties arising from the 2018 jailing of its former director and owner Taoufik Bouachrine and "harassment" from the government along with its refusal provide the aid given to other media during the pandemic.
- On 22 March Mohammed VI appoints Ahmed Rahhou president of the Competition Council; Zineb el-Adaoui, the first president of the Court of Accounts; Mohamed Abdennabaoui, the first president of the Court of Cassation; and Moulay el-Hassan Daki as the King's Prosecutor.

- On 23 March the historian Maati Monjib is provisionally released after a 20-day hunger strike. Monjib had been held in custody since 29 December 2020 in two trials, one of them related with a project led by the Dutch NGO Free Press Unlimited to promote the StoryMaker application that enables anonymous citizen journalism.
- On 30 March the Prime Minister Saadeddine Othmani blocks the law on legalizing cannabis, two weeks after the government unveils a plan to allow the therapeutic use of marijuana, further deepening the internal divisions in the ruling Justice and Development Party (PJD, Islamist).
- On 31 March Morocco is one of the top ten countries in the world in terms of vaccination rates, after having immunized 12% of its population in two months, mostly with AstraZeneca through the Indian Vaccine Maitri programme.

Mauritania

- On 22 March Mauritania reestablishes diplomatic ties with Qatar after the Gulf States end their blockade on the Middle Eastern country.
- On 26 March Mauritania begins vaccination against Covid-19 with the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine.

EU

- On 1 March the 2017 EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Association Agreement enters into force.
- On 2 March the EU Court of Justice (CJEU) rules that the regulations Poland adopted in 2018 for appointing Supreme Court judges violate EU Law.
- On 4 March the Austrian and Danish prime ministers travel to Israel to formalize a strategy for the joint production of a Covid-19 vaccine, in a decision that breaks with Europe's joint vaccine procurement strategy and which adds to requests from Poland, Hungary and Slovakia for Chinese or Russian vaccines which have not been approved by the EMA.
- On 3 March the Council of the EU approves 330 billion euros for local and regional projects through the structural funds to reduce the impact of the pandemic in the 2021-2027 multiannual framework.

- On 3 March the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban decides to withdraw his party, Fidezs, from the People's group in the European Parliament immediately after the bloc approved a statue reform that allows the expulsion of parliamentary delegations, designed specifically to address the growing discrepancies between Orban and the European people's parties.

- On 3 March the Council approves the regulations governing the cohesion policy, with a budget of 330 billion euros for 2021-2027.
- On 12 March the European Interior Ministers decide to restrict visas for countries that do not cooperate on the readmission of illegal migrants.
- On 15 March the EC announces the opening of infringement proceedings against the United Kingdom for London's unilateral decision in early March to extend the grace period before beginning Irish Sea border checks until October.
- On 22 March the Council of the EU approves sanctions for human rights violations against China, North Korea, Libya, Chechnya, South Sudan and Eritrea.
- On 24 March the EU tightens its mechanism for controlling vaccine exports to ensure pharmaceutical companies comply with the contracts they have signed with the Union, coinciding with the discovery in Anagni in Italy of 29 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine ready for export to the United Kingdom and other destinations, despite the company not having complied with supply terms with the EU.
- On 30 March the WHO and the EU unveil a high-level initiative to create a treaty that addresses global pandemics through international cooperation, backed by France, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Serbia, Albania and Tunisia, as well as 16 other countries.
- On 31 March the Commission take Poland to the CJEU over the country's disciplinary procedures against judges and the lifting of their immunity under Polish law.

Arab League

- On 10 March Russia, Turkey and Qatar advocate a political solution to the Syrian war during talks in Doha, which includes the end of Syria's suspension

from Arab League membership, in place since 2011.

April 2021

Throughout April, most European countries begin gradually easing lockdown restrictions, faced with the moderate downturn in infections and the progress in vaccination rollouts. In Portugal, a court rules that the former Prime Minister Jose Socrates must stand trial. France introduces tougher anti-terror legislation. In Italy, Mario Draghi unveils a post-pandemic recovery plan. Slovenia becomes embroiled in a diplomatic conflict with Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani is elected President. In North Macedonia, the former secret police chief is sentenced. Albania holds parliamentary elections. In Turkey, 10 admirals are arrested and the US recognizes the Armenian genocide. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) suspends Syria. Lebanon announces the extension of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In Jordan, the former Crown Prince Hamzah Bin Hussein is arrested. In Tunisia, President Saied refused to ratify the creation of the Constitutional Court. The Protests continue in Algeria.

Portugal

- On 9 April the courts decide that the former Prime Minister Jose Socrates is to stand trial on charges of falsifying documents and money laundering in Operation Marquis, an investigation into his alleged fraudulent connections with the former head of Banco Espirito Santo.
- On 18 April hundreds demonstrate in Lisbon against a request to outlaw the far-right Chega party, set in motion by the former socialist presidential candidate Ana Gomes.

France

- On 8 April the Parliament adopts a law to protect regional languages.
- On 8 April the President Emmanuel Macron announces that he will replace the National School of Administration (ENA) with the Public Service Institute

(ISP), which will be more flexible, diverse and open to society.

- On 15 April the Parliament approves the National Security law, pushed forwards by Emmanuel Macron, which sparked protests in late 2020 by journalists and civil society organizations.
- On 21 April 20 retired generals condemn the “disintegration” of France due to a failure to uphold republican values and the risk of a “racial war.”
- On 23 April a police employee is stabbed in the throat and killed in Rambouillet, in the Ile-de-France, by a radicalized Tunisian, who is shot dead by police. After the attack, the government announces tougher anti-terror legislation.
- On 28 April France arrests seven former members of the Red Brigades and other radical groups convicted in Italy for terrorism.

Italy

- On 1 April the government approves a decree in an effort to ban big ships from the waters around Venice, to protect the city’s foundations from erosion.
- On 1 April the ship Open Arms docks in Pozzallo with 209 migrants.
- On 3, 4 and 5 April Italy imposes another lockdown to prevent an increase in Covid-19 infections during Easter week.
- On 5 April the coast guard rescues 160 migrants trying to reach Lampedusa.
- On 6 April there are demonstrations against the government’s Covid-19 restrictions. On 12 April, clashes break out in Rome between demonstrators from the lo Apro (I Open) movement and militants from the far-right Casapound group.
- On 26 April 99 members of the Sacra Corona Unita’s Strisciuglio clan are arrested in an operation in Bari.
- On 26 April the gradual opening begins of activity suspended due to the pandemic.
- On 26-27 April the Prime Minister Mario Draghi presents his 221.5-billion-euro post-pandemic recovery plan to the Parliament, which has been previously negotiated with the EC.

Malta

- On 7 April the government announces its calendar for the country’s pro-

gressive reactivation following a drop in Covid-19 infections.

- On 20 April the CJEU rules in favour of Malta’s system for appointing judges, in which the Prime Minister can participate in their designation, thereby dismissing an objection filed by the Repubblica association.
- On 29 April the European Parliament call for those people implicated in the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia to be tried and highlights the need for guaranteeing press freedoms in Malta.

Slovenia

- On 12 April the Bosnian Presidency summons the Slovenian ambassador in Sarajevo over statements allegedly made by the Slovenian President Borut Pahor and an alleged non-paper sent to the EU by the Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa in which a proposal was made to “redraw” the borders of the Balkans and “dissolve” Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- On 27 April thousands gather in Ljubljana to condemn the authoritarian drift of Janez Jansa’s government.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 7 April at least 55 migrants in quarantine for possible Covid-19 infections escape from the Miral reception centre in Velika Kladusa.
- On 8 April Jovan Divjak, the Serbian general who fought with the Bosnian troops to defend Sarajevo against the Bosnian Serb seige in 1992, dies.

Montenegro

- On 8 April the government postpones the approval of a law that would facilitate obtaining citizenship, following protests by nationalist organizations.
- On 20 April the police arrest Slobodan Kascelan, the alleged boss of the so-called Kavac drug gang from Kotor.
- On 26 April the Economy Minister Branko Vujovic is arrested in connection with guarantees given to the bankrupt Podgorica Aluminium Plant (KAP) in 2009.
- On 28 April Zdravko Krivokapic announces that his government will form a

commission to negotiate the dispute with Croatia over the Prevlaka peninsula.

Serbia

- On 10 April thousands gather in Belgrade to call for an “ecological uprising” against environmental pollution and construction works next to rivers.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 2 April Vetevendosje’s parliamentary majority proposes an amendment to the Election Law to allow the diaspora to vote in embassies instead of by post.
- On 4 April the Parliament elects Vjosa Osmani, from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK, liberal nationalist), as President of Kosovo.

North Macedonia

- On 13 April the former secret police chief Saso Mijalkov is convicted for abuse of power and the illegal procurement of surveillance equipment.

Albania

- On 8 April Tirana-Rinas airport is brought to a standstill because of an air traffic controllers strike demanding salary hikes.
- On 19 April five people are stabbed by a man in a mosque in Tirana.
- On 25 April Albania holds legislative elections won by Edi Rama’s Socialist Party (PS) with 48.62% of the votes, followed by Lulzim Basha’s Democratic Party (PD), which took 39.47% of the votes.

Greece

- On 2 April six vessels carrying 300 people try to leave Turkish shores and reach Lesbos without Turkish patrols making any attempt to stop them, sparking yet another confrontation with Greece.
- On 9 April the journalist Giorgos Karaivaz, a specialist in criminal investigation, is assassinated in Athens.
- On 24 April the eviction begins of the Kara Tepe-1 migrant camp, in Lesbos.

- On 26 April the European Parliament strips the MEP Ioannis Lagos from the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn Party of his immunity over his imprisonment for forming and running a criminal organization.

Turkey

- El 1 April the Council of State rules that the stricter regulations on issuing press accreditation, introduced in 2018, breach media freedom.
- On 5 April 10 retired navy admirals are arrested for criticizing the country's possible withdrawal from the Montreux Convention, which regulates the passage between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and praising the army's role as guarantor of the Constitution and the secular State.
- On 7 April 38 people are sentenced to life imprisonment and a further hundred to between six and 16 years in jail in the large-scale trial for the 2016 attempted coup.
- On 8 April Turkey summons the Italian ambassador in Ankara after the Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi describes Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a "dictator" over the diplomatic incident known as *sofagate*, in which the EC President Ursula Von der Leyen had to sit on a sofa set apart from the armchairs reserved for the European Council President Charles Michel and Erdogan himself, during a visit to Ankara on 6 April to offer Turkey a modernization of the Customs Union, mobility facilities and aid for integrating Syrian refugees in exchange for easing tensions in the eastern Mediterranean and compliance with the 2015 Migration Agreement. On 11 April, Turkey announces the suspension of several contracts with Italian companies.
- On 13 April the ECHR condemns Turkey for the arrest of the journalist Ahmet Altan for his alleged participation in the 2016 coup attempt. On 14 April, the Court of Cassation orders Altan's release.
- On 21 April President Erdogan replaces Ruhsar Pekcan as Trade Minister, appointing Mehmet Mus, after it is confirmed that Pekcan's family-owned company was favoured in the sale of medical supplies to the Ministry.
- On 21 April the US removes Turkey from its F-35 fighter jet programme after having suspended its participation in

2019, when Turkey purchased the Russian S-400 missile system.

- On 24 April the US recognizes the death of more than a million and a half Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 as "genocide."
- On 26 April Turkey announces that it will produce the Russian Sputnik-V Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 26 April the trial begins against 108 HDP members, including Figen Yuksekdag and Selahattin Demirtas – jailed since 2016 –, for instigating the 2014 protests against Ankara's failure to act in the Daesh siege on the Syrian Kurdish city of Kobani.
- On 26 April arrest warrants are issued for 532 people with ties to Fethullah Gulen and the 2016 coup attempt.
- On 29 April a new curfew enters into force until 17 May, to halt Covid-19 infections.

Cyprus

- On 5 April the government presents its supplementary budget of 250 million euros to address the consequences of the pandemic.
- On 29 April a new attempt in Geneva to unblock four years of paralysis in the Cypriot reunification talks ends without an agreement.

Syria

- On 4 April the SDF agrees to supply oil to areas controlled by the Syrian regime in exchange for a commitment from Damascus to allow imports of basic goods to areas controlled by Syrian Kurdish forces.
- On 8 April Syria blames Israel for a missile attack close to Damascus.
- On 21 April Bashar al-Assad appoints Muhammad Issam Hazima governor of the central bank to replace Hazem Karfoul, amid continued depreciation of the pound.
- On 22 April Syria receives its first batch of 256,800 doses of Covid-19 vaccines, through the COVAX mechanism. On 24 April, Syria receives its first 150,000 doses of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine.
- On 21 April despite Russian, Chinese, and Iranian opposition, the OPCW suspends Syria's rights and privileges

for the repeated use of chlorine gas and the nerve agent sarin against civilians.

- On 21 April clashes break out in Qamishli after an attack by the National Defence Forces (NDF) on a checkpoint manned by Kurdish security forces.

Lebanon

- On 12 April Lebanon announces the extension of its EEZ, despite the ongoing dispute with Israel over the demarcation of territorial waters, which are rich in gas reserves. On 14 April, the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale arrives in Beirut to reactivate negotiations.

Jordan

- On 3 April the former Crown Prince and Abdullah II's half-brother Hamzah Bin Hussein is arrested, along with another 20 people, for his alleged involvement in a plot against "the stability" of the kingdom. On 10 April, the King and his half-brother appear together to commemorate the 100th anniversary since the founding of the kingdom and after the Royal House confirms Prince Hamzah's loyalty. On 22 April, the State Security Court releases 16 suspects in the alleged plot.

Egypt

- On 3 April the Parliament gives its preliminary approval to a bill that introduces tougher sentences for female genital mutilation, coinciding with the death of the writer Nawal el-Saadawi, who fought against this practice, and of which she herself was a victim.
- On 5 April Egypt and Sudan conclude a military exercise in Merowe, a day after both countries resume talks with Ethiopia in Kinshasa on the GERD, which end on 6 April without an agreement.
- On 19 April the security forces kill three Daesh members linked with the execution of the Christian businessman Nabil Habashi Salama, accused by the terrorist group of collaborating with security forces in Sinai.

Libya

- On 1 April Ali Mahmoud Hassan is dismissed as chairman of the Investment

Authority, which controls the Libyan sovereign wealth fund, who has been criticized for his lack of transparency.

- On 10 April Libya begins vaccination against Covid-19 with the Russian Sputnik-V vaccine.
- On 14 April the Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibah announces during a visit to Turkey that he will lift visa requirements for Turkish citizens to foster Turkish investment in Libya.
- On 27 April the Ocean Viking rescues 236 migrants off the coast of Libya. A day later the Libyan coast guard reports the interception of another 108 migrants.

Tunisia

- On 2 April the government announces the death of three terrorists, among them a prominent member of the Daesh-linked Jund al-Khilafah group (Soldiers of the Caliphate), in Kasserine.
- On 3 April the President Kais Saied refuses to sign in the bill on the formation of the Constitutional Court, saying that the Constitution specifies that the High Court must be created in the year following the first legislative elections, i.e., in 2014.
- On 13 April clashes break out between the police and journalists who have been protesting since 6 April against the Prime Minister Hichem Mchichi's appointment of Kamel Ben Younes as director-general of the Tunis Afrique Presse.

Algeria

- On 1 April the military court of Blida sentences the former head of interior security Wassini Bouazza to 16 years in prison for corruption.
- On 4 April the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune removes an amendment to the nationality law presented in March, under which Algerians from the diaspora accused of acts that are "harmful to the State" can be stripped of their citizenship.
- On 5-6 April the National Council of the Social Forces Front (FFS) and the Forces of the Democratic Alternative Alliance (FDA) announce their boycott of June's legislative elections, claiming they fail to meet acceptable conditions.

- On 6 April Morocco confirms that the former leader of the National Liberation Front (FLN) Amar Saadani has sought refuge in the country after leaving France fearing extradition to Algeria, where he has a number of pending cases in connection with investigations into the entourage of the former President Bouteflika and after defending Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

▪ On 7 April a nationwide strike by healthcare workers demands improvements in the sector.

▪ On 7 April 23 prisoners held in preventive detention since 3 April for their participation in the HIRAK Movement's anti-government protests, which have been taking place since February, begin a hunger strike. On 16 April, thousands gather in Algiers to call for their release.

▪ On 12 April a postal strike begins calling for the payment of delayed salaries, which continues for several days. On 12-13 April, teaching staff begin a nationwide strike demanding better welfare and working conditions.

Morocco

▪ On 14 April the Economy and Finance Minister Mohamed Benchaaboun meets with Mohammed VI to present the guidelines for the future generalization of basic compulsory health insurance in Morocco.

EU

▪ On 12 April the Council extends sanctions until April 2022 for human rights violations in Iran and adds eight people and three entities to the list for their role in the repression of the protest movement in 2019.

▪ On 20 April the EMA endorses the use of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine against Covid-19.

▪ On 27 April the European Parliament ratifies the post-Brexit EU-UK trade deal.

May 2021

Various European countries lift Covid-19 restrictions with the vaccine rollout progressing. In Spain, Madrid holds early elections and troops are deployed in Ceuta faced with mass migrant arrivals.

France enters into a crisis with the United Kingdom. Migrant arrivals surge in Italy. In Slovenia, the Prime Minister survives a confidence vote and the Justice Minister resigns. Croatia holds local elections. In Albania, a former chief prosecutor is sentenced to prison and the US bars the former Prime Minister Sali Berisha from entering US territory. Authorities in Greece report the country's biggest wildfire in decades. There are arrests in Turkey following protests against a decree that prohibits filming police interventions and the new Taksim Mosque in Istanbul is inaugurated. Cyprus and Syria hold elections. In Lebanon, workers stage a one-day strike. In Libya the Presidency Council is attacked.

Portugal

▪ On 1 May the state of emergency for Covid-19 is lifted.

Spain

▪ On 4 May Madrid holds early regional elections called on 10 March by the regional president Isabel Diaz Ayuso (PP), thereby avoiding a confidence vote from her government partner, Cs, and PSOE. The PP wins, increasing its seats from 30 to 65. More Madrid (leftist) overtakes PSOE as the second biggest party, Cs disappears from the hemicycle and after the poor results for United-We Can (leftist), the party's candidate and former Social Rights Minister Pablo Iglesias steps down from politics.

▪ On 9 May the lifting of the state of alarm for Covid-19, decreed in March 2020, enters into force.

▪ On 18 May Spain deploys troops on the border with Morocco in Ceuta, faced with the arrival of thousands of migrants, amid diplomatic tensions between both countries over the presence of the leader of the Polisario Front in Spain, to be treated for coronavirus. The EU calls on Morocco to stand by its commitment to halt irregular immigration into Europe.

France

▪ On 3 May the progressive lifting of Covid-19 restrictions on mobility enters into effect.

- On 6 May the United Kingdom sends patrol vessels to Jersey following French threats to block the port and cut off the power supply to the British territory, because of a dispute over fishing rights in British waters following Brexit, which has prompted flotilla protests by French fishermen in the English Channel.
- On 16 May Marine Le Pen is accused by the French anti-fraud unit of embezzling 6.8 million euros from the European Parliament for her party, National Rally (AN, far-right) and its predecessor, the National Front (FN).
- On 19 May 35,000 police officers gather in Paris to demand more resources and a tougher response to the aggression they face.
- On 28 May the President Emmanuel Macron recognizes France's responsibility in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

Italy

- On 9-10 May more than 2,000 migrants arrive in Lampedusa.
- On 14 May the leader of the League (populist) Matteo Salvini is cleared of charges of kidnapping 131 migrants when he refused to allow the ship they were travelling in to dock. The incident lasted for several days in 2019, while he was the Interior Minister.

Malta

- On 10 May restaurants partially reopen as part of the measures to reactivate the economy and ease restrictions due to the pandemic.

Slovenia

- On 26 May the Prime Minister Janez Jansa survives an impeachment motion tabled by the parliamentary opposition over his handling of the pandemic and press freedom violations. On 28 May, thousands of people rally in Ljubljana against Jansa's government.
- On 27 May the Justice Minister Lilijana Kozlovic resigns in protest against her government's decision to annul the appointment of two Slovenian prosecutors to the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

Croatia

- On 16 and 30 May Croatia holds local elections. The environmental activist Tomislav Tomasevic, leader of the Mozemo (We Can) platform, wins in Zagreb.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 17 May Republika Srpska and Serbia begin construction of the Buk Bijela hydroelectric dam, despite opposition from Bosnia's state government.
- On 26 May the former President of Republika Srpska Radovan Karadzic is transferred to the United Kingdom to serve his life sentence for crimes against humanity, handed down in March 2019 by the ICTY.
- On 31 May the former Interior Minister Sadik Ahmetovic is sentenced to six months in prison for abuse of power.

Montenegro

- On 19 May the President Milo Djukanovic refuses to ratify the Prosecution Law reforms approved in the Parliament and accuses the ruling majority of exerting political pressure on the prosecution.

Serbia

- On 16 May the municipal boards of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS, right-wing) call for the resignation of the Defence Minister, Nebojsa Stefanovic and Health Minister Zlatibor Loncar over alleged corruption and amid dissension in the party's leadership.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 19 May the President Vjosa Osmani sacks 12 ambassadors in accordance with the Foreign Ministry's proposal to recall all Kosovo's politically appointed diplomats.

Albania

- On 5 May the Constitutional Court abolishes the provision in the penal code that deems rallies held without police authorization illegal.

- On 19 May the US announces it is barring the former President and former Prime Minister Sali Berisha from entering US territory over accusations of "significant corruption."

Greece

- The Greek coast guard rescues 170 migrants close to the Peloponnese.
- On 3 May bars and restaurants reopen after a six-month closure due to Covid-19.
- On 19 May the most serious wildfire in the last three decades is reported in the Geraneia mountains, burning 7,000 hectares in three days.

Turkey

- On 1 May during a Workers' Day rally, hundreds are arrested in clashes with the police, coinciding with the ministerial decree banning citizens from filming or taking photographs of police officers during demonstrations or public events.
- On 18 May the Interior Minister Sulayman Soylu files a criminal complaint against the Turkish mafia boss Sedat Peker for "insults and defamation," following Peker's video posts accusing Soylu of corruption.
- On 19 May the European Parliament proposes suspending Turkey's stalled accession talks until the country reverses its domestic and foreign policy trends.
- On 29 May the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan inaugurates the new Taksim Mosque located in a square that is a symbol of secular Istanbul and stage of the 2013 Gezi Park protests.
- On 30 May Turkey reports that 1,162 terrorists have been "neutralized" in military operations in Syria and Iraq so far in 2021.

Cyprus

- On 10 May the document that certifies Covid-19 vaccination needed to access indoor public spaces enters into effect.
- On 30 May Cyprus holds parliamentary elections in which the Democratic Rally (DISY, conservative) of Averof Neophytou and the President Nicos Anastasiades wins with 27.8% of the votes and 17 seats.

Syria

- On 1 May Covid-19 vaccination begins in the rebel stronghold of Idlib, with doses of AstraZeneca.
- On 5 and 10 May Syria condemns attacks in Latakia and Quneitra, respectively, as part of Israel's systematic bombing campaign of Iranian soldiers in Syria.
- On 19 May the SDF opens fire on civilians in two majority Arab towns in Hasakah during protests against the decision announced two days previous by the Kurds to increase fuel prices amid widespread shortages of essential services. The incidents continue throughout the month.
- On 26 May the regime holds presidential elections in areas under its control. Candidates are Bashar al-Assad, Abdullah Sallum Abdullah, former deputy cabinet minister and candidate from the Socialist Unionist Party and Mahmoud Marai, from the Democratic Arab Socialist Union, after, on 3 May, the Constitutional Court annulled another 48 aspiring candidates. Al-Assad is declared the winner with 95.1% of the votes. On 27 May, the EU extends its sanctions for another year, believing the elections to be fraudulent.

Lebanon

- On 5 May the media reports that the central bank's reserves have dropped by a total of 513 million dollars, endangering subsidies on basic necessities.
- On 6 May the French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian travels to Lebanon for talks with leaders aimed at ending the country's political paralysis, where there is still no government since Hassan Diab's resignation in August 2020 following the explosions at the Beirut port.
- On 26 May a nationwide strike denounces the government's impotence in the face of the country's worst economic crisis in the last 30 years, which has already left more than 50% of the population below the poverty line.

Jordan

- On 17 May the Parliament unanimously calls for the expulsion of the

Israeli ambassador over the current fighting between Israel and Gaza. On 25 May, Jordan summons the Israeli ambassador over the arrest of two Jordanians on the border between the two countries.

Egypt

- On 4 May Egypt confirms the purchase from France of 30 fighter jets for 4.75 billion euros, as part of an anti-terror strategic partnership.
- On 26 May Egypt and Sudan begin the "Nile Protectors" military exercise, the same day that Kenya announces it has signed a military cooperation agreement with Egypt, amid an escalation with Ethiopia over the filling of the GERD.

Libya

- On 5 May the United Nations delivers its Legal Committee's proposal for holding elections in December to the LPDF.
- On 7 May the GNU announces the creation of sovereign funds for the reconstruction of Tripoli, Benghazi and Derna.
- On 8 May the Presidency Council in Tripoli is attacked by militias loyal to the former GNA Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, calling for the resignation of the head of the Intelligence Service Hussein al-Aib – appointed the previous day and considered an ally to General Khalifa Haftar – and of the Foreign Minister Najla Mangush, over her opposition to the presence of foreign troops in Libya.

Tunisia

- On 4 May Salmane Rezig, leader of the Daesh-linked jihadist group Ajnad al-Khilafa al-Ifrikiya (Soldiers of the Caliphate in Africa), is sentenced to more than 35 years in jail.
- On 17 May the main suspect of the Bardo Museum attack in 2015 is arrested on a migrant vessel in the Gulf of Hammamet.
- On 6 May 38 migrants are rescued off the coast of Sfax. On 17 May, at least 50 migrants drown in waters near Sfax. On 25 May, around a hundred migrants are intercepted in waters near Zarzis.

On 29 May, the authorities announce the rescue of 158 migrants off the coast of Sfax.

- On 31 May the blogger Salim Jabali is arrested for insulting the President Kais Saied.

Algeria

- On 2 May a fire fighters' demonstration in Algiers calling for better wages and working conditions ends in clashes with the security forces.
- On 5 May the activist Amira Bouraoui is sentenced to two years' imprisonment for offending Islam and insulting the President in the context of the anti-government demonstrations that have been taking place weekly since 2019.
- On 18 May the High Security Council includes the Movement for the Self-determination of the Kabylie (MAK) and Rachad Movement on the country's list of terrorist organizations.
- On 30 May the High Council of Magistracy dismisses the judge Sadedin Merzoug, a figure close to the Hirak movement and outspoken critic of the lack of independence of the judiciary.

Morocco

- On 13 May Mohammed VI grants pardon to 810 prisoners on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, including 17 jailed over the Al Hoceima protests, which began in 2016.
- On 27 May the Parliament approves a bill to legalize growing and selling cannabis for medical and industrial purposes.

EU

- On 5 May the United Kingdom grants the EU representative in London ambassador status, thereby putting an end to the first diplomatic incident after Brexit, which began in January.
- On 9 May the Commission announces that it will not renew its contract with the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca after June over the company's failure to meet delivery targets.
- On 9 May the Conference on the Future of Europe is launched, a joint undertaking of the Parliament, the

Council and the Commission aimed at adapting European legislation and treaties to the new challenges of the future, and which until 2022 will also involve civil society through a broad participatory process.

- On 11 May the Foreign Affairs Council announces a 28-billion-euro enlargement support package for the Balkans to counter the growing presence of China, Russia and Turkey.
- On 17 May Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia sign a memorandum formalizing their cooperation on a joint path towards EU membership.
- On 20 May the EU reopens its external borders to travellers from third countries with good Covid-19-related epidemiological situations.
- On 23 May the Ryanair flight between Athens and Vilnius is forced to land in Minsk while flying over Belarusian airspace to enable the arrest of the dissident journalist Roman Protasevich, sparking a crisis between the EU and Belarus and Russia.
- On 26 May Switzerland rejects the new institutional framework agreement with the EU, negotiations for which began in 2014.

June 2021

Portugal is the first country to receive the EU's approval for its recovery plan. The crisis continues between Spain and Morocco and the Spanish government pardons nine Catalan pro-independence leaders. France holds regional elections. In Italy, Forza Italia (FI, liberal conservative) and the League announce that they will join forces and run together in the coming elections. The ICC upholds the life sentence handed down to the former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic. Two former Serbian secret service heads are convicted by the ICC. The Albanian Parliament dismisses the country's President. Greece approves the labour reform bill. The Turkish Constitutional Court accepts the indictment on outlawing the HDP. The political and economic crisis in Lebanon continues to worsen. In Jordan, Abdullah II orders a reform of the political system. In Egypt, death sentenc-

es are upheld for 12 Muslim Brotherhood members. Berlin hosts the 2nd Conference on Libya. Algeria holds legislative elections. In Mauritania, the former President Ould Abdel Aziz is jailed.

Portugal

- On 16 June Portugal's recovery plan becomes the first to receive EC approval, thereby securing 16.6 billion euros in grants for the country from Europe's post-pandemic recovery fund.
- On 18 June the Lisbon City Hall admits to having sent personal data of protesters demonstrating outside embassies in 2011, following the controversy over the sending of data to the Russian Foreign Ministry on demonstrators rallying in support of the jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Spain

- On 13 June the Social Rights Minister Ione Belarra is elected leader of Podemos.
- On 22 June the government pardons nine Catalan pro-independence leaders, jailed over the self-determination referendum in 2017 and the unilateral declaration of Catalan independence.

France

- On 9 June bars, cafés and restaurants reopen and tourists are allowed entry with a Covid passport as part of the measures to ease the lockdown for Covid-19. On 17 June, face masks are no longer mandatory in open spaces. On 20 June, the curfew is brought to an end.
- On 20 and 27 June France holds regional elections, delayed since March because of the pandemic, in which the Gaullist, centre-right The Republicans (LR) party wins most votes, ahead of RN and LREM.

Italy

- On 1 June the Cosa Nostra boss Giovanni Brusca is released after serving 25 years in jail and having collaborated with the authorities.

- On 17 June the government publishes data that reveal that in the last year the number of migrant arrivals in Italy have tripled, standing at 18,170, as compared with 5,696 for the same period in 2020.
- On 22 June Silvio Berlusconi and Matteo Salvini agree that FI and the League are to run together for the 2023 elections.
- On 28 June the International Coalition against Daesh, meeting in Rome, decides to shift the main focus in its fight against terrorism to Africa.
- On 29 June the M5S co-founder Beppe Grillo's opposition to the candidacy of the former Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte to lead the party hampers efforts to revamp the party in order to overcome its internal crisis.

Malta

- On 23 June the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) includes Malta on its grey list of countries monitored for money laundering and terrorist financing.

Slovenia

- On 4 June the Parliament approves an amendment to the penal code, redefining the crime of rape to include sexual acts without explicit consent.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 8 June the ICC upholds the life sentence handed down in 2007 to the former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic for war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated between 1992 and 1995.

Serbia

- On 4 June Russia and Serbia announce the start of production in Serbia of the Sputnik-V Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 30 June Nikola Bozic, director of the Petnica Research Station, resigns following sexual harassment accusations from five former students.
- On 30 June Jovica Stanisic, the former state security chief, and his deputy, Franko Simatovic, are sentenced by the ICC to 12 years' imprisonment for supporting paramilitary death squads in the wars in Yugoslavia.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 15 June Serbia and Kosovo resume EU-mediated talks to normalize their relations.

North Macedonia

- On 10 June Russia reports the expulsion of the North Macedonian diplomat in response to a similar measure taken by Skopje on 18 May.

Albania

- On 9 June the Parliament approves the impeachment of the President Ilir Meta for violating the Constitution in his active participation in April's election campaign, and brings the case before the Constitutional Court for its final ruling.
- On 11 June Albania is elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Greece

- On 10 June thousands of Greeks march in Athens against a labour reform bill during a one-day nationwide strike. On 16 June, the Parliament approves the bill, presented by the Prime Minister Kiriakos Mitsotakis, with an absolute majority.
- On 17 June the EC gives Greece the go ahead for its recovery plan, opening the door to the 30.5-billion-euro disbursement the country has requested from the European recovery fund.

Turkey

- On 1 June the media reports that Selahaddin Gulen, the nephew of the cleric accused by Ankara of plotting the 2016 coup, was arrested in May by the Turkish intelligence service in Kenya.
- On 1 June Turkey eases Covid-19 restrictions faced with the drop in infections.
- On 3 June the coast guard releases the figures on rescues in the Aegean Sea, which amount to 5,369 migrants and asylum seekers so far this year.
- On 5 June the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces the discov-

ery of 135 billion m³ of natural gas in the Sakarya field, raising the total discovery in the Black Sea since 2020 to 540 billion m³.

- On 7 June the clean-up begins of an unprecedented outbreak of mucilage which, due to rising sea temperatures and contamination, has been affecting the Sea of Marmara and areas close to the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea in recent weeks.
- On 17 June a man is arrested after forcing his way into the HDP offices in Izmir and killing a worker there. The HDP accuses the AKP government of instigating the action.
- On 21 June the Constitutional Court accepts the Chief Prosecutor's request to start the trial to outlaw the HDP, the second biggest opposition party in the Parliament. The party is accused of acting as the political wing of the PKK terrorist organization.
- On 26 June the Gay Pride march in Istanbul ends with a police intervention and 35 arrests.

Syria

- On 1 June the SOHR sets the death toll since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011 to be 494,438, of which 159,774 were civilians.
- On 14 June more than a thousand people flee from Jabal al-Zawiya after the regime steps up its airstrikes on areas of Idlib under rebel and Turkish control.
- On 28 June the US carries out major strikes on Iranian militia positions on the Syria-Iraq border.

Lebanon

- On 1 June the World Bank estimates that the Lebanese financial crisis is one of the world's three worst since the mid-19th century, with a 40% fall in GDP.
- On 4 June the central bank says banks must allow customers to withdraw 400 dollars a month plus the equivalent in Lebanese pounds, after, on 3 June, its decision to stop all withdrawals sparked fierce protests.
- On 7 June several streets in Beirut, Sidon and Tripoli are blocked by demonstrators protesting against poor living conditions and electricity, fuel and medicine shortages.

▪ On 17 June the President Michel Aoun and the Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri accuse each other of boycotting the efforts of the Prime Minister Saad Hariri to form a government since October 2020. On the same day, a one-day nationwide strike protests against government incompetence and corruption.

- On 24 June France hosts a conference in support of the Lebanese army, in which 20 countries pledge aid in response to the Lebanese army's call for assistance to survive the economic collapse and guarantee the country's stability. More than 3,000 of its 80,000 soldiers have quit over salary cuts following the depreciation of the pound by 90% against the dollar and faced with inflation rates that have already reached 200% of GDP.
- On 25-26 June clashes increase in the anti-government demonstrations following yet another drop of the Lebanese pound to up to 17,500 to the dollar.
- On 30 June the Parliament approves a ration card law that allocates 556 million dollars to supporting vulnerable families and replaces the subsidy system.

Jordan

- On 5 June security forces clash in Amman with supporters of the lawmaker Osama al-Ajarma, expelled from the Parliament in May for insulting the security forces and inciting protests.
- On 10 June Abdullah II asks the former Prime Minister Samir Rifai to chair a 92-member committee to modernize the political and electoral system.

Egypt

- On 14 June the Court of Cassation upholds death sentences for 12 members of the Muslim Brotherhood as part of a large-scale trial involving hundreds of defendants following the 2013 anti-government protests.
- On 24 June the armies of Sudan and Egypt sign a bilateral cooperation agreement amid tensions that have brought the two countries together against Ethiopia over the filling of the GERD. On 12 June, Cairo makes a formal request for the UN Security Council to intervene in the dispute.

Libya

- On 12 June more than 1,000 migrants are returned to Libya in two operations, coinciding with the sea rescue of another 119 people.
- On 23 June Berlin hosts the 2nd Conference on Libya, in which the US and Germany push for more involvement in the country's democratization, to guarantee elections in December and the withdrawal of foreign troops and mercenaries.

Tunisia

- On 10 June the circulation of a video showing a man in police custody being beaten to death in Sidi Hassine, a day after the funeral of another man who died under the same circumstances, sparks protests and unrest against police brutality, which spread to other working-class neighbourhoods of the Tunisian capital during the week.
- On 14 and 24 June the coast guard rescues 110 and 267 migrants, respectively, adrift at sea.

Algeria

- On 1 June Algeria partially reopens its borders, which have been closed since March 2020 due to the pandemic.
- On 1 June the Court of Tebessa decides to keep the Hirak Movement lawyer Abderraouf Arslane in prison, accused of circulating a video about the May 1945 massacres in Kherrata, prompting the boycott of the legislative elections on 12 June. On the same day, the FDA parties reiterate their demands for the immediate release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.
- On 6 June the former Tourism and Craft Industry Minister Abdelkader Benmessaoud is arrested in connection with a corruption case involving the businessman Mahieddine Tahkout, currently being held in detention.
- On 10 June the amendment to the Penal Code is introduced that broadens the definition of terrorism and creates a list of people and entities considered to be terrorist organizations.
- On 12 June Algeria holds early legislative elections that are boycotted by a large part of the opposition, with a

turnout of a little over 23% and amid weekly anti-government protests that have been taking place since 2019, parallel to an increase in repressive measures. The pro-system FLN party wins, securing 98 of the 407 seats, followed by the independent candidates (84 seats) and the Islamist Movement of Society for Peace (MSP, 65 seats).

- On 16 June Menad Nouba, the former head of the National Gendarmerie, is sentenced to 15 years in prison for illicit enrichment and abuse of office.
- On 30 June the Finance Minister Aimen Benabderrahmane is appointed Prime Minister, following the resignation of Abdelaziz Djerad after the 12 June elections.

Morocco

- On 1 June Mohammed VI orders the Interior and Foreign Ministries to readmit unaccompanied Moroccan minors residing in Spain and other European countries, two weeks after the Ceuta crisis.
- On 23 June the Rabat Court of Cassation rejects the appeal presented by the last eight Hirak prisoners to be jailed and upholds the sentence handed down in June 2019.

Mauritania

- On 19 June the police use tear gas to disperse an Islamist protest against a rise in criminal violence in Nouakchott.
- On 23 June the former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz is jailed in connection with an investigation into corruption, for which he had been under house arrest since 12 May.

EU

- On 1 June the new European Public Prosecutor starts work.
- On 1 June the Commission announces the launch of the NextGenerationEU recovery plan following its ratification by Member States, which provides 80 billion euros in 2021 in long-term bonds and short-term bills. It also presents its budget guidelines for the Member States, asking for the excessive deficit safeguard clause to be maintained until 2023.

- On 7 June the European Court of Auditors publishes a report in which it warns of the collapse of Frontex due to its "inefficiency" in the fight against illegal immigration and cross-border crime.
- On 9 June the European Parliament approves the Covid-19 digital certificate which will allow European tourists unrestricted travel within the European Union from 1 July.
- On 10 June the European Parliament unanimously condemns the action of Morocco for using migrant minors in May's Ceuta crisis as a means of putting pressure on Spain for having allowed the Polisario Front leader to enter its territory to be treated for Covid-19.
- On 24-25 June the summit of Heads of State and Government of the Union rejects the French-German proposal to hold a summit with Russia in an attempt to improve relations with Moscow, condemns the approval in Hungary of a law that criminalizes homosexuality and condemns the instrumentalization of migration flows by countries like Belarus or Morocco.
- On 24 and 28 June respectively, the Parliament and European Council adopt the European Climate Law, which establishes a CO₂ emission reduction of at least 55% by 2030 in order to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

Arab League

- On 15 June the Arab League asks the United Nations Security Council to intervene in the dispute between Egypt and Sudan and Ethiopia over the GERD.

July 2021

Several countries in the region reintroduce social distancing measures and lockdown faced with a rise in Covid-19 infections. In Spain, there is a major government overhaul and the Constitutional Court rules that the lockdown imposed in March 2020 was illegal. France approves a law against radical Islamism. Migrant arrivals to Italy and Malta increase again. Slovenia takes over the six-month European Presidency. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative of the international community amends the criminal code. Montenegro

announces an agreement to repay its debt for the Bar-Boljare motorway. Kosovo recognizes the Srebrenica massacre as genocide. In North Macedonia, sentences are handed down over the failed storming of the Parliament in 2017. North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania reach an agreement for an area of free movement. In Turkey, large demonstrations reject the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and the rector of Bogazici University is sacked. In Cyprus, the worst wildfire in the country's history is reported and Turkey announces its support for the reopening of Varosha. In Lebanon, Saad Hariri abandoned efforts to form a government. Sentences are handed down in Jordan for the coup plot against Abdullah II. In Egypt, the life sentence against Mohamed Badie is upheld. In Tunisia, the President suspends the Parliament and dismisses the Prime Minister. In Algeria, the new government is appointed. Morocco denies having used Israeli spyware.

Portugal

- On 3 July Portugal reintroduces the curfew in municipalities with high numbers of Covid-19 infections faced with a rise in cases.
- On 25 July the colonel Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, a key figure in the Carnation Revolution, dies.

Spain

- On 3 July more than 400 migrant arrivals are reported in Almeria in the last three days.
- On 5 July thousands demonstrate throughout Spain to condemn the murder in La Coruña of a young man, Samuel Luiz, because he was gay, amid a worrying surge in attacks against the LGTB community.
- On 10 July the Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announces a major government reshuffle in which the Economy Minister Nadia Calviño will also be the new First Vice-President to replace Carmen Calvo.
- On 12 July 119 irregular migrants storm the Melilla border fence. On 20 July, there is another attempt, in which 200 make it through into the city. On 22 July, the Moroccan police stop another 150 from crossing the border.

- On 15 July the Constitutional Court rules that the lockdown decreed by the government during the state of alarm in March 2020 was illegal.
- On 25 July the Paseo del Prado-Retiro Park boulevard is added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

France

- On 3 July France resumes military cooperation with Mali to combat terrorism after it was suspended by Paris on 11 June following the coup d'état organized by the Malian Vice-President Assimi Goita. Paris plans to withdraw 40% of its 5,100 troops deployed there, as of 2022.
- On 4 July Marine Le Pen is reelected leader of the far-right RN party.
- On 8 July the accidental death of a teenage girl in Septèmes-les-Vallons during a gunfight brings the number of victims in the Marseille area over the 12 days to six, amid a surge in drug trafficking and mafia violence.
- On 16 July the CJR charges the Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti with corruption.
- On 17 July there are protests against the government's measures against the Covid-19 pandemic, especially against the requirement for healthcare workers to be vaccinated and Covid passes.
- On 21 July France and the United Kingdom agree to step up joint efforts faced with the surge in illegal channel crossings.
- On 22 July the President Emmanuel Macron calls an "exceptional" defence council to deal with high-level phone hacking using the Israeli Pegasus spyware programme.
- On 23 July the Parliament approves a law to combat the rise in radical Islamism.
- On 27 July Nice is added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Italy

- On 9 July the Ocean Viking disembarks 572 migrants rescued off the coast of Libya in Augusta.
- On 14 and 20 July the police in Palermo dismantle Cosa Nostra's Torretta clan, linked to the New York mafia, with 27 arrests.

- On 20 July a vessel travelling with 171 migrants arrives in Lampedusa.
- On 25 July Italy asks neighbouring countries to help fight the fierce wildfires in Sardinia.

Malta

- On 1 July the army rescues 88 migrants. On 14 July, another 81 are rescued.
- On 14 July the Parliament rejects the government's constitutional amendment to redefine what constitutes a criminal offence and allow any public authority to impose high administrative fines.
- On 22 July demonstrators against the Covid-19 lockdown and vaccination measures protest in Valletta.

Slovenia

- On 1 July Slovenia takes over the European Presidency with the priorities of crisis recovery, reflection on the future of Europe, strengthening the rule of law and European values and security and stability in the European neighbourhood. On the same day, the Commission President Ursula von der Leyen urges Janez Jansa's government to respect rule of law and press freedom, following repeated condemnations by journalist organizations of the Prime Minister's attacks on the media.
- On 11 July 86% of voters reject the government-proposed Water Law in a national referendum.

Croatia

- On 8 July the EC approves the post-pandemic recovery plans of Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania and Slovenia.
- On 26 July Serbia's central bank opposes Croatia's decision to include the image of Nikola Tesla on its future euro coin.
- On 28 July the construction of the Peljesac Bridge is completed, the country's biggest infrastructure project, built by the Chinese CRBC and which will connect Dubrovnik with the rest of Croatia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 14 July Osman Mehmedagic, director of the Intelligence and Security

Agency is arrested in an investigation into abuse of office.

- On 23 July the High Representative of the international community Valentin Inzko amends the criminal code prohibiting the denial, condoning, trivialization or justification of genocide and crimes against humanity or war crimes. On 27 July, the Bosnian Serb representatives announce their boycott of the federal institutions until the amendment is withdrawn.
- On 26 July the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council dismisses Gordana Tadic as Chief Prosecutor, citing professional negligence.

Montenegro

- On 9 July the government announces an agreement with three Western banks to cover the cost of 829 million euros to complete the Bar-Boljare motorway, financed since 2014 with a Chinese loan, which has increased the country's debt from 65% to 80% of GDP.
- On 17 July the Parliament approves recognizing the Srebrenica massacre as genocide with the votes of the opposition Bosniak Party and DPS and the centrist parties from the government coalition – United Reform Action (URA) and Democratic Montenegro. During the same session, there is also a vote in favour of dismissing the Justice Minister Vladimir Leposavic for questioning the ICTY's ruling that the Srebrenica massacre constituted genocide. The pro-Serbian government coalition member DF announces a parliamentary boycott following Leposavic's dismissal.
- On 23 July Montenegro rejects modifying the 2018 border agreement with Kosovo.
- On 25 July the first same-sex marriage in Montenegro is registered in Budva.
- On 30 July the State Prosecutor Milivoje Katnic reports that investigations have begun into 114 members of the Veljko Belivuk criminal group after the leader of the True Montenegro party Marko Milacic accuses him of not investigating the group's alleged connections with state authorities.

Serbia

- On 12 July Serbia signs a memorandum with China and the UAE for the

national production of the Sinopharm vaccine.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 6 July the trial begins for the assassination of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic in 2018.
- On 7 July the Parliament recognizes the Srebrenica massacre as genocide.
- On 14 July the Trade Minister Rozeeta Hajdari affirms that the government is preparing to reintroduce reciprocity measures on Serb imports.
- On 20 July the Serb List reelects Goran Rakic and Milan Radoicic as president and vice-president of the pro-Serbian party, respectively.

North Macedonia

- On 14 July Turkey urges North Macedonia to speed up the extradition of 86 people implicated in the 2016 attempted coup, requested in 2019, increasing tensions between Ankara and Skopje.
- On 23 July UNESCO gives North Macedonia two more years to adopt measures to protect the city's heritage and Lake Ohrid.
- On 26 July the former Parliament Speaker Trajko Veljanoski, former Transport and Labour Ministers Mile Janakieski and Spiro Ristovski and the former secret police chief Vladimir Atanasovski are sentenced to six years in prison over the attempt to storm the Parliament in April 2017.
- On 29 July North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania agree in Skopje on an area of free movement for 2023.
- On 29 July the Parliament adopts a resolution drawing the "red lines" for the talks with Bulgaria on North Macedonian identity and languages, a subject that has led to the paralysis of the country's European accession process.

Albania

- On 3 July the Constitutional Court suspends the initiative of the government and Municipality of Tirana for the construction of a new National Theatre. On 4 July, the Special Prosecution Office launches an investigation, at the request of the opposition Democratic

Party (PD), into abuse of office, corruption and destruction of public property, in connection with the demolition of the old theatre.

- On 7 July Armela Krasniqi is elected as the new chairperson of the Audio-visual Media Authority by the socialist parliamentary majority, before the new Parliament takes office in September, raising concerns from the OSCE and EU over the impartiality of the regulatory body's new management.
- On 13 July the Special Prosecution against Corruption announces that the former Deputy Interior Minister Rovena Voda is under house arrest for suspected bribery.

Greece

- On 2 July, after nine months on the run, Christos Pappas, ideologue, former MP and member of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn, is jailed.
- On 6 July Greece announces new restrictions on nightlife due to the increase in coronavirus infections.

Turkey

- On 1 July large demonstrations in the country's big cities condemn Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.
- On 2 July Turkey becomes the first NATO country to be included by the US in its annual report on the trafficking of humans to be used as child soldiers.
- On 15 July Melih Bulu, the politically appointed rector of Bogazici University is dismissed after six months of student protests.
- On 23 July a vessel carrying 45 migrants sinks near Kas.

Cyprus

- On 2 July the President Nikos Anastasiades apologizes over the scandal of the irregular granting of passports between 2007 and 2020, which led to the abolition of the national plan to issue passports to big investors.
- On 3 July the worst wildfire in the country's history is reported in Arakapas, which is brought under control on 5 July.
- On 20 July the Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar announces during a visit to the north of the island by the Turkish

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the opening of Varosha, the neighbourhood of Famagusta that was sealed off by the UN following the 1974 Turkish invasion, and the lifting of its military zone status. On 23 July, the UN Security Council condemns Turkey's unilateral position on Cyprus.

- On 30 July the UN Security Council extends the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

Syria

- On 7 July the army and Russian forces begin a massive military offensive against Daesh, east of Hama.

- On 11 July Bashar al-Assad adopts two legislative decrees that increase public workers' salaries by 50% and increase retirement pensions by 40%.

- On 17 July Bashar al-Assad is sworn in as President for his fourth term.

- On 20 July Syria condemns Israeli missile fire against al-Safirah. On 22 July, Syria condemns another Israeli attack in Homs.

- On 23 July the OPCW reports that two gas cylinders found at the site of the Douma chemical warfare attack in April 2018 were destroyed on 8 June during an Israeli airstrike condemned by Syria.

- On 28 July the US Biden Administration announces its first sanctions against Syrian officials and entities for human rights violations.

Lebanon

- On 16 July the Prime Minister delegate Saad Hariri abandons efforts to form a government because of disagreements with the President Michel Aoun over its makeup. On 26 July, Aoun begins consultations to designate a new Prime Minister, leading to the election of the businessman and former Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

Jordan

- On 12 July the former head of the Royal Court Bassem Awadallah and a former envoy to Saudi Arabia Sharif Hassan Bin Zaid are sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for plotting to overthrow Abdullah II.

Egypt

- On 11 July the Court of Cassation of Cairo upholds the life sentence for the Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Badie, and another nine senior members of the outlawed group.

- On 11 July the historian Alia Mosalam is arrested on landing in Cairo and then released the following day in a move that comes amid an escalation of repression against academics, particularly those residing abroad.

- On 14 July Egypt pauses Russia's construction of the El-Dabaa nuclear plant for two years amid tensions over Moscow's rapprochement with Ethiopia.

- On 19 July Egypt and Sudan condemn Ethiopia's announcement that it has completed the second phase of filling the GERD.

Libya

- On 1 July the Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh insists that the power to appoint cabinet members is exclusively his and not the Presidency Council's, faced with the disagreement over the appointment of the Defence Minister, the position for which the Council threatens to appoint its own candidate.

- On 2 July the LPDF ends without an agreement to hold elections in December.

- On 21 July the IOM condemns on social media the interception and forced return to Libya of more than 500 migrants on that same day.

- On 27 July at least 57 migrants drown off the coast of Khoms.

- On 27 July Mohammed al-Kani, the leader of the Kaniyat militia sanctioned for alleged war crimes by the US and EU, is killed in a raid by security forces.

Tunisia

- On 2 July Tunisia imposes a new curfew after the daily coronavirus infection rate reaches 6,000 for the first time.

- On 3 July at least 43 people travelling in a vessel from Libya go missing when their boat sinks off the Tunisian coastline.

- On 6 July the United Nations condemns the violence against the leader of the Free Destourian Party (PDL,

Bourguibist) Abir Moussi, who was assaulted on 30 June by Sahni Smara, a deputy with close ties to the Islamist al-Karama (Dignity) coalition.

- On 20 July the Health Minister Faouzi Mehdi is dismissed over the surge in Covid-19 infections. On the same day, the Health Ministry suspends the second day of mass vaccination after, on the first day, fighting breaks out and there are long queues at the walk-in vaccination centres.

- On 22 July the coast guard rescues 160 migrants.

- On 25 July thousands of Tunisians demonstrate against the political elite and especially against Ennahda. The President Kais Saied suspends the Parliament and sacks the Prime Minister Hichem Mchichi, assuming executive authority. The army blocks entry to the Parliament and the national television building, leading to clashes mainly between Ennahda supporters and those of the President. On 27 July, Saied dismisses around 20 senior officials, including the Chief Prosecutor Tawfiq al-Ayouni.

- On 28 July the Public Prosecutor announces an investigation into foreign election funding concerning three political parties: Ennahda, Qalb Tounes and Aish Tounsi.

Algeria

- On 1 July the former Parliament Speaker and former leader of the FLN Mouad Bouchareb is summoned by the Court of Algiers over a complaint filed against him in 2019 by members of the party's Central Committee for overtaking public office.

- On 7 July the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune issues pardons for those arrested during the protests on 5 July – Independence Day. Human rights organizations condemn an increase in arrests parallel to the measure.

- On 7 July the President names the 34 members of Aymen Benabderrahmane's government, 15 of who remain in their ministerial post.

- On 8 July Ibrahim Boughali, from the Unity and Change in Power list of independents, is elected Parliament Speaker.

- On 14 July the arrest is reported of the former Water Resources Minister Hocine Necib for corruption.

Morocco

- On 5 July a deal is signed for the production in Morocco of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine to be distributed throughout Africa.
- On 10 and 19 July the journalists Suleiman Raissouni and Omar Radi are sentenced, respectively, to five and six years' imprisonment for sexual offences. Both, who were arrested in 2020 and began a hunger strike in April 2021, claim to be victims of a political trial because of their criticism of the authorities.
- On 19 July the US announces its first repatriation of a prisoner from Guantanamo Bay under the Biden Administration, the Moroccan Abdul Latif Nasir.
- On 21 July Morocco denies allegations that it used the Pegasus spyware, developed by the Israeli firm NSO, to spy on politicians and journalists, slamming what it calls a "media campaign" against Rabat.
- On 23 July a new nationwide curfew comes into force in response to the increase in Covid-19 infections.

EU

- On 4 July the former European Council President and former Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk steps down from leading the EPP to return to Polish politics and halt the anti-European drift of the conservative Law and Justice party government.
- On 5 July, at the Berlin Process Summit, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel underlines the need to prioritize the Western Balkans joining the EU.
- On 14 July Poland's Constitutional Court rules that the safeguard measures of the EU High Court with respect to the Polish judiciary are not binding as they enter into conflict with the country's Constitution.
- On 19 July the EU, US and NATO blame China for cyberattacks, in collusion with cybercriminal groups.
- On 14 July the ECB launches its digital euro project to adapt to the context of virtual payments, which have increased with the pandemic.
- On 28 July the Commission freezes recovery funds for Hungary and Poland until the autumn because of their drift

away from the Union's values and their legislation against the LGBTQ community.

August 2021

Parallel to a rise in the number of infections from the Covid-19 Delta variant throughout the Mediterranean region and announcements by several countries of the administration of a third vaccine dose, countries in southern European and the Maghreb are hit by serious wildfires and extreme temperatures, while Turkey suffers major flooding. In Spain and Italy the migrant arrivals increase. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative of the international community is replaced. In Kosovo, senior officials are linked to cases of abuse of office. North Macedonia expels a second Russian diplomat. Greece reshuffles its cabinet. Cyprus cancels the European passports of the main Turkish Cypriot leaders. In Syria, fighting intensifies and a new cabinet is unveiled. In Libya, the chairman of the National Oil Corporation (NOC) is dismissed. The Tunisian President makes new dismissals and extends the suspension of Parliament, parallel to the arrest of the former presidential candidate Nabil Karoui. Algeria breaks ties with Morocco. Morocco extends its state of emergency.

Spain

- On 12 August 165 irregular migrants reach the Canary Islands. On 21-22 August, at least 307 more disembark on the islands and on 28-29 another 289 reach the archipelago, where arrivals already stand at 8,222 for this year, 144.4% more than for the same period in 2020.
- On 17 August 57 migrants illegally enter Melilla.

France

- On 11 August the government announces the administration of a third vaccine dose against Covid-19 starting in September.
- On 21 August thousands of demonstrators protest for the sixth Saturday in a row against the requirement of a

Covid-19 certificate for most social activities.

Italy

- On 5 August the requirement is introduced to present a certificate of vaccination against Covid-19, a negative PCR test or a certificate of recovery from Covid-19 to enter numerous recreational venues.
- On 13 August data collected by the European Forest Fire Information (EFFIS) reveal that in the more than 400 wildfires reported so far in 2021, Italy has lost 110,000 hectares, four times more than the average for the last decade, especially in Sardinia and the southern half of the peninsula, where temperatures have been recorded of up to 48.8 degrees, the highest in European history.
- On 26 August the Economy Undersecretary Claudio Durigon from the far-right the League resigns after pressure from the other parties in the government coalition following his proposal to change the name of a square in Latina to that of the dictator Benito Mussolini's brother.
- On 28 August Lampedusa registers the arrival of 820 migrants.

Slovenia

- On 4 August a 71% increase in Covid-19 infections in Slovenia over the last week is reported, where preparations are underway to reintroduce social restrictions, with only 38.5% of the population vaccinated.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 1 August the former German minister Christian Schmidt replaces the Austrian Valentin Inzko as High Representative of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- On 10 August the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina reports that only 18 war crimes cases were completed in 2020, in comparison with 49 in 2019, with 571 cases yet to be resolved involving 4,498 suspects.

Serbia

- On 17 August, in anticipation of a new wave of Covid-19 infections, this

time the Delta variant, Serbia begins administering a third dose of the vaccine.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 4 August the dismissal of the head of the Financial Intelligence Unit is announced after he can be heard discussing plans for taking over the media in audio recordings leaked by the media, which implicate civil servants and members of the judiciary in abuses of office. On 6 August, the Chief Prosecutor Aleksander Lumezi orders an investigation into the recordings.
- On 25 August Serbia protests against a Kosovo court's decision to uphold a two-year prison sentence for the MP Ivan Todosijevic for claiming that the massacre of Kosovo Albanians by Serbian forces in Racak in 1999 was fabricated.
- On 29 August the government delays the start of the school year by two weeks, faced with a rise in Covid-19 cases.

North Macedonia

- On 16 August the requirement enters into force for hospitality venues with a capacity of over 30 people to hire private security to check customers' vaccination certificates.
- On 17 August North Macedonia confirms the expulsion of a Russian diplomat on 11 August.
- On 30 August North Macedonia declares a state of emergency for a month due to the proliferation of wildfires.

Albania

- On 15 August Albania and Kosovo announce they will take in several hundred Afghan refugees at the request of the US, with Afghanistan falling into the hands of the Taliban.

Greece

- On 16 August three districts of Athens are ordered to evacuate after two new wildfires are reported in the area. Since the beginning of the month, Greece has been hit by hundreds of fires in the middle of its most severe heat wave in decades.

- On 20 August Greece strengthens its land border with Turkey, predicting a wave of Afghan refugees now that the Taliban are in power.
- On 24 August the Health Ministry announces that as of September only people who are vaccinated or have recovered from Covid-19 can enter leisure or hospitality venues.
- On 31 August the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis reshuffles the cabinet after fierce criticism against the measures taken to address the pandemic and severe wildfires. The economy, foreign affairs, labour and education ministers remain unchanged. Athanasios Plevris becomes the Health Minister to replace Vasilis Kikilias, who takes over the Ministry of Tourism. Takis Theodorikakos replaces Michalis Chrisochoidis as the Citizen Protection Minister.

Turkey

- On 16 August Turkey secretly evacuates 40 Afghan senior officials, including the Second Vice-President Sarwar Danish, the Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar and the head of national security Ahmad Zia Saraj.
- On 17 August the death toll from the severe flooding that has hit Turkey stands at 77.
- On 30 August Turkey completes the construction of 43 additional kilometres of its border with Iran to prevent the entry of irregular migrants.

Cyprus

- On 23 August the government revokes the European passports of the main Turkish Cypriot leaders for undermining the integrity and sovereignty of Cyprus.

Syria

- On 5 August tensions increase along the Jordanian border with intense fighting between government forces and the opposition.
- On 9 August Russian airstrikes attack Turkish army positions in Idlib in response to the actions on 7 August by Uzbek militias allied with Turkey against the Syrian army.

- On 10 August Bashar al-Assad issues a decree for the formation of a new government led by the Prime Minister Hussein Arnus and which maintains all the portfolios unchanged, except the Internal Trade Minister.
- On 19 August Syria reports various Israeli attacks on military facilities on the outskirts of Damascus and Homs.
- On 25 August the surge in fighting in the Daraa region between government and rebel forces displaces up to 45,000 people.

Lebanon

- On 4 August France hosts a new international donor conference for Lebanon, faced with the dramatic worsening of the country's economic situation.

Egypt

- On 1 August Egypt announces the death of at least 89 jihadists in Sinai. On 13 August, another 13 insurgent deaths are reported.

Libya

- On 29 August the Oil Minister Mohamed Aoun sacks the chairman of the National Oil Corporation (NOC) Mustafa Sanalla for travelling abroad without prior authorization.
- On 30 August, in Algiers, two days of meetings with the foreign ministers of Libya's neighbouring countries, the Arab League and the UN conclude with a joint declaration on the importance of respecting the outcomes of the 1st and 2nd Berlin Conferences and Libya's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

Tunisia

- On 10 August 150 wildfires are declared in Tunisia, on the same day that temperatures reach 49°C, the highest in Africa.
- On 13 August the President Kais Saied replaces the governor of Bizerte, Mohamed Gouider. Since the dismissal of the Prime Minister in July, Saied has sacked more than 30 senior officials, including the ministers of Defence, Justice, Communications and Technology.

gies and Economy and Finance, the head of the Interior Ministry, the Tunisian ambassador in Washington and the governors of Sfax, Monastir, Medenine and Zaghuan.

- On 23 August President Saied indefinitely extends the suspension of the Parliament and the lifting of all lawmakers' immunity approved in July. On the same day, Ennahda announces the dissolution of its executive committee to create a new formation that responds to the "exceptional circumstances" arising from the presidential decisions.
- On 30 August the businessman and leader of Qalb Tounes (Heart of Tunisia) Nabil Karoui is arrested in Algeria on charges of illegal entry after leaving Tunisia, where on 15 June he was released after being detained for six months as a suspect in a money laundering and tax evasion investigation.

Algeria

- On 14 August more than 100 wildfires are reported in seven days in northern Algeria, leaving 65 dead and more than 30,000 hectares of land burnt. Algiers accuses Rachad and MAK of being behind the fires.
- On 16 August the former wali of Tipasa Moussa Ghellai is sentenced to three years' imprisonment for corruption and influence peddling.
- On 24 August the Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra announces it is breaking ties with Morocco over Rabat's "hostile actions."
- On 28 August Algeria calls for the extradition of the MAK leader, who has been living in France as a refugee for the last 20 years. He stands accused of being involved in the murder of the Hirak member Djamel Bensmail, who was lynched on 11 August in Larbaa Nath Irathen following allegations that he was possibly responsible for the severe fires in the region.

Morocco

- On 23 August Morocco extends the state of emergency until 31 October, after registering the highest infection rates in August since the beginning of the pandemic.

- On 27 August Morocco closes its embassy in Algiers in response to Algeria announcing it is breaking diplomatic relations.

EU

- On 4 August the EU reports the mobilization, through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, of air and land assistance in putting out the forest fires that are affecting Italy, Greece, North Macedonia and Albania.
- On 29 August in an effort to avoid internal splits similar to those that followed the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, the European President Ursula von der Leyen urges Member States to adopt measures before the anticipated mass arrival of refugees following the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan.

September 2021

Portugal holds local elections. In Spain the Cumbre Vieja volcano on La Palma erupts and a massive wildfire rages through Malaga. France and the EU enter a diplomatic crisis with Australia, the US and the United Kingdom. Italy makes Covid-19 vaccination certificates a requirement to work. Malta imposes a record fine on Pilatus Bank. Demonstrations are held by anti-vaccine protesters in Slovenia. Croatia moves forward in its process to adopt the euro. In Montenegro, there are clashes during the inauguration of the head of the country's Serbian Orthodox Church. Tensions rise between Serbia and Kosovo with the decision not to renew the agreement on car number plates. In Albania, the new government is sworn in. Turkey begins talks with the EU to reinvigorate bilateral trade. The Syrian army enters Daraa. Lebanon successfully forms a government. In Libya, Saadi Gaddafi is released and there is fierce fighting in Tripoli. In Tunisia, President Saied increases his powers and announces a constitutional reform. Algeria closes its airspace to Morocco and new sentences are handed down to members of the entourage of the recently deceased former President Bouteflika. Morocco holds legislative elections.

Portugal

- On 10 September the former President Jorge Sampaio dies.
- On 27 September Portugal holds local elections with a 46% abstention rate. In Lisbon, the victory of Carlos Moedas from the Social Democratic Party (PSD, conservative), ends 14 years of socialist control. The same change takes place in socialist strongholds like Coimbra, Ponta Delgada and Funchal. In Porto, the independent Rui Moreira is reelected as mayor.

Spain

- On 8 September the Interior Ministry blames organized criminal groups for the 43% increase in hate crimes based on sexual orientation in the first quarter of 2021, as compared with the previous year.
- On 13 September Spain deploys troops to join the fight against the wildfires reported in Estepona, in Malaga, which have already burnt 7,000 hectares in a week, leading to the evacuation of more than 2,600 people.
- On 19 September the Cumbre Vieja volcano on La Palma, the Canary Islands, erupts, forcing more than 6,000 people to evacuate. The eruption continues until 25 December.
- On 27 September around 450 migrants arrive in Andalusia, Murcia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands from Algeria, amid an increase in recent weeks in arrivals along this migration route.
- On 15 September the first meeting takes place in a new round of talks between the central and Catalan governments in efforts to resolve the Catalan political issue.

France

- On 1 September Emmanuel Macron launches his presidential campaign "Security, the mother of all battles" in Marseille, considered the EU's least safe city. On 6 September, the Interior Minister confirms it has expelled 636 foreign nationals "suspected of Islamist radicalization" since 2018.
- On 10 September the former Health Minister Agnes Buzyn becomes the first

politician to be charged by the Public Prosecutor over her handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- On 17 September France summons its ambassadors in the US and Australia for consultations and cancels a defence summit with the UK in response to the surprise announcement, on 15 September, of the creation of a new military alliance, AUKUS, between Washington, London and Canberra, forged without NATO's or the EU's knowledge. It means the cancellation by Australia of the multimillion-euro contract from 2016 for the construction of 12 French conventional submarines, so that the country can instead sign a deal with the US for nuclear submarines.
- On 20 September Emmanuel Macron issues an apology on behalf of France to the almost 200,000 Algerian harkis who sided with the French army during the war in Algeria and who later suffered reprisals after being abandoned by Paris.
- On 28 September France and Greece sign a defence cooperation pact to ensure the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries.
- On 30 September a court in Paris sentences the former President Nicolas Sarkozy to one year in prison for the illegal financing of his 2012 presidential campaign, in the so-called Bygmalion case.

Italy

- On 16 September around 108 migrants arrive in Lampedusa, bringing the total number currently in the island's reception centre to 880.
- On 17 September Italy becomes the first Western country to require workers to provide a Covid-19 vaccination certificate.
- On 23 September the former senator and co-founder of FI Marcelo Dell'Utri is cleared of his 12-year prison sentence, handed down in 2018 for his involvement in deals made between the State and the mafia in the 1990s.
- On 30 September the former mayor of Riace Domenico Lucano is sentenced to more than 13 years' imprisonment for irregularities in the management of asylum applications.

Malta

- On 1 September Malta imposes a record fine of 4.9 million euros on Pylatus Bank, for its failure to guard against suspicious million-euro transactions. The bank was closed by the State in November 2018, more than a year after the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who repeatedly accused the entity of allowing money laundering.

Slovenia

- On 3 September an anti-vaccination and coronavirus denialist group storms the studio of the RTVS public broadcaster demanding air time to voice their views, before being removed by police. On 15 September, large weekly protests begin in Ljubljana against vaccination.

Croatia

- On 10 September the EC, the eurozone and Croatia sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the preparations for producing euro coins, with a view to Croatia adopting the European currency on 1 January 2023.

Montenegro

- On 5 September clashes break out in Cetinje during the inauguration of the bishop Joanikije II as head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. The demonstrators are protesting against the ceremony being held in the historical Montenegrin capital and consider it an act of Serbian expansionism. On 22 September, the Parliament backs an initiative to call upon the Constitutional Court to rule whether or not the President Milo Djukanovic violated his responsibilities by supporting the protests.
- On 8 September the mayor of Niksic, Marko Kovacevic, is accused by the State Prosecutor of inciting hatred for denying that the Srebrenica massacres were genocide.
- On 24 September the Supreme Court upholds the charges against the former mayor of Podgorica Slavoljub Stijepovic for money laundering and as-

sociation with a criminal organization in the Envelope affair.

Serbia

- On 11 September thousands protest in Belgrade against Rio Tinto's plans to mine Lithium in Loznica.
- On 13 September Borisav Jovic, the President of Yugoslavia between 1990 and 1991, dies of Covid-19.
- On 15 September the Parliament adopts a bill requiring public companies to use the Cyrillic alphabet and offer tax breaks to private companies that use it.
- On 15 September Serbia and Republika Srpska celebrate the day of Serbian unity, created in 2020, amid growing concerns among countries in the region of a surge in Serbian nationalism.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 9 September the Deputy Prime Minister Besnik Bislimi announces that, as of 15 September, Kosovo will not renew its agreement with Serbia on car number plates and will only accept plates that begin with the initials of the Republic of Kosovo. On 20 September, Kosovo's police force disperses hundreds of Kosovo Serbs close to the Jarinje and Zubin Potok border crossing that demand to be allowed to keep using their Serbian registration plates. On 27 September, Serbia gives NATO 24 hours to respond to the situation and Kosovo reports attacks on offices of its Interior Ministry in northern Kosovo. On 30 September, Serbia and Kosovo agree to ease the crisis and withdraw their respective military forces from their shared border.
- On 15 September the trial begins at the Specialist Kosovo Chambers against Salih Mustafa, a former UÇK commander charged with murder, unlawful detention and the torture of Serbian prisoners in 1999.

North Macedonia

- On 3 September the national population census begins, proposed in March in view of the pandemic. This census, the first to be conducted since 2002, was approved in the Parliament

on 21 January despite the initial boycott by the opposition VMRO-DPMNE.

- On 11 September the Health Minister Venko Filipce resigns over the fire on 9 September at a hospital for Covid-19 patients in Tetovo, in which 14 people died.

Albania

- On 15 September thousands take to the streets in Tiran and Fier to demonstrate over the murder, on 10 September, of a young woman by her ex-husband and to protest the inefficiencies of the authorities to prevent violence against women.

- On 18 September Edi Rama's new government takes office, comprising 12 women and four men. On the same day, the cabinet approves creating the Media and Information Agency that will centralize government communication. The decision is met with criticism from the opposition, which accuses Rama of propaganda and wanting to silence the media.

- On 22 September the former General Prosecutor Adriatik Llalla is sentenced by an appeals court to two years in prison for falsifying his asset declaration.

- On 24 September, following an appeal, the Albanian judiciary orders the reopening of the case against the former Defence Minister Fatmir Mediu, for the death of 26 people in an explosion at a munitions factory in 2008.

Greece

- On 17 September Athens hosts the 8th summit of southern European countries, which adopts a joint declaration for COP26 in November in Glasgow, in which it reiterates its commitment to climate transition and environmental protection.

- On 20 September 400 of the 550 migrants currently in the temporary Vathy camp are transferred to the new permanent and controlled Samos camp.

- On 20 September Greece issues an official protest to Turkey, accusing it of illegal fishing in Greek waters in the Aegean Sea.

- On 27 September an earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale in

Crete leaves one dead and thousands displaced.

Turkey

- On 6 September the EC begins talks with Turkey to boost bilateral trade, as part of efforts to normalize ties, as agreed in June by the European Council.

- On 7 September the Public Prosecutor orders 240 new arrests in connection with the attempted coup in July 2016.

- On 14 September the trial begins against eight lawyers of the leader of the PKK terrorist organization Abdullah Ocalan, for cooperating with terrorists.

Cyprus

- On 3 September the Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay announces that Turkey will begin new oil and gas exploration in Cypriot waters if the exploration announced in late August by Cyprus, Exxon Mobil and Qatar Petroleum goes ahead.

Syria

- On 1 September the army, supported by Iranian militias, steps up its offence against the rebel stronghold in Daraa. On 6 September, a precarious ceasefire is established between the rebel forces and the government, who are negotiating a deal to put an end to three months of siege on the city. On 9 September, the Syrian army enters Daraa.

- On 3 September the Syrian air defences shoot down missiles fired by Israel at Damascus.

- On 9 September a French court upholds the four-year prison sentence handed down for corruption between 1996 and 2016 to Rifaat al-Assad, Bashar al-Assad's uncle and the former Vice-President of Syria, who has been living in exile since 1984.

- On 14 September hours after Vladimir Putin and Bashar al-Assad meet in Moscow, the Russian airforce bombs areas of Aleppo controlled by the opposition and included in the 2020 ceasefire.

- On 24 September the UN updates the official death toll for the war in Syria, setting it at 350,000.

- On 26 September Russian warplanes bomb SNA targets in Afrin and areas controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in Idlib, a day before the Turkish and Russian presidents meet to discuss Syria.

Lebanon

- On 1 September the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths announces that 10 million dollars will be allocated to Lebanon to ease the fuel crisis.

- On 8 September Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan agree in Amman to export natural gas to Lebanon from Egypt through Jordan and Syria.

- On 9 September two Iranian ships arrive in Banyas with fuel and other materials to help with the shortages of fuel and essential goods in Lebanon, at the request of the Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and in defiance of the US embargo on the Islamic Republic.

- On 9 September the government launches a cash card programme to help half a million vulnerable families.

- On 10 September the political leaders agree on the composition of a new government led by Nayib Mikati and composed largely of technocrats. On 20 September, the Parliament approves the new government.

Egypt

- On 2 September Egypt presents the biggest factory in the Middle East and North Africa for producing Covid-19 vaccines in 6th of October City.

- On 10 September the Daesh commander in Sinai Mohamed Saad Kamel turns himself in to a tribal union loyal to the army.

- On 21 September the general Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, Defence Minister of the former President Mubarak, dies.

Libya

- On 3 September intense fighting in Tripoli between the Stabilization Support Force and the 444 Brigade endangers the already fragile ceasefire and the elections scheduled for December.

- On 6 September Saadi Gaddafi, Muammar Gaddafi's son, is released after serving a seven-year prison sentence.

- On 8 September the Parliament Speaker Aguila Saleh approves the law on choosing the head of state, in a decision criticized by the High State Council and 22 deputies for not having been debated in the Parliament.
- On 17 September the IMO report that during the previous week the Libyan authorities intercepted and returned to the North African country more than 800 migrants, bringing the total number intercepted in 2021 to 24,000, 6,000 of whom are being held arbitrarily.
- On 20 September the Tobruk-based Parliament approves reducing the GNU's powers, after which the Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibah calls for demonstrations to support the government.

Tunisia

- On 11 September the President Kais Saied announces his intention to reform the 2014 Constitution.
- On 22 September the Presidency announces new powers for Kais Saied, including that of ruling by decree.
- On 26 September more than 100 representatives of Ennahda resign in protest against the party's action in the political crisis triggered by President Saied.

Algeria

- On 16 September a military court in Blida upholds the 16-year prison sentence against the former internal security chief Wassini Bouazza for interfering in the presidential election process in 2019.
- On 17 September the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika dies. He had resigned in April 2019 following the wave of protests calling for democratization.
- On 22 September Algeria closes its airspace to Moroccan aircraft.
- On 22 September the general Ali Ghediri is sentenced to four years' imprisonment for "undermining army morale." The leader of the Forum of Algeria of Tomorrow (FAD) Hocine Gouasmia is sentenced to 10 years in prison on the same charges.
- On 22 September the former President of the Council of the Nation and former caretaker President following the

fall of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Abdelkader Bensalah dies.

- On 23 September the former National Gendarmerie commander Ghali Belkecir is sentenced in absentia to 20 years in prison for high treason.
- On 26 September the former Finance Minister Mohamed Loukal is jailed for abuse of power when he was head of the External Bank of Algeria.

Morocco

- On 8 September Morocco holds parliamentary elections which, with a turnout of 50.35%, end in defeat for the ruling Justice and Development Party (PJD, Islamist) which wins 12 seats, down from 125. They do however bring good results for the parties close to the monarchy: the liberal National Rally of Independents (RNI) led by Aziz Akhannouch and the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) win 97 and 82 seats, respectively, and the centre-right Istiqlal Party, 78. On 10 September, Mohammed VI appoints Akhannouch as Prime Minister entrusted with forming a government. On 22 September, Akhannouch announces a coalition agreement between his party, the PAM and Istiqlal.

EU

- On 2 September Poland declares a state of emergency on its border with Belarus to halt the irregular flow of Afghan migrants entering from Belarus. Lithuania and Latvia adopt similar measures and the EU accuses Minsk of orchestrating a migratory wave in response to sanctions imposed by the Union.
- On 7 September the EC asks the CJEU to impose daily sanctions on Poland to guarantee it complies with a provisional ruling of the Court relating to its disciplinary system for and immunity of Polish judges.
- On 15 September during the State of the Union Address, the President Ursula von der Leyen announces the launch in March 2022 of the European Defence Union.
- On 22 September the ECB estimates that the EU's GDP will drop by 10% by 2100 if it does not take measures for the ecological transition.

October 2021

The government collapses in Portugal. Italy and North Macedonia hold local elections. In Montenegro, the former head of the National Security Agency is arrested. The Serbian Parliament votes against the ban on denying the Srebrenica genocide. Clashes break out in northern Kosovo. Turkey extends its presence in Syria and Iraq. The negotiations for drafting a new Syrian constitution break down. There are protests in Lebanon to call for the recusal of the judge Tarek Bitar. Jordan renews its government and Abdullah II is mentioned in the Pandora Papers financial scandal. Egypt suspends the state of emergency in place since 2017. In Tunisia, President Saied approves a new government. Algeria enters a diplomatic crisis with France, which adds to the one ongoing with Morocco, which leads to the closure of the Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline. In Morocco, Mohammed VI appoints a new government.

Portugal

- On 27 October the draft national budget unveiled by the Prime Minister Antonio Costa is rejected by the Parliament, leading to the collapse of the government and early elections being called.

Spain

- On 14 October the Law on the Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom, which was approved by the government in July, is presented to the Parliament.

France

- On 8 October the 29th Africa-France summit is held in Montpellier, marked for the first time by the absence of African presidents and heads of government and the presence, instead, of young representatives of civil society, to analyse the present and past state of relations between France and its former colonies and how they should develop looking to the future.
- On 12 October the President Emmanuel Macron unveils the France 2030

plan, with investments of 30 billion euros over 10 years.

- On 17 October Emmanuel Macron apologizes on behalf of France during the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the police massacre of demonstrators during a peaceful FLN march against the curfew targeting the Algerian population in Paris.
- On 27 October the Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin confirms the closure of the mosque in Allonnes, Pays de la Loire, and the association, Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia of Sainte Foy-Les-Lyon, Auvernia-Rodano-Alpes, for hate speech and defending terrorism.

Italy

- On 3-4 October Italy holds the first round of local elections. The second round is held on 17-18 October. The elections see a drop in votes for M5S, which loses power in Rome and Turin, and especially for the right wing, which loses Milan, Bologna and Naples. These five cities will now be governed by a centre left, now stronger after the elections.
- On 9 October a big demonstration in Rome against the Covid pass ends with unrest caused by members of Forza Nuova who infiltrate the protests and storm the headquarters of the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), Italy's biggest trade union. The PD and M5S sign a parliamentary motion calling for the dissolution of the far-right party. On 16 October, thousands demonstrate against the attack.
- On 15 October ITA Airways, Italian national airline that replace the bankrupt Alitalia, begins operations amid protests over the relocation of staff.
- On 22 October 406 migrants rescued by the Sea Watch-3 disembark in Pozzallo.
- On 30-31 October Rome hosts the G20 summit that backs the agreement reached at the beginning of the month in the OECD on the global corporation tax and commits to working collectively to overcome the aftereffects of the pandemic and reach an agreement to limit climate change at COP26 in Glasgow.

Slovenia

- On 6 October Brdo pri Kranju hosts an EU-Western Balkans summit marked by the stalled enlargement process and by the offer of economic benefits and political cooperation to avoid the region falling into the sphere of influence of Russia, Turkey or China.
- On 16 October the news programme editor-in-chief at public broadcaster RTVS Manica Janezic Ambrozic resigns in protest against cuts in the news programming, a decision taken amid a standoff between journalists and the government and coinciding with the European Parliament's complaints of the country's hostile climate towards journalists.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 28 October Claudio Graziano, the chairman of the EU Military Committee, visits Bosnia and Herzegovina to formally express the Union's commitment to the country's integrity after the Russian-backed Bosnian Serb President Milorad Dodik threatens to form an exclusively Serb army.

Montenegro

- On 21 October the former head of the National Security Agency Dejan Peunic is arrested for the illegal wiretapping of the Special State Prosecutor's Office.

Serbia

- On 19 October the Parliament votes against debating three resolutions to ban the denial of the Srebrenica genocide, set up a commission to determine the number of deaths during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and recognize Serb rebel fighters as war veterans.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 13 October several people are injured in clashes in Mitrovica and Zvecan between the police and Serb demonstrators protesting against the seizure of goods during an anti-smuggling operation.

- On 27 October Kosovo sanctions seven people and a company for links with Hezbollah, designated as a terrorist organization by Pristina in June 2020.
- On 27 October the indictment is upheld on the former European Integration Minister Dhurata Hoxha, charged with abuse of office for allegedly lobbying for border changes in exchange for normalizing ties with Serbia.

North Macedonia

- On 17 and 31 October North Macedonia holds the two rounds of its local elections, which end with good results for the main opposition party VMRO-DPMNE and defeat for the SDSM of Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, who announces his resignation.

Albania

- On 19 October the EC again recommends starting accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia.

Greece

- On 29 October the coast guard rescues 400 migrants in waters near Crete.

Turkey

- On 7 and 21 October the security forces arrest 15 people suspected of giving information to the Israel's Mossad intelligence agency on foreign students and Israeli opponents.
- On 15 October more than 50 people are arrested for belonging to the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C).
- On 23 October 98 people are arrested for alleged ties with Fetullah Gulen. They add to a hundred or so arrests carried out on 19 October on the same charges.
- On 26 October the Parliament extends Turkey's military mission in Syria and Iraq for another two years.

Cyprus

- On 20 October a week after his coalition government loses its parliamentary majority in the north of the island, Ersan Saner resigns, coinciding with the ap-

pearance of a video allegedly showing him involved in a sexual act, circulated by the Turkish mafia boss Sedat Peker.

Syria

- On 16 October Syria denounces the death of Midhat al-Saleh, head of the Occupied Syrian Golan Office, at the hands of an Israeli sniper.
- On 20 October the blast from two explosive devices kills at least 14 soldiers in Damascus, in the most serious attack in the city since March 2017.
- On 20 October a Syrian army attack on Ariha, in Idlib, leaves 13 dead. In response to the government stepping up its offensive in the area, Turkey threatens to use heavy weapons against the Syrian army.
- On 21 October Syria announces the execution of 24 people charged with terrorism for starting wildfires in 2020.
- On 22 October the US announces it has killed the senior al-Qaeda leader Abdul Hamid al-Matar in an attack in northeastern Syria, two days after Washington denounces an attack on its troops in the country.
- On 23 October the process to draft a new constitution for Syria fails in the sixth round of the Syrian Constitutional Committee in Geneva.

Lebanon

- On 4 October the Lebanese judiciary rejects the request filed in September to recuse the judge Tarek Bitar who was heading the investigations into the explosions in August 2020 at the port in Beirut. On 14 October, at least seven people are killed in clashes in Beirut during the ongoing Hezbollah-led protests against the judge.
- On 9 October Lebanon is left without power for a day and a half after the Deir Amar and Zahrani power stations shut down due to a lack of fuel.
- On 12 October an arrest warrant is issued for the former Minister and MP Ali Hassan Khalil, a close ally to the Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, as part of the investigation into the Beirut port blast.
- On 28 October the US sanctions the businessmen Jihad al-Arab and Dany Khoury and the MP Jamil Sayyed for corruption and undermining the rule of law.

Jordan

- On 3 October Jordan resumes flights to Syria after a 10-year hiatus.
- On 3 October the global investigation run by journalists known as the Pandora Papers reveals that Abdullah II allegedly spent 100 million dollars amassing property in the US and the UK.
- On 12 October Jordan and Israel agree to double the water supply entering Jordan from Israel.
- On 21 October Abdullah II approves the fourth reshuffle of Bisher al-Khasauneh's government in the last year, with changes to eight portfolios.

Egypt

- On 14 October the trial begins against four agents of the National Security Agency over the torture and murder of the Italian student Giulio Regeni.
- On 20 October around a hundred female judges become the first women to form part of the State Council.
- On 26 October Bahaa Kishk, considered a top aide to Hisham Ashmaui, the founder of the al-Qaeda-linked terrorist group al-Mourabitoun, is sentenced to death.
- On 26 October the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi decrees the end of the state of emergency, in place since 2017.

Libya

- On 1 October at least one migrant is killed in an operation in Tripoli carried out by the Libyan forces, which ends with the arrest of more than 4,000 irregular migrants.
- On 20 October the international community expresses its support for the Libya Stabilization Initiative and urges elections be held as scheduled, during the first high-level meeting organized in Tripoli since the beginning of the civil war.
- On 25 October the Zawiya refinery, the only one in operation in Libya, suffers serious damage following skirmishes between armed groups.

Tunisia

- On 1 October Parliament Speaker and Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi

declares the assembly in session and urges lawmakers to resume their duties despite the suspension ordered by the President Kais Saied.

- On 13 October Kais Saied names the new government, led by Najja Bouden Romdhane, the country's first female Prime Minister.
- On 14 October Imed Trabelsi, the nephew of the former President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, is sentenced to eight years in prison for illicit enrichment.
- On 18 October the former minister Mehdi Ben Gharbia is arrested under suspicion of fraud and money laundering.
- On 26 October the former Agriculture Minister Samir Taieb is arrested on corruption charges.
- On 29 October the Hannibal TV television network announces the "voluntary" suspension of its broadcasts, after on 27 October the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA) shuts down Nessma TV and Radio Quran, another two media outlets critical of President Saied, the closure of which follows that of Zituna TV on 7 October.

Algeria

- On 3 October Algeria recalls its ambassador to France for consultations and closes its airspace to French military flights, amid the diplomatic crisis arising from Paris's decision on 28 September to reduce the number of visas for Maghrebi citizens, which in turn comes in response to Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia's refusal to take back illegal migrants sent home by France.
- On 13 October the former Justice Minister Tayeb Louh is sentenced to six years in prison for abuse of office and perversion of justice. Said Bouteflika, the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's brother, is given two years jail time for the obstruction of justice, in the same case.
- On 31 October the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune confirms the termination of the contract with Morocco allowing gas to be transported to Spain and Portugal through the Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline, in the context of the rupture in diplomatic relations between Algiers and Rabat.

Morocco

- On 7 October Mohammed VI names the new coalition government, led by Aziz Akhannouch, with no changes to the ministers of foreign affairs, the interior, religious affairs and defence.
- On 30 October Abdelilah Benkirane returns as the PJD leader after being elected at the party's extraordinary congress in Bouznika.

EU

- On 12 October the United Kingdom asks the EU for a new protocol for the two Irelands to replace the one agreed in 2020, claiming it was hurriedly negotiated and harmful to British interests.
- On 21 October a European Parliament resolution calls for investigations to be launched into any wrongdoing in EU jurisdictions exposed by the Pandora Papers, which reveal the offshore affairs of the former Maltese minister and former European Commissioner John Dalli and the Cypriot and Montenegrin Presidents Nicos Anastasiades and Milo Djukanovic, among other senior officials.
- On 27 October the CJEU orders Poland to pay a record daily fine of a million euros for its failure to comply with the order to suspend its disciplinary mechanism for the country's judges.
- On 29 October the European Parliament files a lawsuit before the CJEU against the EC for its failure to activate its conditionality mechanism and thus force Poland and Hungary to comply with the rule of law, as laid out in the post-pandemic Recovery Fund agreement.

November 2021

Most countries in the region introduce tougher restrictions against Covid-19 faced with the first cases of the Omicron variant. Portugal holds early elections. Migrant arrivals to Spain, Italy and Greece increase. The rise in illegal migration leads to escalating diplomatic tensions between France and the United Kingdom, made worse by the dispute over fishing licences in the English Channel. Relations between Paris and Rome, on the other hand make good progress. In Croatia, a former minister is

arrested and the ECHR rules against the country for its violation of human rights. Kosovo and Algeria hold local elections. In North Macedonia, the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev resigns as head of the SDSM. In Turkey, the lira crisis continues, sparking protests and a ministerial change. The International Conference on Libya ends in the same month that the UN Special Envoy Jan Kubis steps down from the post. In Tunisia, there are demonstrations against President Saied.

Portugal

- On 3 November the Council of State dissolves the Parliament at the proposal of the President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa to hold early elections on 30 January 2022.
- On 8 November at least 10 soldiers and other peacekeeping agents who participated in United Nations missions in Central Africa are arrested over their involvement in a large-scale drug, gold and diamond smuggling case.
- On 26 November the Parliament approves a new law authorizing surrogacy.
- On 28 November Rui Rio, leader of the PSD, beats the Euro MP Paulo Rangel in the primaries to elect a candidate for the January 2022 elections.
- On 30 November the President Rebelo de Sousa vetoes for the second time a bill approved in the Parliament to legalize euthanasia.

Spain

- On 15 November at least 491 migrants have arrived in the Canary Islands since 12 November. Between January and October, at least 16,827 migrants have arrived at the archipelago, 44.3% more than in the same period in 2020.
- On 27 November more than 100,000 police officers and civil guards demonstrate in Madrid to call for the government-approved reform of the Citizens Security Law to be repealed, claiming that it deprives them of the means and authority they need to carry out their duties.

France

- On 4 November France and the United Kingdom begin talks to try to put an end to the dispute over London's

delay in approving licences for French fishermen in British waters, laid down in the United Kingdom's EU withdrawal agreement.

- On 8 November an Algerian residing in France since 2016 stabs two police officers in Cannes, a crime investigated by the Public Prosecutor as an act of terrorism.
- On 16 November the security forces dismantle an illegal migrant camp in Grande-Synthe.
- On 24 November at least 31 people drown near Calais while trying to reach the United Kingdom, amid a sharp rise in migrants crossing the English Channel. On 26 November, France cancels a ministerial meeting to address the migration crisis, describing the British management of the crisis and that of the fishing licences as "not very serious."
- On 26 November the French judiciary announces the opening of an investigation against the former Minister Nicolas Hulot accused of rape and sexual assault.

Italy

- On 7 November 847 migrants disembark in Trapani, after being rescued between 2 and 4 November by the Sea-Eye 4, whose crew denounces Malta's refusal to coordinate the rescues. On the same day, the Ocean Viking disembarks 308 migrants in Lampedusa and 53 more arrive in Crotone. The arrivals on Italian shores increase throughout November.
- On 23 November the Ethics Committee of the Italian public health service authorizes assisted suicide for the first time since the Constitutional Court's 2019 ruling in favour of applying euthanasia in specific cases, despite it still being illegal.
- On 26 November the Prime Minister Mario Draghi and the French President Emmanuel Macron sign the Quirinale Treaty in Rome, a landmark agreement for enhancing cooperation between Paris and Rome.

Malta

- On 24 November the Maltese Roberta Metsola is elected to be the EPP's candidate to run for President of the European Parliament as of January 2022.

Croatia

- On 9 November preliminary figures for the census carried out in September and October by the National Bureau of Statistics (DZS) reveal that Croatia has lost 400,000 residents in the last 10 years, almost 10% of its population.
- On 10 November the former Regional Development and EU Funds Minister Gabrijela Zalac is arrested in connection with an anti-corruption investigation by the European Public Prosecutor's Office.
- On 20 November the ECHR rules that Croatia violated human rights in the death of an Afghan child in 2017, when border police forced her and her family to return to Serbia by walking along the train tracks.
- On 24 November Emmanuel Macron becomes the first French President to pay an official visit to Croatia since the country's independence, during which both countries sign a strategic partnership agreement, which includes the purchase from France of 12 F3F-Rafale fighter jets for 990 million euros.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 3 November the UN Security Council extends the mandate for the EU Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea) by another year, removing from the resolution all mention of the Office of the High Representative of the international community to win support from Russia and China, after Christian Schmidt warns in his first report of the existential risk posed to the country by Bosnian Serb separatism.
- On 23 November thousands of coal miners protest in Sarajevo calling for better pay and working conditions.
- On 29 November the former Defence Minister Selmo Cikotic is indicted for abuse of office between 2009 and 2011.

Serbia

- On 10 November around 991 migrants are arrested along with seven alleged traffickers in an operation against undocumented centred on Belgrade, Subotica, Sombor, Kikinda,

Sabac, Kraljevo, Vranje and Novi Pazar.

- On 27 November demonstrations in several cities protest against the government's plans to help speed up the expropriation of private property in areas of public interest. The project of the multinational company Rio Tinto to open a lithium mine in the west of the country is at the centre of the demonstrations that have been taking place on a weekly basis.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 12 November 21 out of Kosovo's 38 municipalities hold a second round of local elections, following a first round that took place on 17 October. The ruling Vetevendosje wins in just four of the 12 municipalities, and its mayoral candidate for Pristina, the former Health Minister Arben Vitia, loses against the LDK candidate Perparim Rama.
- On 25 November public healthcare workers go on strike to demand the approval of the draft law on public sector salaries, so they can be included in the 2022 state budget.
- On 30 November the US, the UK, Germany, France and Italy urge Kosovo to enforce a ruling from seven years ago that grants the Orthodox monastery in Decani ownership of plots of land claimed by two Kosovar companies.

North Macedonia

- On 9 November North Macedonia declares a state of crisis over the risk of a power shortage, allowing authorities to intervene financially to help power companies buy electricity from abroad.
- On 9 November the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev postpones a decision to resign after poor results in the local elections in October in response to the announcement of a confidence motion tabled by the opposition against the government coalition led by the social democrats, which on 11 November is unsuccessful. In any case, on 27 November Zaev resigns as leader of the SDSM, which agrees to elect a new leader to be presented to the Parliament as Zaev's replacement as Prime Minister.

Albania

- On 11 November Russia and Serbia describe remarks made by the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama regarding a possible unification of Albania and Kosovo as "unacceptable."

Greece

- On 2 November Greece announces tougher Covid-19 restriction for the non-vaccinated, a day after registering record infection rates.
- On 5 November the police use tear gas to disperse firefighters protesting in Athens calling for their temporary contracts to be made permanent in recognition of their work during the wave of fires in the summer.
- On 27 November Greece opens two new Closed Controlled Access Centres to house asylum seekers in Leros and Kos.

Turkey

- On 11 November the EU renews its sanctions on unauthorized drilling activities in eastern Mediterranean waters, which affect the Turkish oil company TPAO, by another 12 months.
- On 12 November Turkey announces the ban on Syrian, Iraqi and Yemeni nationals from travelling by air to Belarus to help stem the dangerous migration crisis on the Polish border.
- On 15 November Turkey announces a new counterterrorism operation against the PKK in the provinces of Bingol and Diyarbakir.
- On 19 November Turkey and Bulgaria recall their ambassadors after Bulgaria's caretaker government accuses Ankara of rigging the vote of Bulgarians residing in Turkey in favour of the pro-Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MDL) in the Bulgarian elections on 14 November.
- On 23 November the ECHR rules against Turkey for the pre-trial detention of 427 judges following the failed coup attempt in 2016.
- On 23 November the Turkish lira hits a record depreciation, its value dropping by more than 13% against the dollar and the euro, after the central bank's decision to reduce interest rates, at the

President's request. The fall in the country's currency sparks protests in the main cities.

- On 25 November the police disperse demonstrators protesting against Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, during the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Cyprus

- On 5 November Colin Stewart is appointed the UN's Special Representative for Cyprus and head of the UNFICYP, to replace Elizabeth Spehar.
- On 18 November the Supreme Court rejects the appeal by Diko MP Zaharias Koulias against the court decision to award the former Agriculture Minister Costas Themistocleous 25,000 euros in damages for defamation when, in 2006, Themistocleous, a staunch supporter of reunification, sued Koulias for remarks suggesting the former minister was being paid by Turkey to support separatism in Northern Cyprus.

Syria

- On 15 November the EU adds four new Syrian ministers to its sanctions list, raising the number of people sanctioned by Brussels to 287.
- On 16 November the President Bashar al-Assad issues a decree abolishing the position of the Grand Mufti and expands the powers of a council under the authority of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.
- On 24 November Syria denounces Israeli attacks on the province of Homs, amid an increase in such attacks over recent weeks to avoid Iranian bases being set up in the country.

Lebanon

- On 2 November after publishing for 70 years, *The Daily Star*, owned by the former Prime Minister Saad Hariri and one of the leading English-language newspapers for the Middle East, shuts down due to Lebanon's economic crisis.
- On 15 November the investigation begins in Luxemburg against the central bank governor Riad Salameh, for illegal financing, which adds to those ongoing

in Switzerland and France for money laundering, embezzlement, illicit enrichment and tax evasion.

- On 24 November Australia designates Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

Egypt

- On 3 November the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi orders government institutions to begin relocating to the administrative capital in December, located to the east of Cairo and without an official name. On 23 November, the government holds its first meeting in the new capital.
- On 15 November the requirement enters into force for public workers to be vaccinated or have a weekly negative PCR. On 25 November, the country approves administering a third dose of the vaccine to vulnerable groups.
- On 18 November the former lawmaker Zyad al-Elaimy, the journalists Hossam Moanis and Hisham Fouad and the activists Mohamed Bahnasy, Husam Nasser and Fatma Ramadan are handed down sentences of between three and five years in prison for spreading false news and questioning the legitimacy of state institutions, in collusion with the Muslim Brotherhood.
- On 19 November the Court of Cassation approves the inclusion of the former presidential candidate Abdelmo-neim Aboul Fotouh and the activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, among others, on the country's list of terrorists, decreed in November 2020.

Libya

- On 13 November the International Conference for Libya in Paris ends, in which some thirty countries announce "sanctions" for those trying to "undermine or manipulate" Libya's first democratic presidential and parliamentary elections, scheduled for December, in which Saif el-Islam, the son of the dictator Muammar Gaddafi, will run as a presidential candidate. On 16 November, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar also announces he will run in the presidential elections, with the Speaker of the House of Representatives Aguila Saleh making a similar announcement the next day.

- On 23 November the UN Special Envoy for Libya Jan Kubis, who has occupied the post since January, resigns abruptly, a month before the presidential elections.

Tunisia

- On 9 November the Tunisian General Labour (UGTT) calls a general strike in Agareb, following violent clashes with police on 8 November during a protest over the reopening of the el-Gonna landfill, in which an activist dies.
- On 12 November the MP of Qalb Tounes Zouhair Makhlouf is sentenced to a year in prison for sexually harassing a school girl.
- On 14 November a demonstration against the suspension of the Parliament and the authoritarian drift of the President Kais Saied ends in clashes with the police.

Algeria

- On 7 November the former director-general of national security Abdelghani Hamel and the former security chief of the wilaya of Algiers Noureddine Berrachedi are cleared of charges of abuse of office by a court in Blida.
- On 27 November Algeria holds early local elections with a turnout of 36.58% and in which the FLN is the most voted party.

Morocco

- On 21 November Morocco reports the arrest of a group of 155 migrants illegally trying to set sail for the Canaries.
- On 24 November, during the first official visit of an Israeli Defence Minister – Benny Gantz – to Morocco, both countries sign a security and defence cooperation agreement.

EU

- On 10 November European Council President Charles Michel, on an urgent visit to Warsaw, announces aid for Poland to avoid the uncontrolled entry of migrants from Belarus, coinciding with Minsk's threat to cut the gas supply to the Union if Brussels approves new sanctions against the regime of Alexan-

der Lukashenko. In parallel, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell proposes the creation of an emergency European military force before 2025 in a document known as “Strategic Compass,” aimed at establishing a common position on geopolitical threats. On 15 November, EU foreign ministers impose a fifth round of sanctions on Belarus.

- On 11 November the European Parliament approves the creation of the new EU asylum agency.
- On 15 November the CJEU rules against Poland for allowing its Justice Minister to appoint judges to higher criminal courts and against Hungary for failing to comply with the regulations on asylum application.
- On 19 November riots break out in Rotterdam in the context of denialist demonstrations against government measures to address the surge in Covid-19 cases, which also affect Vienna, Brussels and Zagreb.
- On 30 November the Parliament and the Council reach an agreement to renew the mandate of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and to strengthen the EU’s health crisis prevention and response capacity.

December 2021

With the Omicron Covid-19 variant adding to the previous alpha, beta, gamma and delta variants, most Euro-Mediterranean countries tighten restrictions to slow down infection rates. Also during December there is a sharp increase in migrant arrivals to European shores. In Portugal, the Internal Administration Minister resigns. In Spain, the Minister of Universities resigns and early elections are called in Castile and Leon. In France, the race begins for the presidential elections in April 2022, the SME Minister resigns and New Caledonia rejects independence again in a referendum. In Italy, the Prime Minister authorizes the entry of 70,000 non-EU nationals to help deal with labour shortages. Two former senior Maltese officials are sanctioned by the US. The Parliament of the Republika Srpska approves starting its withdrawal from the federal institutions of Bosnia and

Herzegovina. The President of North Macedonia asks for a new government to be formed. Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia move forwards in establishing a single market. The Turkish currency crisis deepens and the European Council approves launching infringement proceedings against Ankara over the detention of Osman Kavala. Cyprus signs a deal with Qatar on gas exploration and production sharing in its EEZ. Bahrain and the EAU adopt measures to normalize ties with the Syrian regime. France helps to ensure the Gulf countries’ commitment to settling their diplomatic crisis with Lebanon. Lebanon calls elections for May 2022 as part of efforts to overcome the country’s political crisis. In Egypt, various sentences are handed down for undermining national security and spreading fake news. Libya suspends the elections scheduled for 24 December. In Tunisia, there are protests against President Saied, the former President Moncef Marzouki is sentenced in absentia and a senior official from Ennahda Noureddine Bhairi is arrested.

Portugal

- On 1 December Portugal enters a state of calamity for Covid-19 despite its 87% vaccination rate, the highest in the EU. On 7 December, the government approves vaccinating children from 5 to 11 and, on 22 December, it brings forward restrictions planned to start on 2 January 2022 to 25 December.
- On 6 December with less than two months before the early elections, the Internal Administration Minister Eduardo Cabrita resigns, following an incident on 18 June when a worker for the A-6 motorway, which joins Alentejo with the Spanish border, was struck and killed by a speeding vehicle in which the minister was travelling.
- On 14 December the former Economy Minister Manuel Pinho is arrested on suspicion of tax fraud and money laundering.
- On 17 December seven agents of the National Republican Guard are accused by the Public Prosecutor of torturing and humiliating immigrants in Odemira.

Spain

- On 2 December the EC dismisses calls from Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Romania to reform the marginal pricing system, under which energy prices are fixed, and improve consumer protection, amid soaring electricity prices.
- On 18-19 December around 600 migrants reach the Canary Islands.
- On 20 December Joan Subirats takes over as Minister of Universities, to replace Manuel Castells.
- On 20 December the president of Castile and Leon, Alfonso Fernandez Mañueco (PP) breaks the coalition pact with Cs and calls early elections for 13 February 2022.

France

- On 3 December France signs a multibillion-euro contract with the UAE for the sale of 80 Rafale fighter jets, during Emmanuel Macron’s tour of the Persian Gulf.
- On 4 December Valerie Pécresse is elected the LR candidate to run for the President of the Republic in the April 2022 elections.
- On 6 December after the first case is confirmed of the Covid-19 Omicron variant, France announces new restrictions that include the closure of nightlife activities and the recommendation to vaccinate children between 5 and 11 years old. On 16 December, France closes access from the English Channel and the Channel Tunnel due to the surge in the Omicron variant in the United Kingdom. On 27 December, requirements are announced for workers to telework for at least three days each week, the third dose to be given three months after receiving the last dose and the use of face masks in outdoor spaces in certain cities.
- On 7 December a rally in Villepinte held by Eric Zemmour ends in clashes between SOS Racisme activists and supporters of the far-right presidential candidate.
- On 8 December the SME Minister Alain Griset resigns after being sentenced to six months in prison for making false declarations about his assets.
- On 9 December France begins talks with other EU members to reach a com-

mon position on the US-led diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

- On 12 December New Caledonia holds its third and last referendum as agreed with Paris on the independence of the overseas territory. With a turnout of 44%, the vote against independence wins again with 96% of the votes, due to a massive boycott of pro-independence parties, who claim that the Covid-19 pandemic has hampered both the campaign and voting.

- On 13 December Nicolas Sarkozy's former Interior Minister Claude Gueant is jailed for failing to reimburse the money he was convicted of embezzling from public funds in 2017.

- On 14 December the Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announces the beginning of procedures to close the Grand Mosque of Beauvais, in response to the "extremely radical" nature of its sermons against "Christians, homosexuals and Jews."

- On 23 December France opens its judicial and police archives from the Algerian War, 15 years ahead of the legally scheduled date.

- On 23 December France, another 13 European countries and Canada condemn the deployment in Mali of mercenaries from the private Russian company Wagner, who Bamako has asked to help fight against the jihadist insurgency, following the reduction in French troops from Operation Berkhane.

- On 30 December at least 15 police officers are injured during the evacuation of a migrant camp in Calais.

Italy

- On 2 December in response to the increase in Covid-19 cases with the advance of the Omicron variant of the virus, Italy reintroduces mandatory face masks in city centres. On 15 December, Italy restricts entry to travellers from the rest of the Union. On 23 December, the use of face masks in outdoor spaces is enforced and nighttime leisure activities are closed down.

- On 24, 25 and 26 December amid a sharp increase in arrivals to Italy, despite the bad weather, 490 immigrants disembark in Calabria, 278 in Lampedusa, 100 in Capo Rizzuto and 154 in Capo di Leuca. Added to these arrivals over the

same dates are 114 migrants disembarked in Trapani by the Ocean Viking, 214 disembarked in Pozzallo by the Sea-Eye 4 and 350 picked up by the Sea-Watch 3, which is awaiting a safe port.

- On 28 December the Prime Minister Mario Draghi signs a decree to allow entry to 70,000 foreign nationals for the reconstruction of the Italian economy following the pandemic.

Malta

- On 22 December the US announces sanctions against the former Energy Minister Konrad Mizzi and the former prime minister's chief of staff Keith Schembri over their participation in acts of "significant corruption" while they held their posts, and which includes a ban on entering US territory.

- On 22 December the Education Minister Justyne Caruana resigns following reports of favouritism in her hiring of former footballer Daniel Bogdanovic. This is Caruana's second resignation, following her 2020 resignation as Minister for Gozo after revelations of a trip her husband made with the main suspect in the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia.

Slovenia

- On 16 December the European Parliament condemns the hostility against the press and surge in polarization in Slovenia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 2 December the Bosnian Serb member of the tripartite presidency Milorad Dodik meets in Moscow with the Russian President Vladimir Putin to hold talks on the situation in the Balkans and which may involve plans for the supply of Russian gas.

- On 10 December the Bosnian Serb Parliament approves a declaration calling for the start of the Republika Srpska's withdrawal from the federal judicial and tax system and armed forces, in its first step towards declaring Bosnian Serb independence.

Montenegro

- On 11 December after negotiations fail for a government reshuffle that re-

places technocrat members of Zdravko Krivokapic's cabinet, appointed in December 2020, with members of the parties of the coalition government, the DF, a coalition member, proposes early parliamentary elections. The announcement leads the DPS-led opposition to withdraw, on 13 December, a confidence vote tabled against the government, in exchange for elections being called.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 16 December Kosovo and Denmark agree on the transfer of up to 300 non-EU nationals to Kosovo's Gjilan prison to ease the strain on the overloaded Danish prison system.

- On 21 December the former mayor of Shterpce/Strpce Bratislav Nikolic is arrested on corruption charges.

North Macedonia

- On 6 December the Albanian party Alternative joins the Social Democrat-led coalition government.

- On 29 December following Zoran Zaev's resignation as Prime Minister and SDSM leader on 22 December, the President Stevo Pendarovski tasks the party's new leader Dimitar Kovachevski with the formation of a new government.

Albania

- On 20-21 December Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia sign six agreements in Tiran on the labour market, electronic identification and the lifting of non-tariff barriers, which add to a previous agreement to abolish customs controls as of 2023, in efforts to move forward with the Open Balkan initiative for a single market, which will pave the way towards European accession.

Greece

- On 11 December the US approves a possible sale of warships to Greece, which challenges a similar agreement between France and Greece in September.

- On 13 December Nikos Androulakis is elected as the leader of the Movement

for Change, formerly the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), taking over from Fofi Gennimata, who died on 25 October.

- On 25 December at least 27 migrants die in the Aegean Sea while trying to reach Greece. 2021 has seen the death of 2,500 migrants in the Aegean Sea, according to official figures.

Turkey

- On 2 December the Council of Europe approves infringement proceedings against Turkey for repeatedly failing to comply with a ECHR ruling from December 2019 and for continuing to hold the philanthropist and businessman Osman Kavala in pre-trial detention since 2017. Although Kavala was cleared in February 2020 of charges related with the 2013 Gezi Park protests, the Court of Cassation overturned the ruling ordering a retrial and merging it with proceedings for the 2016 coup attempt. The new, broader trial began on 8 October with Kavala in preventive detention.

- On 2 December Metin Gurcan, a former soldier and founding member of the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA), a splinter party from the AKP, is indicted by the Public Prosecutor for spying for Spain and Italy.

- On 2 December Recep Tayyip Erdogan appoints Nureddin Nebati as Finance Minister to replace Lutfi Elvan in an effort to reverse the course of the country's currency crisis. On 12 December, thousands gather in Ankara and Istanbul to protest against the government's social policy and the sustained depreciation of the lira, despite the central bank's interventions to prop up the exchange rate. On 17 December, Erdogan announces a 50% increase in the minimum wage for 2022, and on 21 December, he promises savers that they will be compensated for any losses resulting from the exchange rate.

Cyprus

- On 13 December QatarEnergy signs an energy exploration and production sharing deal with Cyprus. Ankara, which maintains a strategic alliance with Doha, condemns the agreement.

Syria

- On 22 December the EU announces 10 million euros in aid to ease the effects of the severe drought in Syria.

- On 22 December the SDF and international coalition announce the death of five Daesh members in Deir ez-Zor, amid a rise in attacks by the terrorist organization in recent months.

- On 28 December Syria accuses Israel of attacking the port of Latakia for the second time in a month.

- On 30 December Bahrain names its first ambassador in Damascus since the Syrian war. This appointment adds to the UAE's request in November to readmit Syria into the Arab League.

Lebanon

- On 3 December Information Minister George Kordahi announces his resignation after more than a month of diplomatic, commercial and political crisis since on 29 October, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait ordered the expulsion of the Lebanese ambassadors and suspended Lebanese imports following Kordahi's condemnation of war crimes by the Arab coalition against the Houthi rebel movement in Yemen. On 4 December, the French President Emmanuel Macron announces he has secured Saudi Arabia and Lebanon's commitment to resolving the crisis.

- On 12 December three people are killed in a gunfight, attributed to members of Fatah and Hamas, during the funeral of a member of the Shiite party-militia who died in a blast at the Burj el-Shemali Palestinian refugee camp.

- On 18 December the nighttime curfew begins for the Christmas holidays.

- On 26 December the Saudi-led Arab International Coalition accuses Hezbollah of actively participating in fighting in Yemen in support of the Houthi insurgency.

- On 27 December the President Michel Aoun calls for urgent international dialogue to resolve the political paralysis in the government which began on 12 October with the decision of Hezbollah and the AMAL Movement to block government work until the replacement of the judge Tarek Bitar, who

is leading the investigation into the Beirut port blasts in August 2020.

- On 27 December the government approves a decree setting parliamentary elections for 15 May 2022.

Egypt

- On 8 December after almost two years in pre-trial detention, the activist Patrick Zaki, whose trial for spreading fake news began on 14 September, is provisionally released.

- On 19 December the acting leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Mahmoud Ez-zat, arrested in August 2020, is sentenced to life imprisonment for collaborating with Hamas against national security.

- On 20 December Alaa Abdel Fattah, one of the leaders of the 2011 Revolution, is sentenced to five years in prison together with the blogger Mohamed Ibrahim and lawyer Mohamed al-Baqer, both sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

- On 23 December the activist Sanaa Seif, who was sentenced on 17 March to a year and a half in prison for spreading fake news, is released.

Libya

- On 13 December there are serious clashes in Sebha, between the GNU-affiliated 116 Brigade and the Tariq Bin Ziyad force, loyal to Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar.

- On 15 December armed men surround the government in Tripoli and the office of the Prime Minister. The head of the Presidency Council Mohammed al-Menfi calls for the security forces to intervene.

- On 22 December, after receiving a report from the High Election Commission, the Parliament decides to suspend the presidential elections scheduled for 24 December, given the disputes over their legality, the resulting presidential powers and the validity of various candidacies. It is decided not to propose a new date without first having restructured the executive authority and reaching an agreement on a road map enshrined in the Constitution.

Tunisia

- On 17 December thousands protest against the President Kais Saied, four

days after he announces that Parliament will remain suspended for another year, on the basis of a new electoral law, until elections are held in December 2022, along with a popular consultation to draft constitutional reforms that will be put to a referendum in July.

- On 22 December the former President Moncef Marzouki is sentenced in absentia to four years in prison for conspiring against state security.
- On 22 December the vaccination certificates become a requirement for accessing indoor spaces.
- On 31 December Ennahda report that security forces have arrested a senior party official, Noureddine Bhairi, in a move Parliament's biggest party brands as an attempt to silence the opposition to President Saïed.

Algeria

- On 26 December the government announces the requirement of a vaccination pass to enter or leave the country.

Morocco

- On 10 December Morocco extends the suspension of international air links until 31 December to contain Covid-19 infections. On 21 December, New Year's Eve celebrations in public spaces are banned. On 30 December, the period before administration of the third vaccine dose is reduced from six to four months.
- On 21 December Morocco says it has rescued at least 350 migrants in various operations since 18 December.

EU

- On 3 December Hungary, the only EU country not invited to the World Summit for Democracy called by the US President Joe Biden, vetoes the Union's participation with a common position.
- On 6 December Frontex registers 8,239 returns of irregular migrants in the first half of 2021, the highest figure on record for a six-month period.
- On 8 December the Commission approves a draft regulation allowing commercial retaliation in response to illegitimate political and economic pressure from third countries.

- On 13 December EU Foreign Ministers approve sanctions on people and entities supporting the Russian Wagner Group due to its destabilizing activities in various countries.
- On 14 December the Commission approves a reform of the Schengen Area, which includes, at the request of the Commission, centralizing in the European Council the closure of the EU's external borders in the event of a crisis.
- On 16 December Poland and the Czech Republic block an agreement to address the energy crisis in the European Council, over their disagreement with the CO₂ emissions trading system, which has triggered soaring prices in 2021.
- On 20 December the EMA recommends the new Covid-19 Nuvaxovid vaccine produced by the US pharmaceutical company Novavax.
- On 23 December the Commission launches infringement proceedings against Poland in response to the Polish Constitutional Tribunal's ruling on 7 October rejecting the primacy of EU law over the Polish Constitution.
- On 25 December Romania's Constitutional Court rules that a CJEU decision cannot be applied without first amending the Romanian Constitution, two days after the CJEU ruling concerning the primacy of EU law over Constitutional Court rulings that lead to systemic impunity for crimes concerning European funds.

Gibraltar

- On 19 March the EC refers the United Kingdom to the CJEU for failing to guarantee the repayment of up to 100 million euros in illegal tax exemptions granted to large companies in Gibraltar.
- On 24 March Gibraltar announces an easing of Covid-19 restrictions.
- On 24 June, in a referendum, a majority of Gibraltarians voters support abolishing life imprisonment as a possible sentence under the Abortion Law.
- On 12 October talks begin between the EU and the United Kingdom on Gibraltar, a territory that is not covered by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement signed with London in 2020.

Western Sahara

- On 10 January the US begins the process of establishing a consulate in Dakhla.
- On 24 January the Polisario Front says it has launched a missile attack on the Guerguerat border area. The situation in the area is highly tense since Moroccan troops were deployed in Guerguerat in October 2020 to remove Sahrawi activists that were blocking goods transit.
- On 5 April Senegal opens its consulate in Dakhla.
- On 8 April a senior commander of the Polisario Front, Addah al-Bendir, is killed in an attack by the Moroccan army in Tifariti, after participating in an offensive in Bir Lehlou on the Moroccan-built separation wall.
- On 23 April Spain confirms that the leader of the Polisario Front Brahim Ghali has been hospitalized in Logroño for humanitarian reasons and is in a serious condition due to Covid-19. Morocco accuses Spain of withholding information regarding the situation and failing to change its stance on the status of Western Sahara, sparking a diplomatic crisis that comes to a head on 17-18 May with the entry of 10,000 migrants into Ceuta, which Moroccan forces do nothing to stop. On 1 June Spain informs Morocco of Ghali's departure for Algiers after being discharged and after the National Court decides not to press charges against him.
- On 15 June the Moroccan ambassador to the United Nations rejects the UN's parameters for the self-determination of Western Sahara.
- On 29 October the United Nations Security Council extends the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until October 2022.
- On 1 November Staffan de Mistura is appointed the UN Special Envoy for Western Sahara, following the approval of Morocco and the Polisario Front.
- On 5 November Algeria denounces Morocco before the UN for terrorism over the death of its citizens in a bombing in Western Sahara.
- On 7 November the Polisario Front condemns Mohammed VI's previous day's address during the commemora-

tion of the Green March and announces a return to the armed struggle.

- On 19 November the EU Council appeals the ruling of the EU General Court on 29 September annulling the trade and fisheries agreements with Morocco, as they included Western Sahara in their application without the consent of the Polisario Front.
- On 22 December after a statement is posted on the German Foreign Ministry website in which Morocco's autonomy plan presented to the UN in 2007 is described as an "important contribution" in resolving the Sahwari issue, Morocco announces it is resuming diplomatic ties with Germany, which have been suspended since March over Berlin's criticism of the US recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

Sources

ABC
Affaires Stratégiques - IFRI

AffarInternazionali - IAI
Agence France Presse
Agencia EFE
Al-Ahram
Al-Jazeera
Al-Masry al-Youm
Al-Monitor
ANSAMed
Associated Press
B92
Balkan Insight
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Council of Foreign Relations
Cyprus Mail
Deutsche Welle
DiploWeb
Ekathimerini
Election Guide - IFES
El Mundo
El Pais
El Watan
Euronews
Europa Press
European Council on Foreign Relations
Europe Media Monitor

Haaretz
Hürriyet
Il Corriere della Sera
Inside Arabia
International Crisis Group
Jeune Afrique
La Vanguardia
Le Figaro
Le Monde
Le monde diplomatique
L'Orient Le Jour
Middle East Eye
Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty
Radio Televisión Española
Real Instituto Elcano
Reuters
Robert Schuman Stiftung
SwissInfo
German Institute for International and Security Affairs - SWP
The Diplomat
The Guardian
The New York Times
The Times of Malta
The Washington Post
United Nations News Centre

Chronologies

Chronology of Events in Israel and Palestine

2021 begins in Israel with what is considered to be the world's most streamlined Covid-19 vaccination rollout, with 2.5 million of the country's close to 9 million inhabitants immunized by mid-February. Despite promising results from the programme, containment measures against the pandemic are re-introduced as of July after new rises in infections are recorded with the appearance of the delta and omicron variants of the virus, for which Israel is the first country in the world to approve administering third and fourth doses of the vaccine, in July and December respectively. There are two other developments that mark the start of the second year of the pandemic. Firstly, Israeli government plans to give 45,000 of the country's doses to 20 countries that have normalized relations with Israel, have recognized Jerusalem as the country's capital or have increased their diplomatic presence in the city, in an example of vaccine diplomacy. The move, however, is interrupted in February under orders of the Attorney General over suspicions that the programme lacks transparency. Secondly, is the controversial introduction of tracking methods used by the domestic intelligence service to monitor those who are or may be infected. In stark contrast, Palestine does not begin its immunization campaign until March, with just 15,000 doses for its population of over five million, most of which have been contributed by Russia – 10,000. The remaining 5,000 of these initial doses have been contributed by Israel, which also decides to vaccinate the nearly 130,000 Palestinians that cross the border on a daily basis to work or trade in Israel.

Besides the pandemic, another major area that has marked 2021 both in Is-

rael and Palestine are the electoral processes. For Israel, the fourth legislative elections in less than two years are held in March, after, in December 2020, a failure to agree on the state budget definitively breaks up the short-lived and forced coalition between Likud (Consolidation) and Kajo Lavan (Blue and White). With a 71.51% turnout, Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud once again wins most votes, on this occasion with 36 of the 120 seats in the Knesset (Parliament), followed very closely by Benny Gantz's Blue and White party, with 33 seats. The close results mean the inevitable formation of a new coalition government. With Netanyahu, as the most voted candidate, unable to form a government before the deadline, having failed to reach an agreement that secures the minimum parliamentary support required, it is not until 2 June, coinciding with the election by the Parliament of Isaac Herzog as the new President of Israel, that an agreement is reached to form a government. Approved on 13 June by the Parliament, the new coalition government comprises a complex alliance of eight parties in which Naftali Bennett, from Yamina (Rightwards) and Yair Lapid, from Yesh Atid (There is a Future), will take turns as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. This brings the end to Benjamin Netanyahu's 12-year government, which has struggled against the growing citizen protests and ongoing trials over the cases known as 1000, 2000 and 4000. The new Bennett-Lapid Administration, after securing approval for the state budget and thereby avoiding a fifth election, continues to respect the Abraham Accords and normalize relations with the UAE and Bahrain, as well as focusing on normalizing

relations with Morocco. The country also continues with its settlement expansion policy in Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights. This, together with measures such as October's designation of six of the main Palestinian human rights NGOs as terrorist organizations, does not bode well for the resumption of the frozen peace talks.

As regards the Palestinian electoral process, in January, the Fatah-dominated PNA announces parliamentary, presidential and Palestinian National Council elections for May, July and August. However, they are suspended in April with President Mahmoud Abbas' decision to postpone the elections until Israel guarantees that Palestinians living in East Jerusalem can participate. The election call itself provokes confrontations between Fatah's Central Committee and splinter groups like Mohammed Dahlan's Democratic Reform Current (DRC) and the factions of Nasser al-Qudwa and Marwan Barghouti. This only serves to cast greater doubt over Abbas' leadership, brought further into question following the assassination in June of Nizar Banat, an opponent of both Abbas and Dahlan. Thus, the first round of local elections, on 11 December, are the only elections held in Palestine in 2021, the second round being scheduled for March 2022. These elections are only held in the West Bank because of Hamas's decision to boycott the vote.

Noteworthy among the conflicts between the parties are the clashes in April at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem, between police and Palestinians from the eastern part of the city, and, in May, protests and clashes in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Beersheba, Acre, Musmus, Lod and Jaffa con-

demning the Israeli settlement policy and the effective annexation of the eastern sector of Jerusalem following an order to evict several Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. This, in turn, triggers a fierce exchange of rocket fire between Israel and the Gaza Strip, culminating in the biggest Israeli offensive against Hamas since the war in 2014, an offensive that ends on 21 May, with a ceasefire secured by Egyptian mediation, which is broken in June with fresh Israeli attacks on Gaza in response to the launch of incendiary balloons into Israel throughout the summer.

January 2021

Israel

- On 1 January the Israeli health authorities report that they have already vaccinated a million citizens against Covid-19 in the first two weeks of the immunization campaign.
- On 5 January Israel introduces tougher measures against Covid-19 for at least two weeks, ordering the closure of schools and non-essential businesses, after more than 8,000 infections are recorded the previous day.
- On 19 January the government opens a tender for the construction of 2,575 new homes in Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- On 24 January the government approves the normalization of relations with Morocco, following the US' recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. On the same day, Israel opens its embassy in the UAE, four months after the signing of the Abraham Accords in Washington.
- On 25 January Merav Michaeli is elected leader of the Labor Party.
- On 25 January Israel suspends flights into the country following the rise in Covid-19 infections and an increase in social opposition to the measures adopted by the government.

Palestine

- On 15 January the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announces that

Palestine will hold parliamentary elections on 22 May, presidential elections on 31 July and elections for the Palestinian National Council on 31 August, in the first Palestinian elections to be held in 15 years. The announcement causes an immediate confrontation between Fatah and the Democratic Reform Current (DRC), led by the dismissed party leader Mohammed Dahlan, who asks to run on a joint list with Fatah or, failing that, on an independent list, following Fatah's dismissal of DRC members. Dahlan, exiled in the UAE since 2011, was investigated by the Palestinian Authority (PNA) and convicted *in absentia* in 2016 for embezzlement. Fatah says it will stop the DRC running in elections, based on the 2007 Palestinian Elections Law and the amendments to this, outlined in the decree law enacted on 11 January 2021.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 5 January a Palestinian man is killed after attempting to stab an Israeli during a protest in the Gush Etzion settlement, close to Bethlehem.
- On 31 January a Palestinian man is shot dead by the Israeli security forces after attempting to stab a soldier in the Gush Etzion settlement, south of the West Bank.

February 2021

Israel

- On 1 February Israel and Kosovo sign an agreement via online links establishing diplomatic ties between the two countries.
- On 5 February the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is declared competent to investigate war crimes committed in Palestinian territories, opening up the possibility of an investigation against Israel or Palestinian militias like Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Israel is not party to the 2002 Rome Statutes, which the PNA signed in 2015.
- On 8 February the trial resumes against Benjamin Netanyahu for corruption cases 1000, 2000 and 4000, in which the Prime Minister pleads not guilty to all charges.

- On 18 February Israel and Syria complete a Russian-mediated prisoner swap of an Israeli woman held captive in Syria for two Syrian shepherds captured by Israel, in a rare instance of indirect cooperation. According to the newspaper Asharq al-Awsat, the swap includes a clause, denied by Syria and Israel, under which Israel would send thousands of Covid-19 vaccines to Syria, a country with which it is technically at war.
- On 21 February Israel begins the reopening of its economy as the Covid-19 vaccination rate reaches 50%, while keeping social distancing measures in place.
- On 21 February the government urges the population to avoid bathing in Mediterranean waters following a serious oil spill that reaches a large part of the coastline.
- On 23 February the trial against Benjamin Netanyahu in three corruption cases is postponed until 5 April, after the elections on 23 March, in response to a request made by the Prime Minister's defence.
- On 25 February Benjamin Netanyahu suspends the donation of tens of thousands of Covid-19 vaccines to a list of allied countries after the Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit asks for legal clarifications concerning the plan.

Palestine

- On 1 February Israel delivers an initial batch of 2,000 doses of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine, out of a total 5,000, to the PNA.
- On 4 February 10,000 doses of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine arrive at Ben Gurion airport to be transferred to the PNA on the same day.
- On 8 February 14 Palestinian parties meet in Cairo to discuss the procedures for the legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 22 May and 31 July, respectively.
- On 14 February, in the West Bank, Palestine begins its Covid-19 vaccination campaign with only 15,000 doses available, in the hope that the WHO's COVAX programme will enable the country to vaccinate 20% of its population during 2021.
- On 5 February, with Gaza struggling with a severe crisis, the announcement

of the replacement of the Khalil al-Wazir mosque, which was destroyed during the war with Israel in 2014, at a cost of over a million dollars sparks controversy among the population of the Palestinian enclave.

- On 17 February a shipment of 2,000 doses of the Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine, donated by Russia, reaches the Gaza Strip from the West Bank after Israel approves the delivery.
- On 27 February the PNA announces new restrictions in the West Bank for 12 days, faced with the increase in coronavirus infections and delays in the vaccination campaign.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 5 February a guard at the Sadeh Ephraim outpost, close to Ramallah, shoots dead a Palestinian man who, according to Israeli sources, was trying to attack a settler at the post. The incident comes in a context of increasing attacks since the beginning of 2021 in the West Bank, involving settlers and Palestinians.
- On 12 February the PNA reports several clashes to the east of Nablus and in Deir Jarir, between settlers and Israeli security forces and demonstrators protesting against the settlements in the West Bank.

March 2021

Israel

- On 1 March Benjamin Netanyahu blames Iran for the attack in the Gulf of Oman in late February on the Bahamian-flagged, Israeli-owned cargo ship *Helios Ray*.
- On 1 March the Supreme Court authorizes the inclusion in the Labor Party's electoral list of the Arab candidate Ibtisam Mara'ana Menuhin for the upcoming elections. The parliamentary electoral committee had annulled her candidacy at the request of a far-right candidate, due to statements made by Menuhin in the past casting doubt over the Jewish nature of Israel and in support of the Palestinian cause.
- On 1 March the first UAE ambassador to Israel arrives in Tel Aviv in order

to establish bilateral diplomatic ties, as outlined in the 2020 Abraham Accords.

- On 5 March thousands of demonstrators take to the streets in Um el-Fahem, in northern Israel, to protest against the police response, a week earlier, when they used force to disperse a demonstration against the widespread violence suffered by the Arab city.
- On 7 March Israel begins a large-scale campaign to vaccinate the 120,000 Palestinians working legally in Israel and the Israeli settlements in the West Bank.
- On 11 March Jordan refuses to allow the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to fly through its airspace on his first official visit to the UAE. The decision could be, according to diplomatic sources, a reprisal for Israel's cancellation on the previous day of a visit by the Jordanian Crown Prince to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.
- On 11 March the Czech Republic opens a diplomatic office in West Jerusalem as a sign of its recognition of the city as the capital of Israel.
- On 14 March Kosovo opens its embassy in Jerusalem in recognition of the city's status as the capital of Israel and in exchange for Israel recognizing Kosovo's independence in September 2020.
- On 17 March the Israeli Parliament approves the use of an electronic bracelet to help supervise the mandatory Covid-19 quarantine for anyone returning to the country.
- On 18 March the UAE suspends preparations for the summit scheduled for April with Israel, the US and the Arab countries that have normalized relations with Israel, accusing Benjamin Netanyahu of exploiting the normalization between the two countries in his campaign for the elections on 23 March.
- On 20 March thousands demonstrate in Jerusalem to call for the resignation of the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, three days before the elections on 23 March.
- On 22 March the Israeli army announces the imminent closure of all border crossings from the West Bank and Gaza a day before the legislative elections.
- On 23 March Israel holds early elections, the fourth in less than two years,

in which, with a high turnout, Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud wins again with 36 of the 120 seats in the Knesset (Parliament), thereby requiring the party to form a new coalition to be able to govern. Benny Gantz's Blue and White party wins 33 seats.

- On 24 March the United Nations Human Rights Council renews its support for another year for four resolutions against Israel for its activities in occupied Palestinian territories.
- On 25 March Channel 12 reports a "recent" Iranian missile attack in the Arabian Sea on an Israeli container ship heading to India from Tanzania.
- On 30 March Bahrain appoints Khaled Yousif al-Jalaha as the Emirate's new ambassador to Israel, in virtue of the 2020 Abraham Accords.
- On 30 March Israel gives the green light to an international operation to administer Covid-19 vaccines to 7,000 Palestinian traders from the Gaza Strip, who travel regularly through Israel and the West Bank.

Palestine

- On 2 March the PNA confirms it has diverted 10% of the 12,000 doses of the Covid-19 vaccine earmarked for medical workers to the Palestinian football team, government ministers, presidential guards and members of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). A further 200 doses were given to the royal court of Jordan, following a request from Aman.
- On 4 March the PNA decrees a state of emergency in the West Bank after reporting a record daily infection rate of 2,000 and with hospitals overflowing. On 6 March, a provincial lockdown and curfew are imposed in Ramallah and Nablus.
- On 11 March Fatah's Central Committee expels Nasser al-Qudwa, one of its most prominent members, for his attempt to field a separate list of candidates for the parliamentary elections in May.
- On 14 March Hamas announces the appointment, for the first time since its creation in 1987, of a woman, Jamila al-Shanti, as a member of its politburo.
- On 17 March the PNA receives an initial batch of 60,000 doses of the

coronavirus vaccine through the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access Fund (COVAX).

- On 31 March the EU announces that it is studying alternatives for observing the upcoming Palestinian elections, faced with Israel's refusal to allow it to deploy an exploratory mission ahead of the vote, due to the pandemic.
- On 31 March members of Fatah that support Marwan Barghouti break away from the party governing the PNA to form a separate electoral list, which will compete against Fatah in the May elections in an alliance with the faction led by Nasser al-Kidwa, Yasser Arafat's nephew and former Palestinian envoy to the United Nations, who abandoned Fatah in the middle of the month.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 3 March the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, announces the opening of "an investigation respecting the situation in Palestine," which will include crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court allegedly committed by Israel or Hamas during the 2014 Operation Protective Edge, which formed part of Israel's settlement expansion policy, and in the Israeli army's response to the Great March of Return protests, organized in Gaza between March 2018 and December 2019.
- On 8 March the Israeli army says it has "neutralized" a Palestinian assailant who attempted to stab a soldier in Nablus.
- On 23 March the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) reports that a rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip at Beersheba, shortly after the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to the city during the Israeli legislative elections.

April 2021

Israel

- On 6 April Benjamin Netanyahu is tasked to form a government by the President Reuven Rivlin, Likud (Consolidation) being the most voted party in the early elections in March.
- On 8 April Israel reiterates that it will not recognize the ICC's jurisdiction with

respect to alleged Israeli war crimes during the 2014 conflict with Gaza.

- On 12 April Iran accuses Israel of being behind the power cut, on that same day, at the Natanz nuclear plant, describing it as an act of "nuclear terrorism."
- On 18 April Israel lifts the mandatory use of face masks outdoors.
- On 19 April the police enter Mea Shearim, Jerusalem, to arrest a man suspected of participating in violent protests which led to clashes with local residents, most of them ultra-Orthodox Jews.
- On 22 April there is a big explosion close to Dimona, where Israel's nuclear reactor is located, attributed by Israel to a missile launched from Syria. Shortly after, Syria announces that four of its soldiers have been injured in Israeli airstrikes on the outskirts of Damascus.
- On 30 April at least 45 people are killed, crushed to death or asphyxiated, and over a hundred injured in the worst civilian disaster in the history of the State of Israel. The crush was caused by a human avalanche at Mount Meron in Galilee, during the Jewish pilgrimage of Lag Baomer at the tomb of rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. 100,000 people were attending the event.

Palestine

- On 6 April the Gazan authorities order school closures, a night curfew and a ban on movement between populations faced with the high percentage of new Covid-19 infections.
- On 30 April the PNA President and Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas announces another postponement of the Palestinian legislative elections, scheduled for 22 May, "until the participation of our people in Jerusalem is guaranteed," pending an Israeli decision. Hamas describes Abbas's decision as a "blow" to avoid a defeat at the ballot box with polls suggesting good results for the ruling party in Gaza and faced with Fatah's internal divisions. Following Abbas's announcement, there are protests in Gaza and the West Bank.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 6 April a Palestinian man is shot dead by the Israeli army when he attempted to ram a vehicle into a check-

point close to Ramallah, according to the IDF.

- On 13 April there are clashes at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem between police and Palestinians from the eastern part of the city, which continue for over a week, in reaction to the Israeli decision to set up barriers to open up the steps outside the gate, thereby preventing people from sitting down and facilitating transit.
- On 15-16 April the Israeli army reports two attacks carried out on Hamas targets in retaliation for two rockets launched from Gaza.
- On 18-19 April clashes break out in the Jaffa district of Tel Aviv between Arab and Jewish demonstrators, after Arab residents attack the head of a Jewish religious school who was looking to buy property for the centre's facilities.
- On 22 April over 100 Palestinians and some 20 Israeli police officers are injured in clashes that erupted when the police escorted a protest organized by the extremist Jewish movement Lahava in Jerusalem's Old City.
- On 26 April the Israeli security cabinet authorizes broad military action if rockets continue to be fired from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory, following the recent surge in attacks.
- On 29 April the Israeli army condemns a Molotov cocktail attack on a building in a settlement east of Ramallah.

May 2021

Israel

- On 4 May Israel and Lebanon resume direct talks brokered by the US on the demarcation of their maritime border, which began in October 2020 and have been on hold since December.
- On 5 May the President Reuven Rivlin begins consultations to deliver the mandate to form a government to Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party (There Is a Future), after Likud's 28-day deadline as the most voted party in the March elections expires without the acting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu able to attain the 61 seats needed to form a coalition government.
- On 5-6 May Syria blames Israel for two airstrikes on different areas of Latakia and Quneitra, respectively.

- On 13 May the leader of Yamina (Rightward), Naftali Bennett, withdraws his support for the formation of a coalition government between Yesh Atid, the United Arab List and his party, and begins to negotiate a government agreement with Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud, faced with the escalation of the conflict with Hamas in Gaza and the ongoing clashes in mixed Arab-Israeli cities. On 26 May, Yair Lapid announces an agreement between Yesh Atid and the left-wing Meretz (Vigor) party of Nitzan Horowitz for the possible formation of a government that does not include Likud. On 30 May, Bennet retracts his decision and announces his support for the Yesh Atid leader, Yair Lapid, in the formation of a new government in which Bennet would occupy the position of prime minister for the first half of the term and Lapid during the second half. For its part, Gideon Saar's centre-right party Tikva Hadasha (New Hope) rejects Netanyahu's offer to prevent the formation of the new Bennett-Lapid coalition.
- On 14 May Israel condemns the launch of three missiles into its territory from Syria, a day after it condemned another three launches from Lebanese territory.
- On 18 May Israel responds with artillery fire to the launch of at least six rockets from Lebanon, which fail to reach Israeli territory.
- On 27 May Israel summons the French ambassador following remarks made by the French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian in which he warned of the "risk of apartheid" in Israel if there were no guarantees of a Palestinian state that coexisted with an Israeli one.

Palestine

- On 18 May a nationwide general strike is held in Palestinian Territory to condemn the Israeli bombing of the Gaza Strip, which has already claimed 200 lives.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 3 May clashes break out in East Jerusalem between the Israeli security forces and Palestinian demonstrators protesting against the eviction by court order of 28 families from their homes in

the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, under an Israeli law that stipulates that if Israelis can prove their family lived in East Jerusalem before the 1948 war, they can file for the recovery of their "property rights." On 6 May, 15 people are arrested after new clashes take place between Israelis and Palestinians. The United Nations calls upon Israel to halt the evictions, recalling that there are already 3,500 settlers living in Arab neighbourhoods with the support of the government.

- On 5 May the Biden Administration announces before the US congress a new arms deal with Israel to the value of 735 million dollars. The announcement leads to an internal division in the Democratic Party.
- On 6 May two Palestinians are killed and a third injured during an attack on a checkpoint in Salem, the West Bank.
- On 7 May 205 Palestinians and 17 Israeli police are injured in clashes in Jerusalem, which include a police raid on the al-Aqsa mosque, where thousands of Muslims were gathered following the Friday prayers in solidarity with the evicted families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. On 9 May, Israel decrees a state of maximum alert in Jerusalem hours before the beginning of the Israeli celebration to commemorate the 54th anniversary of the city's unification, while the fighting between Arabs and Jews spreads to other cities.
- On 10 May the Israeli army hits 130 Palestinian targets, mostly Hamas and Islamic Jihad positions, in its Guardian of the Wall offensive, in response to 200 rockets launched from the Gaza Strip in Palestine's Sword of Jerusalem offensive against the evictions of Palestinians from East Jerusalem. On 12 May, the attacks continue with 110 rockets fired from the Gaza Strip at Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport. In response, Israel attacks Hamas positions in the Palestinian enclave leaving dozens dead. The UN Security Council concludes an emergency session without a final statement condemning Israel, due to a US veto.
- On 14 May the clashes between Arabs and Jews continue in cities like Tel Aviv, Haifa, Beersheba, Acre, Musmus and Jaffa with interventions from riot police, over a hundred arrests, property set on fire and gunfights. The situation

is particularly intense in Lod, where a state of emergency is decreed, and fears grow of an outbreak of civil conflict, fuelled largely by Itamar Ben Gvir and his far-right Otzama Yehudit (Jewish Power) party.

- On 14 May Israel launches its biggest offensive against Hamas since the 2014 war with 50 rounds of bombing by land and air in 40 minutes, destroying practically the entire network of clandestine tunnels, and deploys combat troops along the border with Gaza. The quick escalation of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, which in five days has already left over a hundred dead in Gaza, threatens to put an end to the rapprochement process between Israel and the Gulf countries, set in motion by the Abraham Accords.
- On 15 May 10 members of the same family are killed in an Israeli airstrike on the al-Shati refugee camp. On the same day, the al-Yala building is destroyed, which houses the Associated Press and al-Arabiya offices in Gaza and which, according to the Israeli army, was used by Hamas to try to jam the Iron Dome defence system.
- On 16 May Israeli missiles hit key Hamas targets, including its intelligence headquarters and homes of prominent Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip, without harming anyone. The day ends with 42 Palestinians dead in Gaza. For its part, Egypt confirms it has stepped up diplomatic contacts to put an end to the spiral of violence, and, during the third emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres urges both sides to immediately cease hostilities, faced with the risk of a regional conflict and uncontrollable humanitarian crisis. The US veto once again prevents the adoption of a joint statement condemning Israel.
- On 17 May Hamas threatens to step up its attacks on Tel Aviv after an Israeli airstrike kills the Islamic Jihad commander Hussam Abu Harbeed in the Gaza Strip.
- On 18 May a Palestinian demonstrator is killed and another 40 injured in fighting with the Israeli army near al-Bireh, in the West Bank.
- On 19 May the US urges Israel to immediately de-escalate the bombing of Gaza.

- On 21 May, thanks to Egyptian mediation, a unilateral Israeli ceasefire enters into effect in Gaza, to which Hamas responds with similar measures. After 11 days of fighting, the death toll stands at 230 in Gaza and 12 in Israel, added to which thousands have been injured and over 70,000 internally displaced.
- On 21 May more violence is reported between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Temple Mount, East Jerusalem, after the Muslim Friday prayers.
- On 24 May the US State Secretary Antony Blinken travels to Jerusalem and Ramallah to reaffirm the Biden Administration's commitment to a two-state solution with Jerusalem as the shared capital.
- On 27 May the United Nations Human Rights Council agrees to open an investigation into the violations of international humanitarian law during the fighting between Israel and the Palestinian militias in Gaza.
- On 28 May Israeli soldiers kill a Palestinian man during a protest against the Israeli settlements in Beita, in the West Bank.
- On 30 May the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, receives his Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi in Cairo to reinforce the ceasefire with Hamas in Gaza.
- On 31 May an Israeli soldier is injured near Sdei Avraham by a man who entered Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip and who is subsequently "neutralized."

June 2021

Israel

- On 1 June Israel withdraws its Green Pass system and allows equal access for vaccinated and unvaccinated citizens to restaurants, bars and cultural and leisure centres, in view of the drop in Covid-19 infections.
- On 2 June the Parliament elects Isaac Herzog as the new President of Israel, to succeed Reuven Rivlin, whose seven-year term expires on 9 June.
- On 2 June Israel reports that it has destroyed a Syrian army observation post in the Golan Heights. On 9 June, Syria condemns new Israeli attacks in the centre and south of its territory.
- On 2 June Yair Lapid announces that he has enough support to form a coalition government formed by the secular liberal Yesh Atid party and another seven parties: Benny Gantz's Kahol Lavan (Blue and White, right-wing); Naftali Bennett's ultra-nationalist Yamina and Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu; Gideon Saar's Tikva Hadasha (New Hope, liberal nationalist); Merav Michaeli's Labor Party (Avoda); Nitzan Horowitz's Meretz (Vigor, left-wing) and Mansour Abbas's United Arab List (Ra'am, Islamist).
- On 7 June the police bans the Flag March called by ultra-nationalists and pro-settlement groups in Jerusalem due to the high risk of unrest, since the organizers are planning to march through the Muslim neighbourhood of the Old City. On 9 June, the outgoing government of Benjamin Netanyahu authorizes the march, which finally goes ahead on 15 June amid a heavy police presence and incidents between security forces and Palestinian demonstrators along the route.
- On 13 June, after 12 years of a government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Parliament approves Naftali Bennet as the new Prime Minister, by a single vote, along with the rotating coalition government comprised of eight parties and 27 ministries. In a power-sharing deal, in two years, Yair Lapid will move from his position as Foreign Minister to occupy the post of Prime Minister.
- On 15 June the government announces the end of the mandatory use of face masks in indoor spaces. However, on 25 June the requirement is reintroduced in view of a surge in infections, and the country's reopening to tourism is delayed until 1 August.
- On 29 June the Israeli authorities begin the evacuation and demolition of Palestinian homes in Silwan, East Jerusalem, to expand the settlements.
- On 29 June the Foreign Minister Yair Lapid becomes the first Israeli leader to make an official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since the normalization of relations and opens his country's first embassy in the Persian Gulf.

Palestine

- On 18 June the PNA cancels a deal with Israel to receive up to 1.4 million

doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine, as they are nearing their expiry date.

- On 21 June Israel allows commercial exports from the Gaza Strip to resume, on a limited and conditional basis, a month after the truce that put an end to 11 days of fighting.

- On 25 June protests break out in Ramallah over the death of Nizar Banat, the well-known opponent of the President Mahmoud Abbas, after being arrested by the Palestinian security forces in Hebron. The Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh orders an investigation to be opened.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 2 June at least two members of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, are killed trying to deactivate a bomb fired by Israel during the latest attacks on Gaza.

- On 4 June more than 130 Palestinians are injured in clashes against Israeli police near Nablus, in protests against an Israeli settlement in Beita, and in Jerusalem, in protests against the evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

- On 4 June 23 runners that participated in a race in solidarity with the Palestinian families facing forced expulsion in East Jerusalem are injured when Israeli police fired tear gas and stun grenades.

- On 4 June Hamas threatens to renew fighting with Israel after Israeli officials stop Qatari funds at the Gaza border. The party-militia gives Israel a week to allow the aid passage into the country.

- On 10 June at least three Palestinians are killed, two of them intelligence officers, in an Israeli raid in Jenin, in the West Bank.

- On 16 June Israel launches airstrikes against the Gaza Strip in response to the launch of incendiary balloons the previous day from Palestinian territory. This is the first significant incident since the ceasefire on 21 May, as well as the first attack under the new Israeli government headed by Naftali Bennett.

- On 17 June the Israeli army launches new airstrikes on alleged Hamas targets in Beit Lahia, Jabalia and Khan Yunis, in the Gaza Strip.

July 2021

Israel

- On 3 July an Israeli cargo ship is damaged after being hit by a missile in the northern Indian Ocean on its way to the Persian Gulf, in an action attributed to Iran.
- On 6 July the Parliament refuses to extend the Citizenship and Entry Law in Israel passed in 2003, thereby affecting the reunification of Palestinian families and preventing citizenship or residency being automatically granted to Palestinians married to Israelis, after a member of the coalition government votes against the agreement.
- On 7 July Israeli forces destroy the homes and animal enclosures of 11 families from Khirbet Humsa al-Fouqa, who are moved to another area in the Jordan Valley. On 14 July, another operation in the Jordan Valley ends with the seizure of tents, belongings and livestock from 84 Palestinians from the Ras al-Tin Bedouin community.
- On 8 July the Supreme Court rejects an appeal from various NGOs against the 2018 law that defines the country as the “nation-state of the Jewish people.”
- On 12 July the Health Ministry authorizes the administration of a third dose of the Covid-19 vaccine to adults with immunodeficiency.
- On 14 July the UAE opens its first embassy in Israel in the framework of the Abraham Accords.
- On 18 July a Washington Post investigation reveals a list of 50,000 telephone numbers from all over the world which may be the target of the Pegasus spyware software leased by the Israeli firm NSO Group.
- On 19 July the ice-cream brand Ben & Jerry's, owned by the multinational Unilever, announces that it will stop the sale of its products in Palestinian Occupied Territories joining the boycott campaign against the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- On 20 July the Israeli army launches artillery into Lebanese territory in response to the launch of two rockets.
- On 21 July Israel imposes new restrictions faced with the increase in

Covid-19 cases, including the so-called Green Pass to access closed spaces.

- On 23 July the African Union grants Israel observer member status.
- On 25 July the Environmental Protection Ministry announces its decision to delay implementing the oil transport deal with the UAE, fruit of establishing bilateral relations between both countries following the signing of the Abraham Accords.
- On 27 July the Religious Affairs Minister Matan Kahana presents a plan to privatize the supervision and issue of kosher certificates and increase competition in the industry.

Palestine

- On 11 July the Israeli government announces that it will withhold 154 million euros as a reprisal for funds that, over the last year, have been given to Palestinian institutions for what it considers purposes of “terrorism.”

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 1 July Israel bombs Hamas facilities in response to the launch of incendiary balloons from the Gaza Strip.
- On 3 July a young Palestinian is shot dead by the Israeli army during clashes in the village of Qusra, in the West Bank.
- On 18 July clashes break out between the Israeli police and Muslim demonstrators at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem during the Jewish celebration of Tisha B'Av, which coincides with the Eid al-Fitr Muslim holiday.
- On 26 July Israel bombs Hamas positions in the Gaza Strip in response to incendiary balloons launched at Israeli territory.
- On 27 July a Palestinian municipal worker in Beita, in the West Bank, is shot dead by Israeli soldiers during the weeks of protest over a dispute on an Israeli settlement.

August 2021

Israel

- On 3 August major wildfires are reported in wooded areas east of Jerusa-

lem stopping the traffic on the motorway that connects the city with Tel Aviv.

- On 5 August the Israeli Air Force attacks areas of Lebanon from where it is believed three rockets were fired on 4 August at the Upper Galilee.
- On 17 August the Health Ministry reports more than 8,500 Covid-19 infections, the highest figure since January in a generalized surge in the pandemic that has forced the country to reinstate some of the lockdown measures.

Palestine

- On 29 August, in Ramallah, the Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas hold the first high-level meeting between Israel and Palestine since 2010, during which they agree on measures for rescuing the Palestinian economy, such as a 132-million-euro loan to the PNA, the legalization of the status of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank, Palestinian building permits in Zone C in the West Bank and an increase in permits for Palestinians working in Israel.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 22 and 28 August the IDF attacks Hamas targets in Gaza following “violent unrest” and the launch of incendiary balloons.
- On 24 August a young Palestinian is shot dead by Israeli soldiers during a raid at the Balata refugee camp, near Nablus.
- On 30 August an Israeli sergeant dies in Beersheba from injuries suffered nine days earlier in fierce clashes close to the border with Gaza.

September 2021

Israel

- On 6 September the commander of Fatah's armed wing Zakaria Zubeidi and five members of Islamic Jihad escape from the Gilboa Prison using a tunnel they dug in their shared cell. In the West Bank, protests are organized to hamper the Israeli security forces' search efforts.

- On 13 September Naftali Bennett becomes the first Israeli prime minister to make an official visit to Egypt in the last 10 years, during which he talks with the President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi regarding formulas to reactivate the peace talks with the Palestinians, the Turkish influence in Libya, tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia and the threat of jihadist groups in the region.
- On 13 September the trial resumes against the former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on charges of corruption, fraud and abuse of power in Case 4000 over alleged favours granted to the magnate Shaul Elovitch, chairman of the Bezeq telecommunications company.
- On 30 September the Foreign Minister Yair Lapid becomes the first Israeli minister to make an official visit to Bahrain.

Palestine

- On 1 September Israel announces the lifting of certain restrictions imposed on the Gaza Strip and the expansion of its fishing zone by 15 nautical miles.
- On 2 September the trial begins of a group of six activists and national figures at the Ramallah Magistrate Court, accused of illegal gatherings, incitation of sectarian strife and defamation. The six were arrested in August for taking part in protests against the murder in June of activist Nizar Banat while he was in police custody and to condemn the oppression of freedom of expression in Palestine.
- On 6 September the Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip temporarily suspend their activities at the border fence to give space to Egyptian and Qatari mediation and work towards raising the embargo.

Peace Negotiations

- On 1 September the Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid rules out resuming the peace process with Palestinians describing it as “unfeasible” at the current moment.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 7 September the Israeli army carries out attacks on the Gaza Strip in

response to the launch of incendiary balloons from Palestinian territory.

- On 10 September the Iron Dome defence system intercepts a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip after four of the six Palestinian prisoners that escaped from the Gilboa Prison on 6 September are recaptured.
- On 10 September the Israeli police kill a man in Jerusalem's Old City who had attempted to stab several officers, in the context of increasing tensions following the escape of Palestinian prisoners from the Gilboa Prison.
- On 13 September a young Palestinian man tries to stab an Israeli soldier in the Gush Etzion settlement, in the West Bank. Hours later, at least two people are injured in a new knife attack at the Jerusalem central bus station, allegedly perpetrated by a young Palestinian man who is arrested after the attack.
- On 24 September at least one person is killed and 17 injured in clashes in Beita, in the West Bank, between Palestinians and Israeli security forces.
- On 30 September two Palestinians are shot dead by Israeli forces in different incidents in Jerusalem's Old City and in Jenin.

October 2021

Israel

- On 7 October Israel alerts its embassies around the world warning of possible terrorist threats from Iran.
- On 10 October a demonstration in Tel Aviv by health workers protests the government's decision to uphold 26-hour shifts for most doctors.
- On 10 October official Israeli data reveal that Jewish immigration to Israel has grown by 31% in 2021, with 20,360 arrivals in the last year, compared with 15,598 in 2020.
- On 11 October the Prime Minister Naftali Bennett announces that the government will approve establishing two new settlements in the Golan Heights, in efforts to increase the Israeli population in the occupied area to 100,000.
- On 22 October the Defence Ministry designates six of the main Palestinian human rights NGOs as terrorist organizations for supporting and financing the

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

- On 25 October Israel approves a 4.1-billion-euro plan involving 13 ministries to reduce carbon emissions.
- On 27 October Israel announces a plan to build 3,144 new homes in settlements in the West Bank, the first since Joe Biden assumed the US Presidency. Washington, the EU and the UN all urge Israel to halt the project.

Palestine

- On 8 October a group of Palestinian factions from the Gaza Strip call on the population to participate in demonstrations to condemn the landmark ruling of an Israeli court to authorize Jewish prayer at the Temple Mount. On 9 October, the President Mahmoud Abbas instructs the Palestinian representative to the United Nations Riyad Mansour to initiate immediate action before the UN to counter the court decision.
- On 23 October a group of prisoners from Islamic Jihad ends a nine-day hunger strike to protest against Israeli policies towards inmates since several prisoners escaped from the maximum security Gilboa Prison in September.
- On 25 October Hamas announces that several of its prisoners in Israeli jails will join the hunger strike initiated in July by six other members of the Islamic Resistance Movement being held in administrative detention.
- On 28 October Hamas announces that six Palestinians have been sentenced to death for spying for Israel with other sentences handed down ranging from life imprisonment to hard labour.
- On 28 October the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC) threatens to cut the power supply to parts of the West Bank for failing to pay debts to the value of 104 million euros.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 16 October at least 44 Palestinians are injured in clashes with the Israeli army in Beita and Beit Dajan, in the West Bank, during protests against the expansion of Israeli settlements.

- On 19 October Israeli police officers clash with Palestinian demonstrators at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City.

November 2021

Israel

- On 1 November Israel's Civil Administration authorizes the construction of 1,303 homes for the Palestinian community in Jenin and Bethlehem, in the Israeli-controlled Area C.
- On 2 November four Palestinian families awaiting expulsion in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem reject the Israeli Supreme Court's solution to allow them to remain in their homes as tenants for at least 15 years, paying rent to the organization of Jewish settlers trying to evict them.
- On 4 November the Knesset approves the 2022 state budget presented by the coalition government by a narrow margin, thereby avoiding a fifth election since 2019.
- On 10 November Israel initiates the first joint naval exercise with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, coordinated with the US Fifth Fleet, in the Red Sea.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 17 November two Israeli border police officers are injured in Jerusalem's Old City in a knife attack carried out by a Palestinian who is shot down in the act by security forces.
- On 21 November an imam and Hamas member disguised as an ultra-Orthodox Jew kills one person and injures another three at the Chain Gate, one of the entrances to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The attack leads Israel to call Turkey to shut down the Hamas office in Ankara and ban its activities.

December 2021

Israel

- On 2 December the United Nations General Assembly calls on Israel to

withdraw from the occupied Golan Heights in a resolution which describes the country's decision to impose its jurisdiction on the territory as "null and void."

- On 3 December Israel suspends the controversial programme overseen by Shin Bet, the internal security service, to track people affected by the Covid-19 omicron variant just a few days after it entered into effect, in view of the widespread criticism of the measure.
- On 6 December Israel postpones the controversial construction of some 9,000 homes on the grounds of the old airport of Atarot, in East Jerusalem, citing the need to assess the project's environmental impact.
- On 8 December Israel finishes the construction of a 65-kilometre underground border wall by the Gaza Strip to stop possible Hamas attacks.
- On 13 December Naftali Bennett carries out the first official visit to the UAE of an Israeli head of government.
- On 22 December Israeli medical experts recommend a fourth dose of the coronavirus vaccine be given to citizens over 60, at-risk groups and medical workers. On 31 December, administration of a fourth dose begins on patients with immunodeficiency.
- On 27 December Israel urges the UN to intervene after Lebanon announces a tender for international companies to carry out exploratory drilling in a maritime area under dispute between the two countries.

Palestine

- On 11 December Palestine holds the first phase of local elections, which are boycotted by Hamas. The independent lists of local clans close to Fatah win more than 70% of the contested seats. The second round, for the larger constituencies, will be held in March 2022.
- On 15 December the Palestinian armed factions in Gaza begin two weeks of military exercises, known as al-Quds Shield. The manoeuvres coincide with an Israeli army drill in Dimona, which simulates a large-scale defence against the launch of rockets from Gaza, as well as the ultimatum given by Hamas

to Egypt to put an end to Israel's blockade on the Gaza Strip.

- On 28 December the PNA President Mahmoud Abbas meets with the Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz to discuss security issues on his first trip to Israel since the 2016 funeral of the former Prime Minister and former President of Israel Shimon Peres, and his first working visit in 11 years. After the meeting, Gantz announces measure that include the delivery of around 28.5 million euros in funds raised by Israel on behalf of the PNA to reduce the Palestinian deficit and the legalization of the status of 9,500 Palestinians and foreigners living without papers in Gaza and the West Bank.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 3 December at least two Israeli police officers are injured when they are rammed by a vehicle in Umm al-Fahm, in the West Bank, after a night of unrest over the death of a resident during an Israeli police raid.
- On 5 December a Palestinian man is shot down by police after trying to stab an ultra-Orthodox Jew at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City.
- On 13 December a Palestinian is killed during armed clashes with Israeli forces in Ras al-Ain, Nablus.
- On 16 December a student from a rabbinical school is murdered in an attack attributed to Palestinians in the Homesh settlement. The incident provokes attacks over the following days by hundreds of Israeli settlers on residents of the Palestinian villages of Burqa, Sebastia and Silat ad-Dhahr.
- On 23 December the IDF kills a Palestinian man who had opened fire from a vehicle on Israeli soldiers entering Ramallah to search for people suspected of approaching the settlement of Psagot.
- On 31 December Israeli forces shoot down a Palestinian man who had tried to stab several police officers in the northern West Bank.

Sources

ABC

Affaires Stratégiques - IFRI
AffarInternazionali - IAI

Agence France Presse
Agencia EFE
Al-Ahram
Al-Jazeera
Al-Masry al-Youm
Al-Monitor
ANSAMed
Associated Press
Carnegie Endowment for International
Peace
Council of Foreign Relations
Deutsche Welle
DiploWeb

Election Guide - IFES
El Mundo
El País
Euronews
Europa Press
European Council on Foreign Relations
Europe Media Monitor
Haaretz
Il Corriere della Sera
Inside Arabia
International Crisis Group
La Vanguardia
Le Figaro

Le Monde
Le monde diplomatique
L'Orient Le Jour
Middle East Eye
Radio Televisión Española
Real Instituto Elcano
Reuters
Robert Schuman Stiftung
SwissInfo
The Guardian
The New York Times
The Washington Post
United Nations News Centre

Chronologies

Euromed Chronology

January 2021

Development & Aid, EU-Jordan

5-Luxembourg: The European Investment Bank (EIB) announces it will be providing financial support to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as the two parties sign a \$59-million loan agreement to support Jordan's healthcare sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. The funding is intended to assist the Ministry of Health in procuring Covid-19 vaccines, as well as implementing its vaccination campaign and purchasing medical supplies, including personal protective equipment and ambulances. www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-002-team-europe-eib-supports-healthcare-sector-in-jordan

Environment & Sustainability

11-Paris: The fourth edition of the One Planet Summit is held by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), bringing together heads of state to "speed up international action for nature." This year's summit focuses on the conservation of biodiversity in the face of climate change. Participating heads of state proposed a "Coalition for an Exceptional Mediterranean in 2030," an agreement revolving around four pillars: preserving marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean, promoting sustainable fishing in order to end overfishing by 2030, fighting marine pollution in order to end plastic pollution in the Mediterranean by 2030, and promoting maritime transport that protects the marine environment and combats climate change. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/one-planet-summit-biodiversity/>

Development & Aid

13-Cairo: Egypt signs its tourism recovery assistance package, financed by the

EBRD, and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). In response to the strain Covid-19 has placed on global tourism, the EBRD and UNWTO are supporting countries which are particularly dependent on tourism for job creation and economic growth. The financial support packages are implemented through country-level assistance, ensuring every package is tailored to the needs of each individual country. The EBRD and UNWTO are providing similar support to a number of other countries in the Mediterranean including Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon. www.ebrd.com/news/2021/egypt-launches-ebrdunwto-tourism-recovery-assistance-package.html

Environment & Sustainability

14-Barcelona: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) and the UfM sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda through food systems transformation in the Mediterranean region. This MoU aims to address the increasing need, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, to change the way we produce, process, distribute, consume and dispose of food across the world, and it includes a detailed work plan to be carried out from 2021 to 2024, spanning areas including sustainable land management, value chain development, waste reduction or sustainable fisheries. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/food-systems-transformation-mediterranean/>

Justice & Human Rights, EU-Syria

18-Brussels: Syrian Foreign Affairs Minister Faisal Mekdad is added to the Eu-

ropean Union's (EU) sanctions list. Since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011, the EU has introduced a series of sanctions consisting of travel bans and asset freezes targeted at individuals and entities linked to the Syrian regime. These measures are adopted by the EU "in response to the violent repression of the Syrian civilian population" and are regularly updated and reviewed.

www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/15/syrian-foreign-affairs-minister-added-to-eu-sanctions-list/

Environment & Sustainability

21-London: The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the UK's Foreign Office announce the construction of the Ain Ghazal wastewater pipeline in Jordan, aimed at relieving pressure on water systems in both Amman and Zarqa. In addition to generating water available for irrigation, the pipeline will reduce untreated sewage overflows and reduce the risks of environmental contamination of surface water in the area. This investment is part of the EBRD's wider efforts to upgrade Jordan's wastewater system, and increase its resilience, in response to both the refugee crisis in Jordan, and the wider water scarcity issues it faces.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-and-uk-support-jordans-wastewater-treatment.html

Youth & Education

25/29-Online: The third Young Med Voices Regional Leadership Seminar takes place, bringing together over 25 emerging leaders from across the Euro-Mediterranean region, selected from an expanding resource pool of many hundreds of young debaters engaged

in the Young Mediterranean Voices programme. This seminar provides a space for cross-cultural interaction and dialogue among young leaders and focuses on tackling key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Young Mediterranean Voices is the flagship debate and dialogue programme connecting civil society, education and policymakers across the southern Mediterranean and Europe. <https://youngmedvoices.org/>

Trade & Diplomacy

26-Brussels: The EU's first regional media officer for the Middle East and North Africa takes office. It marks the first time the EU appoints an Arabic-speaking media officer and is part of a wider commitment from the EU to engage more with the Arab world, as highlighted by the European Union High Representative (EUHR) for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell. The new regional media officer, Luis Miguel Bueno, an Arabic-speaking European diplomat, will be based in Beirut and will communicate EU priorities, policies and projects relevant to the MENA region to local and pan-Arab media networks. https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/jordan/92057/eu%E2%80%99s-first-regional-media-officer-middle-east-and-north-africa_en

Development & Aid

26-Brussels: The EU announces it is boosting its humanitarian aid budget for 2021. The 60% increase, up to €1.4bn from €900 million last year, is aimed at meeting needs created by the consequences of the pandemic and climate change. This budget increase includes the Mediterranean region; €385 million of the EU humanitarian funding will be allocated to the Middle East and Turkey, and €505 million will be allocated to Africa. <https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-boosts-humanitarian-aid-budget-2021-including-middle-east-region>

Justice & Human Rights

26-Online: The EU and Morocco launch the Support to the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture in Morocco project. The project is part of the EU and Council of Europe's wider joint programme titled "Support to the national

mechanism for the prevention of torture in Morocco and to the development of Parliament's role in Morocco." The objective of the project is to support national mechanisms for the prevention of torture in Morocco through capacity building of the members of the National Council for Human Rights (CNDH). <https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/joint-eu-project-support-prevention-torture-morocco-be-launched>

Business & Entrepreneurship

27-Luxembourg: The EIB announces the signing of a €10-million loan agreement with JAÏDA, a lender to microfinance institutions that works in areas of financial inclusion and social development in Morocco. The funding from the EIB will be used to finance microloans for income-generating activities such as maintaining jobs at small enterprises or assisting self-employed workers. By supporting JAÏDA, the EIB aims to promote microfinance in Morocco and thus support the Moroccan economy through the pandemic, by promoting sustainable and responsible financial services, particularly for poor and rural populations, as well as for women and young people. www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-033-maroc-la-bei-et-jaida-signent-un-contrat-de-financement-pour-soutenir-l-activite-de-microcredit-a-travers-les-institutions-de-microfinance-imf

February 2021

Justice & Human Rights

1-Ramallah: The head of the EU Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS), Nataliya Apostolova, meets the Director General of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), Dr Ammar Dwaik, to discuss issues including human rights, law enforcement and the rule of law in the West Bank. Through regular cooperation meetings such as this one, EUPOL COPPS aims to contribute to the establishment of sustainable and effective policing arrangements in Palestine, and to advise Palestinian counterparts on criminal justice and the rule of law. <https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/palestine-head-eu>

police-mission-meets-director-general-independent

Environment & Sustainability

2-Brussels: Ministers from the 42 UfM countries sign a new Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy, during a virtual ministerial conference. With the intention of promoting the recovery of the region's economies from the pandemic, whilst addressing the environmental and climate challenges the Mediterranean faces, the ministers agree to promote transformative policies such as maritime spatial planning, shifting towards low-emissions technologies and the circular blue economy. This declaration is part of the UfM's broader aim of advancing regional and sub-regional cooperation to take on environmental degradation and climate change in the Mediterranean. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/news-ministerial-meeting-blue-economy-2021/>

Justice & Human Rights

2/3-The Hague: The Euromed Justice (EMJ) Programme is launched by the EU Agency for Criminal Justice (Eurojust), at an opening conference attended by representatives from Southern Partner Countries and EU Member States. The EMJ aims to strengthen strategic and operational cooperation in judicial criminal matters in the Euro-Mediterranean region, and is funded by the EU Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). Some areas of possible cooperation between EU Member States and Southern Partner Countries discussed during the launch are the enhancement of the cross-border exchange of judicial information and digital transmission of evidence. <https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-funded-euromed-justice-programme-officially-launched>

Development & Aid

3-London: The EBRD announces it will provide a €300-million financing package for Tunisia's utility company, Société Tunisienne de l'Électricité et du Gaz (STEG). The package is aimed at allowing STEG to implement a climate reform roadmap which would make the company's operations more sustainable. Funding packages such as this one are

a part of the EBRD and the EU's efforts at supporting the decarbonization of Tunisia's energy sector, and are accompanied by the introduction of stringent climate governance measures.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-providing-300-million-loan-to-tunisia-utility-company-steg.html

Development & Aid

8-Luxembourg: The EIB announces a financing package of €2.7 million for Microfund for Women in Jordan. The financing is a part of the EU's response to the pandemic and it falls under the Southern Neighbourhood Microfinance Facility (SNMF) – a lending facility investing in microfinance markets in Southern Neighbourhood countries. The package is expected to support around 9000 micro-entrepreneurs in Jordan, over 90% of which will be women. www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-049-team-europe-eib-and-mfw-support-jordanian-micro-entrepreneurs-with-eur-2-7-million

Development & Aid

8-Jerusalem: The EU and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) announce the signature of a partnership agreement worth €1 million in support of the Office of the Quartet to promote fiscal sustainability in Palestine. The Office of the Quartet works towards creating pro-investment policies in order to increase Palestinian economic and institutional development in Gaza and the West Bank. This agreement aims to contribute to the stability of the Palestinian Authority's budget.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-contributes-palestinian-authority-fiscal-sustainability>

EU-Southern Neighbourhood

9-Brussels: The European Commission (EC) adopts a communication proposing a New Agenda for the Mediterranean to “relaunch and strengthen the strategic partnership between the EU and its Southern Neighbourhood partners,” 25 years after the Barcelona partnership, which launched the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. The communication states that under the EU's new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), up to

€7 billion would be allocated to implementing the agenda between 2021-27. The agenda focuses on five policy areas: human development, good governance and the rule of law; resilience, prosperity and digital transition; peace and security; migration and mobility; and the green transition.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press-corner/detail/en/ip_21_426

Environment & Sustainability

10-London: The EBRD and EU announce a Green Financing Facility in Jordan, aimed at promoting green investment in the private sector, in line with Jordan's National Green Growth Plan. The facility is the first internationally supported comprehensive green economy programme in the country. The programme aims to support businesses and homeowners via local banks and microfinance institutions with investments in green technologies aimed at reducing emissions, increasing energy efficiency, and preserving natural resources. Such cooperation and development initiatives in the EU are in line with the sustainable economic development objectives of the EU Green Deal. <https://www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-and-eu-to-promote-green-investments-in-jordan-.html>

Development & Aid

10-Algiers: The Algerian Ministry of Health, the EU Delegation to Algeria and the UNDP announce the implementation of a €43-million financing agreement aimed at supporting Algeria's efforts to stop the spread of Covid-19. Titled “European Solidarity Response to Covid-19 in Algeria,” the agreement will assist health facilities by providing medical equipment, early detection equipment and personal protective equipment.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-implements-project-european-solidarity-response-covid-19-algeria>

Development & Aid

19-Brussels: The EU announces it is doubling its contribution to COVAX, the global initiative leading efforts to ensure fair access to Covid-19 vaccines in low and middle-income countries. The EU

is contributing another €500 million, bringing the total contribution by the EU and individual Member States to €2.2 billion. Southern and eastern Mediterranean countries such as Tunisia, Algeria and Lebanon are among the beneficiaries of the COVAX Facility.

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/news/eu-doubles-contribution-covax-eu1-billion-ensure-safe-and-effective-vaccines-low-and-middle_en

Health

22-Brussels and Online: The annual plenary session of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) takes place, addressing topics such as the provision of Covid vaccines and regional inequality among Mediterranean countries. In particular, the plenary session discusses the New Agenda for the Mediterranean; Apostolos Tzitzikostas, co-president of ARLEM, President of the European Committee of the Regions, and governor of the region of Central Macedonia, welcomed the New Agenda's ambitions, but stressed the need for them to be “transformed into benefits that reach beyond the capitals and reduce the existing huge territorial disparities.”

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/benefits-of-eus-new-mediterranean-agenda/>

Brussels

25-Gender & Inclusivity: The EU announces the launch of *Fa'ela*, a new initiative aimed at mobilizing Libyan women leaders and civil society organizations to increase the participation of women in the Libyan peace process, as well as social, political and economic life in Libya more generally. Only 17 out of 75 members of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum are women, and women account for less than 6% of the Libyan government. In addition, only about a third of Libyan women are active in the labour market. With €1.1 million of funding, *Fa'ela* will establish a network of CSOs, private sector representatives and decision-makers to advocate for the inclusion of women in leadership positions.

www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/libya/eu-launches-fa%20%80%99ela-new-initiative-boost-women-participation_en

March 2021

Health

2-Brussels & Online: The EU-funded Med Dialogue for Rights and Equality programme launches its first advocacy campaign focused on access to information on health across the Mediterranean. Through social and traditional media platforms, the campaign aims to facilitate the provision of accurate and transparent information relating to Covid-19 statistics and prevention measures, to support citizens throughout the pandemic. Med Dialogue for Rights and Equality is an EU-funded Technical Assistance Programme seeking to strengthen the role of civil society on a regional scale in building sustainable development, encouraging regional cohesion and resilience, and influencing policymaking in the Southern Neighbourhood.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/access-public-health-information-eu-funded-med-dialogue-launches-cross>

Development & Aid, EU-Morocco

3-Luxembourg: The EIB and the Société Nationale des Autoroutes du Maroc (ADM) announce the signature of a €85-million financing contract aimed at accelerating the digitalization of motorway infrastructure in Morocco. The funding aims to help improve traffic flows and increase road user safety. It is a part of the EIB's wider aim of supporting the transport sector in the Southern Neighbourhood, as it recovers from the ramifications of the pandemic. The project is expected to create over 6,000 jobs during its implementation phase.

www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-079-maroc-signature-d-un-contrat-de-financement-de-85-millions-d-euros-pour-accelerer-la-digitalisation-des-infrastructures-de-transport-autoroutiers

Development & Aid

5-Brussels: The EU announces it is adopting a €130-million assistance package to support Syrian refugees and local communities in Jordan and Lebanon, the countries hosting the highest number of refugees per capita in the

world. A decade after the start of the Syrian crisis, the funding package aims to provide support to refugees in areas such as social protection, healthcare services and waste management. It will also contribute to efforts in Lebanon to alleviate the consequences of the Beirut port blast. The package will be implemented through the Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis, which has channelled a significant share of the EU's support for Syria and its neighbouring countries since 2014.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press-corner/detail/en/ip_21_986

Gender & Inclusivity

5-Barcelona, Online: The UfM hosts an online event in celebration of International Women's Day, attended by over 700 participants, addressing the challenges faced by women and girls in the Mediterranean to access leadership positions. The event covers this issue in various sectors including agri-food, the digital economy and healthcare, and discusses the increased difficulties women are facing as a consequence of the pandemic, such as higher rates of domestic violence or increased unpaid care duties. This event is held in the context of the UfM's ongoing Regional Dialogue on Women Empowerment, which aims to produce an updated regional progress report by the end of the year and prepare policy recommendations for the UfM's 2022 Ministerial Declaration.

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/international-womens-day-2021-news/>

Gender & Inclusivity

10-Rabat: In the aftermath of International Women's Day, the Council of Europe and Presidency of the Moroccan Public Prosecutor's Office hold a series of activities aimed at strengthening the role of Moroccan prosecutors in the fight against violence against women. The activities include theoretical and practical capacity building and working sessions, which will be based on existing standards such as the Istanbul Convention or the Council of Europe Convention. This initiative is being carried out in the context of the EU and the Council of Europe's South Programme IV, titled "Regional support to

reinforce human rights, rule of law and democracy in the South of the Mediterranean."

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/morocco-strengthening-role-magistrates-fight-against-violence-against>

Development & Aid

17-London: The EBRD announces a new financing package of \$100 million to Banque du Caire for financing and lending to MSMEs in Egypt. The package is aimed at supporting the local economy in Egypt by allowing Banque du Caire to increase its financing of MSMEs, which are considered to be a vital segment of Egypt's economy and a top priority in the bank's strategy. This kind of support for small and local business in Egypt is part of the EBRD's long-standing relationship with Egypt, a country in which it has been operating since 2012.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-boosts-egyptian-private-enterprises-and-trade.html

Business & Entrepreneurship

17-London: The EBRD and the Bank of Palestine announce a partnership to support women entrepreneurs in the West Bank and Gaza. As the pandemic continues to disproportionately affect vulnerable people and women, the programme aims to facilitate access to finance for women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as well as provide training programmes and business advice to support women in growing their companies.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-partners-with-bank-of-palestine-to-support-women-in-business-in-the-west-bank-and-gaza.html

Development & Aid

19-Brussels: The EC releases a statement welcoming the endorsement by the European Parliament and Council of the political agreement on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – the instrument aimed at supporting the EU's external action plan between 2021-2027 with an overall budget of €79.5 billion. The financing instrument will be essential towards implementing

the EU's renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_1267

Justice & Human Rights, EU-Libya

22-Brussels: The Council of Europe announces it is imposing further sanctions over serious human rights violations in Libya. As part of a broader package of listings under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, the EU is imposing restrictive measures on 11 individuals and four entities, held responsible in cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in Libya. www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/22/eu-imp-poses-further-sanctions-over-serious-violations-of-human-rights-around-the-world/

Health, EU-Tunisia

26-Tunis: The EU delivers health equipment worth €13 million to Tunisia, through its "Essaha Aziza" programme aimed at supporting the country's healthcare sector, in cooperation with the Tunisian Ministry of Health. The delivery is aimed at benefitting hospitals and clinics across the entire country, and includes a fleet of 193 ambulances to support first responder capacity.

www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tunisia/1%E2%80%99union-europ%C3%A9enne-livre-%C3%A0-la-tunisie-des-%C3%A9quipements-de-sant%C3%A9-pour-un-montant_en

Security & Defence, EU-Libya

29-Brussels: The European Council announces the extension of the mandate of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) military operation in the Mediterranean – 'EUNAVFOR MED IRI-NI' – until March 2023. The operation's task is to implement the United Nations (UN) arms embargo on Libya through the use of aerial, satellite and maritime assets, mostly for the inspection and monitoring of Libyan vessels off the Libyan coast suspected to be carrying arms. EUNAVFOR MED IRI-NI was launched in March 2020 as an EU contribution to the international community's support towards the return to peace and stability in Libya. [www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/26/council-](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/26/council-extends-the-mandate-of-operation-irini-until-2023/)

[extends-the-mandate-of-operation-irini-until-2023/](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/26/council-extends-the-mandate-of-operation-irini-until-2023/)

Development & Aid

30-Brussels: The international community announces a pledge of €5.3 billion for Syria and neighbouring countries hosting refugees, including €3.7 billion from the EU and Member States. The EU has been a major donor in humanitarian, stabilization and resilience assistance to Syria since the start of the crisis in 2011. The announcement comes during the 5th Brussels Conference on "Supporting the future of Syria and the Region." These conferences, which have taken place since 2017, bring together the international community, as well as Syrian, regional and international civil society organizations, in support of the UN's efforts towards achieving a political solution to the Syrian conflict.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_1464

April 2021

Justice & Human Rights, EU-Morocco

8-Rabat: The EU launches a new project aimed at supporting freedom of expression, association, and assembly in Morocco. The project, titled "Houqouq wa Mousawat" aims to promote the implementation of a legal framework in Morocco conducive to freedom of expression, association and assembly. It will provide support to civil society organizations through the consolidation of a fundamental freedoms observatory, as well as by organizing capacity building sessions on monitoring, advocacy and international standards for freedom of expression, association and access to information.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-funds-new-project-support-freedom-expression-association-and-assembly>

Water

10-Hebron: Construction begins on the Hebron Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, a plant which will be built with €36 million of funding from the EU, France and the World Bank. The plant will serve around 400,000 people living in Hebron City, Palestine, and will allow

for the reuse of treated water for agricultural purposes. Currently, sewage from the Hebron Governorate runs untreated through populated areas such as Wadi As-Samen, which significantly affects the water quality available for residents. Protecting water and the environment is therefore a key factor towards a more sustainable future for Palestinians. This plant is part of the EU's wider objective to protect the water and environment in Palestine. The EU has projects totalling €135 million in the water and sanitation sector, including the development of wastewater treatment plants in other areas prone to scarcity such as Tubas and Nablus.

www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/1%E2%82%AC36-million-eu-france_en

Trade & Diplomacy, EU-Turkey

12-Ankara: EC President Ursula von der Leyen releases a statement at the joint press conference following the EU meetings with the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, outlining the meeting and the EU's aim to give "new momentum" to its relationship with Turkey. Von der Leyen discusses the areas of priority addressed in the meeting, which include strengthening economic ties, establishing high-level dialogues on issues such as climate change, as well as strengthening cooperation on mobility, refugees and migration.

www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/turkey/statement-president-von-der-leyen-joint-press-conference-president-michel_en

Research, EU-Morocco

13-Rabat: Morocco announces it is entering the association process to join the EU's Horizon Europe research programme. The status of "Associated Country" will improve the visibility and attractiveness of Moroccan research structures, as well as encourage and facilitate their links with EU Member States, companies, NGOs and social partners. Moroccan researchers will also be able to access calls for projects from the Horizon Europe programme. Morocco's participation in Horizon Europe is part of the country's efforts to strengthen cooperation with the EU, as

is set out in the objectives of the “Joint Declaration of the EU and Morocco” of 2019.

www.eeas.europa.eu/node/96507_en

Justice & Human Rights, EU-Syria

13-Brussels: EUHR for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell provides a statement condemning the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The statement comes in response to the release of the second report of the Investigation and Identification Team to the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and to the UN Secretary General, which confirms the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Air Force in 2018. Borrell emphasized the EU’s support for the report’s findings, stressing that Syria had failed to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/use-chemical-weapons-syria-statement-high-representative-josep-borrell>

Environment and Sustainability

15-Barcelona, Online: The UfM holds an online training programme for young people across the Mediterranean on skills gaps and employability in the Blue Economy sector. 80 students and young professionals attend the two-day event, which includes sessions tackling topics related to the blue economy in the Mediterranean, like entrepreneurship, smart specialization strategies, technological innovation and partnership building. The blue economy sector has changed significantly over the last decade, and this training programme is part of the UfM’s efforts towards promoting initiatives that foster careers in the sector while addressing barriers to employability such as skills mismatches.

https://ufmsecretariat.org/training_blue_economy/

Health

20-Addis Ababa: The EU launches a €100-million humanitarian initiative to support Covid-19 vaccination campaigns in Africa. This initiative is part of the European Commission’s efforts to ensure equitable and safe access to vaccines for all. While one part of the

funding will be allocated to generally supporting the rollout of the vaccination campaign, another part will be specifically aimed at vaccine rollout in humanitarian settings, including conflict zones. Southern Mediterranean countries such as Algeria, Libya and Egypt are among the beneficiary countries.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_1816

EU-Southern Neighbourhood

20-Brussels: The European Council approves the conclusions of the New Agenda for the Mediterranean. These conclusions affirm the EU’s ambition to renew and strengthen its strategic partnership with its Southern Neighbourhood. The approval of the Council marks a vital step towards the full implementation of the New Agenda for the Mediterranean.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/new-agenda-mediterranean-european-council-approves-conclusions-renewed>

Heritage & Culture

21-Beirut: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launches a 3D urban documentation of historic areas of Beirut most affected by the port explosion of August 2020. The explosion had a devastating impact on historic areas of the city such as Gemmayzeh, Mar Mikhail and Karantina, and UNESCO’s documentation project has partnered with the Directorate General of Antiquities of Lebanon, as well as Iconem, an organization which specializes in the 3D digitalization of endangered cultural heritage sites. The initiative is funded by the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund and will provide vital architectural data towards achieving the rehabilitation of these urban cultural spaces and historical landmarks.

www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-partners-launch-3d-urban-documentation-historic-areas-beirut-affected?hub=701

Environment & Sustainability

22-London: The EBRD announces its contribution to a \$114-million financing package for the construction of Kom Ombo, Egypt’s largest private solar

plant. The OPEC Fund for International Development, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Green Climate Fund and the Arab Bank are among the other contributors. The construction of Kom Ombo will significantly increase the share of renewable energy in Egypt’s energy mix, and is expected to serve 130,000 households. This financing package is in line with the EBRD’s objectives to promote renewable energy in North Africa, one of the regions with the highest potential for solar energy production in the world.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/egypts-largest-solar-plant-kom-ombo-receives-us-114-million-financing-package.html

Health

28-Barcelona, Online: The first high-level coordination meeting between the UfM and the World Health Organization (WHO) takes place, bringing together representatives from both sides to discuss further collaboration and the implementation of the MoU signed by both parties in 2020. This includes common objectives on issues such as health research, clean water, urban development and governance, healthy cities, energy and climate action, or women’s access to health. This kind of high level meeting is a continuation of years of collaboration between the two parties, working towards achieving more sustainable and inclusive societies in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-who-meeting/>

May 2021

Trade & Diplomacy

3-Brussels: The European Council announces the appointment of Mr Sven Koopmans as the EU’s new Special Representative (EUSR) for the Middle East Peace Process, from May 2021 to February 2023. The EUSR for the Middle East Peace Process has a mandate to contribute to the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-state solution, and aims to do so by maintaining close contact with all parties in the peace process, as well as with the UN and other organizations like the League of Arab States. The EUSR

oversees EU regional activities linked to the Middle East Peace Process.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/new-eu-special-representative-middle-east-peace-process-appointed>

Development & Aid

11-Tripoli, Online: The International Follow-Up Committee on Libya convenes via an online meeting to assess Libya's economic situation, as well as areas of international support. The committee, co-chaired by Egypt, the EU, the United States and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), focuses on discussing how the international community and the Libyan Economic Expert Commission can support the Libyan Government of National Unity, Parliament and other Libyan institutions as they work towards facing the economic challenges the country faces. Priorities discussed include delivering basic services to Libyans, strengthening economic institutions and revitalizing the private sector.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/international-follow-up-committee-libya-convenes-assess-economic-situation>

Health

12-Luxembourg: The EIB announces an increase in its support to the COVAX Facility. The investment comes as part of a new €1.5-billion financing package, which will provide investment towards green energy generation, transmission and distribution. €200 million of this funding is earmarked for increasing Team Europe's support for COVAX, thus scaling up access to Covid-19 vaccines in beneficiary countries, including in Europe's Southern Neighbourhood, such as Algeria or Tunisia.

www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-159-eib-increases-support-for-covax-and-backs-eur1-5-billion-clean-energy-water-health-and-education-investment

Environment & Sustainability

17-Brussels: The EC announces it will be cooperating with the EIB and the European Investment Fund (EIF) in the implementation of the new EU Sustainable Blue Economy Policy. The announcement comes as part of the EC's

new approach to a green recovery in the blue economy, one that aims to ensure coherence between the EU's blue economy and the European Green Deal. The institutions will work jointly with EU Member states to help tackle pollution in European seas, particularly the Mediterranean, and to support investment for blue innovation and blue bioeconomy.

www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-161-the-european-commission-and-european-investment-bank-group-join-forces-to-protect-the-oceans-and-boost-investment-in-the-sustainable-blue-economy

Development & Aid

17-London: The AfDB Group and the EBRD sign a memorandum of understanding to promote sustainable private sector development in Africa. The two development finance institutions will work in a partnership which is expected to focus on climate change, green and resilient infrastructure, and the improvement of business environments to mobilize private sector investment in Africa. As the pandemic continues to threaten progress made towards the UN SDGs, while worsening the debt vulnerability of African countries, both the EBRD and the AfDB hope to play a key role in generating sustainable private sector development for the continent.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/afdb-and-ebrd-partner-to-unlock-sustainable-investment-opportunities-in-africa.html

Migration

17-Brussels: The EC reaches an agreement on the entry and residence of highly skilled workers from outside the EU into the EU, under the Blue Card Directive. The Commission claims this new scheme will make rules on attracting highly-skilled workers more efficient, including more flexible admission conditions, enhanced rights and better possibilities for moving and working between EU Member States. The Blue Card Directive is one of the main goals set out in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, and is likely to be an important element in future scenarios for migration to the EU from southern Mediterranean countries.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press-corner/detail/en/ip_21_2522

Trade & Diplomacy

19-Beirut: The International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG), comprising the governments of China, France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the UN, the EU and the Arab League, convenes to discuss the situation in Lebanon. The ISG members focus on the increasing challenges in Lebanon, the difficulties faced by institutions in addressing them, and the growing hardship of the Lebanese population. Members call on Lebanese leaders to form a fully empowered government to address the country's urgent needs. The ISG was launched in 2013 to mobilize support and assistance for Lebanon's stability, sovereignty and state institutions.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/international-support-group-lebanon-expresses-concern-continuing-political>

Development & Aid

25-Brussels: The EC announces an increase in the EU's humanitarian assistance for Palestine by €8 million, bringing the total for 2021 to €34.4 million. The funding will be allocated to victims of recent violence, which has left hundreds of Palestinians dead. Covid-19 has aggravated the humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the EU aims to provide humanitarian assistance such as by creating safe education spaces for vulnerable children and increasing its cash assistance to the most vulnerable.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press-corner/detail/en/ip_21_2670

Justice & Human Rights, EU-Syria

27-Brussels: The European Council announces the extension of EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime for one additional year, in response to its continued repression of the civilian population. EU sanctions on Syria were introduced in 2011 in response to the violent repression of the civilian population by the Syrian regime. The sanctions also target companies, and businessmen benefitting from ties with the regime.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/syria-european-council-extends-sanctions-against-regime-another-year>

Environment & Sustainability

28-Barcelona, Online: The UfM holds its 5th UfM Environment Task Force meeting, bringing together country representatives and regional stakeholders from the UfM environment agenda. The meeting focuses on the priorities and modalities of the UfM 2030 Greener Med Agenda, which sets out objectives towards achieving Environmental SDGs in the Mediterranean. Among the topics discussed are plastic and the green circular economy (land and sea), as well as sustainable food systems and value chains.

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/task-force-joint-action-mediterranean/>

Development & Aid, EU-Tunisia

28-Brussels: The EC announces it will provide €300 million to Tunisia as part of its €600-million macro-financial assistance (MFA) programme in response to Covid-19. This MFA will aim to mitigate the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic in Tunisia. This first instalment of the MFA package will not be tied to any conditions, given the urgent financial need. The EU's MFA to Tunisia is part of a wider objective on the part of the EU to assist countries in its Southern Neighbourhood, like Tunisia, through the post-pandemic recovery period. It has included other measures such as providing medical equipment like ambulances or financing the COVAX facility.

www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tunisia/union-europ%C3%A9enne-verse-300-millions-deuros-dassistance-macro-financi%C3%A8re-%C3%A0-la_en

Justice & Human Rights, EU-Jordan

31-Amman: The Jordan Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission launches a twinning project with the EU to support efforts in Jordan to strengthen integrity and corruption prevention. This is an EU-funded project aimed at reviewing the application of the national integrity standards in the public sector, and guaranteeing compliance with these standards. The project also aims to create mechanisms allowing the Jordan Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission to more effectively assess corruption risks.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-and-jordan-anti-cor>

ruption-commission-launch-twinning-project

June 2021

Business & Entrepreneurship

1-London & Brussels: The EU and the EBRD launch a new programme to strengthen growth opportunities for small businesses in Tunisia, called In-sadder. The programme aims to boost the competitiveness, productivity and export potential of Tunisian SMEs by helping them enter external markets. Beneficiaries will receive strategic and operational support, training on exports, and co-financing for certifications required for exports.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-and-eu-join-forces-to-boost-exports-by-tunisian-smes.html

Business & Entrepreneurship

2-Luxembourg: The EIB and CIH Bank (Morocco) sign a financing partnership from a package of €60 million to support SMEs in Morocco affected by the pandemic. This assistance is intended to help develop the private sector in Morocco by focusing on SMEs and their potential for job creation.

www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-184-la-bei-et-cih-bank-joignent-leurs-forces-pour-renforcer-le-soutien-aux-entreprises

Trade & Diplomacy, EU-Tunisia

4-Brussels: Tunisian President Kais Saied visits Brussels and holds meetings with Presidents Charles Michel, Ursula von der Leyen and David Maria Sassoli from the European Council, EC and European Parliament. Tunisia's strategic partnership with the EU is discussed, with a particular focus on youth, education, culture, economic ties and the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. Two specific areas discussed as being vital to future cooperation between the EU and Tunisia are investing in youth through education and training, and cooperation on migration, mobility and border management.

www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tunisia/reactions-ue-%E2%80%93-tunisie-pour-un-partenariat-renouvel%C3%A9_en

Migration, EU-Libya

7-Tripoli: EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson visits Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammad Dbeiba of Libya and other members of the Government of National Unity in Tripoli, to discuss issues including the political process in Libya, migration and border management, and security. As the largest provider of assistance in Libya, the EU has a vital relationship with the country, cooperating in fields such as human development, good governance, encouraging youth entrepreneurship and empowerment, the response to Covid-19 and migration.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-commissioner-johansson-libya-discuss-migration-border-management-and>

Business & Entrepreneurship

7-London: The EBRD provides a loan of \$100 million to the National Bank of Egypt (NBE) to support SMEs in Egypt in areas of energy efficiency, climate change mitigation and the implementation of adaptation technologies. The NBE will lend the funds to SMEs in industry, commerce and agriculture. Egypt is a founding member and long-standing cooperation partner of the EBRD.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/ebrd-and-nbe-support-small-businesses-egypt>

Development & Aid, EU-Southern Neighbourhood

10-Brussels: The EC announces that the European Parliament has adopted the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) for the period 2021-27. As the final step of the adoption process following negotiations between the European Parliament, Council and Commission, this decision means the EU will be able to use the €79.5 billion included in the instrument to foster a pandemic recovery in the EU's neighbouring countries, through international partnerships on sustainable development, climate change, democracy, governance, peace and security.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/european-commission-welcomes-final-adoption-eus-new-external-action-budget>

Environment & Sustainability

14-Lisbon: The UfM holds its Third Ministerial Conference on Energy, gathering energy ministers from the 42 UfM Member States to discuss regional cooperation towards energy security and a low-carbon transition. The ministers adopt a new Ministerial Declaration agreeing to join efforts to address the Mediterranean region's energy challenges and to promote a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The declaration is to be developed into concrete action plans by three UfM Energy Platforms, acting as a platform for dialogue that brings together stakeholders and organizations from across the region. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/3rd-energy-ministerial/>

Development & Aid

18-Brussels: The EC announces €20 million in humanitarian funding to be provided to Algeria, Egypt and Libya, in order to support the most vulnerable people affected by crises by facilitating access to basic needs such as nutrition, shelter and clean water. €9 million is allocated for supporting Sahrawi refugees in Algeria, €6 million for vulnerable people in Libya, and €5 million for refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt. As one of the leading humanitarian donors in North Africa, the EU has sought to adapt its response to the growing needs caused by the pandemic. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_2874

Migration, EU-Libya

21-Brussels: The European Council announces the extension of the mandate of the European Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya) for another two years. The mission, which was launched in 2013, is tasked with continuing to assist relevant Libyan authorities in building state security structures in Libya, particularly in areas of border management and law enforcement in the central Mediterranean region. <https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eubam-libyas-mandate-extended-further-two-years>

Business & Entrepreneurship

22-Palestine: The EU-Palestine Investment Platform meets for the second time

as the EIB announces a new \$425-million financing package for the Palestinian private sector. The meeting brings together the EU Representative, the Palestinian Prime Minister, as well as the representatives of various European financial institutions, to discuss cooperation and investment. The EIB's announcement made during this meeting is an example of the coordinated effort between the EU and the EIB to support the sustainable social and economic recovery from the Covid-19 crisis in partner countries.

www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/eu%E2%80%9393palestine_en

Environment & Sustainability

30-Brussels: The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) publishes a series of recommendations to the EU which provide a regional and local perspective on the EU's revised strategy towards the Mediterranean region. The recommendations include the improvement of the health of the Mediterranean sea as one of the top priorities. The CoR statement also praises the EU for its inclusion of support for youth entrepreneurship as one of the central pillars of its New Agenda for the Mediterranean. <https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/mediterranean-citizens-and-mediterranean-sea.aspx>

July 2021*Business & Entrepreneurship*

1-Barcelona: The UfM and Mobile World Capital sign a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen their collaboration on addressing the digitalization needs of the Euro-Mediterranean region. While calls for digitalization and for a "digital, green transition" are increasingly frequent in the context of the post-pandemic recovery, there is a growing digital divide across the shores of the Mediterranean, with a North-South digital skills gap and a need to bolster digital connectivity and entrepreneurship. This partnership seeks to respond to these gaps and establish a framework for engagement between the UfM and Mobile World Capital towards achieving this.

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-joins-mwc-barcelona/>

Business & Entrepreneurship

2-London: The EBRD announces a \$10-million financial package to Quds Bank in Palestine, intended to boost MSMEs and promote international trade in the West Bank and Gaza. MSMEs represent more than 98% of the local market in the Palestinian economy, and insufficient access to funding has been a constraint on their growth, which has been worsened by the pandemic.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-strengthens-small-businesses-and-trade-in-west-bank-and-gaza.html

Research

7/8-Barcelona: The UfM Regional Platform in Research and Innovation holds its 27th meeting, approving new research agendas for the Mediterranean on climate change, health and renewable energy. International cooperation on Research and Innovation has grown in the Mediterranean since the approval of the Euro-Med Valletta Declaration on Research and Innovation in 2017, and these new agendas will seek to pave the way for more effective cooperation in the Mediterranean in the future.

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/new-research-and-innovation-agenda/>

Development & Aid

8-Hatay: European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic visits the Turkish border with northwestern Syria ahead of the upcoming vote on the renewal of the UN resolution on cross-border aid delivery. The Turkish border with Syria is a vital crossing point for the delivery of humanitarian assistance for millions of Syrians. Commissioner Lenarcic meets senior UN representatives and aid workers, as well as Turkish government officials and local authorities, whilst emphasizing the importance of the UN cross-border resolution.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3484

Youth

12-Damietta: The Damietta Port Authority (DPA) and Port Training Institute sign an agreement with the Damietta Port Community for cooperation under YEP

MED – a project co-financed by ENI CBC MED (European Neighbourhood Instrument, Cross-Border Cooperation, Mediterranean; an EU Programme). YEP MED promotes integration between education, technical vocational and educational training (TVET) and career guidance, leading to counselling, mentoring, specialized employment support, entrepreneurship and job placements. In this context, the project aims at capacity building for 582 young Egyptians to improve their opportunities for employment in the port sector.

www.enicbcmed.eu/egypt-yep-med-partners-sign-agreement-local-community-foster-youth-employment-port-sector

Trade & Diplomacy

27-Brussels: The EUHR for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell releases a statement on behalf of the EU discussing recent developments in Tunisia, including the suspension of parliament. The HR emphasizes the need for Tunisia’s democratic transition to be maintained, including its commitment to respecting the rule of law, the Constitution and the legislative framework. The HR calls for “institutional stability” to be restored and for parliamentary activity to be resumed. www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/27/tunisia-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu/

Business & Entrepreneurship

28-London: Lebanon joins the EBRD’s Star Venture programme, which provides innovative start-ups with tailored advisory services. Other beneficiary countries of the programme include Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, and selected start-ups come from a range of sectors including educational technology, sustainable fashion and cloud computing. The EBRD has been investing in Lebanon since the start of its engagement with the country, supporting private sector development, sustainable energy and increasing the efficiency of public service delivery.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-supports-highpotential-startups-in-lebanon.html

Health

29-Luxembourg: The EIB makes a €250,000-donation to UNICEF Luxem-

bourg and Red Cross International, both operating in Tunisia to provide some relief to the country’s health system, which has been heavily affected by the pandemic. The funds will be used for providing oxygen concentrators to various hospitals and sending mobile units of doctors and nurses to rural areas of the country to treat Covid patients with little access to healthcare.

www.eib.org/en/press/news/donation-to-help-tunisia-tackle-covid-19-crisis

Justice & Human Rights

30-Brussels: The European Council adopts a framework for targeted sanctions to address the ongoing financial, economic, social and political crisis in Lebanon. This framework provides the possibility of imposing sanctions on persons and entities responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon through actions such as obstructing the political process, undermining the holding of elections or serious financial misconduct concerning public funds.

www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/30/lebanon-eu-adopts-a-framework-for-targeted-sanctions/

Heritage & Culture

30-Rome: The UfM Secretary General Nasser Kamel addresses the Ministers of Culture at the G20 Culture Summit. The summit concluded with a new Ministerial Declaration on Culture, to which the UfM contributed. Secretary General Kamel speaks at panels focusing on cultural heritage, creativity and indigenous people’s knowledge of climate action, mitigation and adaptation, and he discusses the Mediterranean experience of human adaptability to climate change.

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-secretary-general-g20-culture/>

August 2021

Health, EU-Algeria

3-Algiers: Following a request made by the Algerian Ministry of Health, the EU-funded “European Solidarity Response to Covid-19 in Algeria,” announces its provision of 750 oxygen

concentrators has been received and is ready for use by public health organizations. The concentrators are being delivered by the National People’s Army. This project aims to support the Algerian public health system in its ongoing fight against the consequences of Covid-19.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/algeria-receives-750-oxygen-concentrators-part-european-solidarity>

Health

4-Brussels: The EC announces the allocation of €5.5 million in humanitarian funding to support the Covid-19 response in Lebanon. This comes in addition to the previous allocation of €50 million in humanitarian aid. The funding is aimed at supporting vaccination rates, preventing infections, as well as critical health needs like psycho-social support. A year after the Beirut blast, the country continues to face a profound socioeconomic crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic. The new funding aims to help improve outbreak detection at community level, strengthen testing capacity and reinforce the health system.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_4042

Migration

9-Rome: Operation “EUNAVFOR MED IRINI” – an EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) military operation in the Mediterranean – announces the signing of a working arrangement with the EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya). Operations IRINI and EUBAM will seek to establish effective cooperation in order to strengthen their actions responding to newly emerging issues in Libya. EUBAM assists relevant Libyan authorities in security-related issues, particularly in areas of border management.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eunavfor-med-irini-and-eubam-libya-sign-working-arrangement>

Environment & Sustainability

16-London: The EBRD provides a \$50-million loan to Egyptian bank QNB ALAHLI, to be used on supporting SMEs and green investments in Egypt. The EU will support the financing, which

will be extended by QNB ALAHLI to SMEs in agribusiness, residential, industrial, commercial and service sectors, developing green, energy efficiency, water efficiency, renewable energy or resource efficiency projects.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-donors-and-qnb-alahli-boost-green-investments-in-egypt.html

Development & Aid

16-Brussels: The EU announces the provision by 13 European countries of urgent Covid-related assistance to Tunisia via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Countries including Belgium, Austria, Spain and Portugal provide close to 1.3 million vaccine doses, 8 million face masks, as well as antigen tests, ventilators and other vital medical equipment. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism aims to strengthen cooperation between EU Member States and six Participating States in the field of civil protection, as a way of improving prevention, preparedness and response to disasters in European and neighbouring countries.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press-corner/detail/en/ip_21_4243

September 2021

Trade & Diplomacy

1-London: The EBRD provides a \$5-million trade finance limit to the Bank of Palestine to support local exporters and importers from the West Bank and Gaza. The Covid-19 pandemic has produced a strong demand for trade financing in Palestine as a way of boosting the import and export of vital goods. To this end, the EBRD has previously established its Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP), to promote international trade amongst its member countries.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-and-bank-of-palestine-boost-trade-in-west-bank-and-gaza.html

Youth & Education

6-Jordan: The EDU-SYRIA/EDU-JORDAN programme announces it is opening scholarship applications for Syrian refugees living in refugee camps who apply to do bachelor's degrees at Zarqa University, Jordan. EDU-SYRIA/

EDU-JORDAN is an EU-funded project which provides higher education opportunities for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian youth. The programme offers scholarships for higher education (bachelor's and master's), as well as vocational education, technical training, special entrepreneurial training, or summer programmes for school students.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/edu-syria-bachelors-degree-scholarships-now-open-syrians-living-inside>

Development & Aid

8-Brussels: The EU releases €80,000 of humanitarian funding to provide emergency relief to 25,000 people affected by forest fires in northern Algeria. The aid will go to the Algerian Red Crescent to support families in the provinces of Bejaia, Tizi Ouzou, Jijel and Setif with emergency shelter, household items, food packages and psychosocial support. It will also support the Algerian Red Crescent by allowing it to sustain the mobilization of its staff and volunteers.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/european-union-helps-victims-forest-fires-algeria>

Trade & Diplomacy

8/10-Libya & Tunisia: EUHR for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell visits Libya and Tunisia. In Libya, Borrell voices the EU's intentions to continue to contribute to the stabilization of the country, and raises areas of ongoing cooperation between the EU and Libya, such as Operation Iriini. In Tunisia, Borrell meets with President Kais Saied, as well as ministers, independent bodies and representatives of Tunisian civil society. In a statement, Borrell says he intends to "listen to our Tunisian friends" and "support the Tunisian people in building a sustainable democracy."

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/first-official-visit-eu-high-representativevice-president-borrell-tunisia>

Trade & Diplomacy

21-London: The EBRD provides the Housing Bank for Trade and Finance in Jordan with a \$50-million trade finance limit to support exports and imports in

the country. This facility comes under the EBRD's Trade Facilitation Programme, which seeks to enhance connectivity between banks, thus expanding the access of the Jordanian Housing Bank to a larger banking network and more international business opportunities.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-fosters-trade-in-jordan-.html

Trade & Diplomacy, EU-Lebanon

21-Brussels: The EU states its support for the Lebanese Parliament in its confirmation through a vote of confidence of the new government headed by Prime Minister Najib Mikati. In its statement, the EU commends the agenda of the new government in its ambitions to face Lebanon's multifaceted crisis, and welcomes calls for a strengthening of Lebanon's partnership with the EU.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/lebanon-statement-high-representative-confidence-vote-new-government>

Development & Aid

29-Brussels: EU ambassadors approve a budget amendment unlocking €149.6 million of funding from the EU budget to support the most vulnerable among the Syrian refugee population in Turkey. Turkey is the country with the highest refugee population in the world, and budget amendments like this one allow for the EU to continue providing support to refugees and host communities in Turkey, through programmes such as the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) – the biggest humanitarian programme in the EU's history – which provides multi-purpose cash assistance on a monthly basis to approximately 1.8 million refugees in Turkey to cover essential needs like rent, transport, bills, food and medicine.

www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/09/29/humanitarian-support-to-refugees-in-turkey-approval-for-a-2021-eu-budget-amendment/

Environment & Sustainability

30-Morocco: The EU and its Member States launch "climate diplomacy weeks" across Morocco, from 30 September to 17 October, to address the

theme of “Action and Ambition.” The “climate diplomacy weeks” will be organized in association with Moroccan partner organizations, with the intention of discussing climate change action ahead of COP26. Activities include youth workshops, meetings between young people and European diplomats, or a radio and web campaign to raise awareness on climate change.
<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/climate-diplomacy-weeks-eu-and-its-member-states-mobilise-climate-morocco>

October 2021

EU-Southern Neighbourhood

4-Online: MAJALAT, an EU-funded initiative for EU-civil society dialogue in the southern Mediterranean region, announces the project is closing. Since its conception in 2018, MAJALAT has organized debates that have brought together civil society organizations, trade unions, policymakers and experts from across the Mediterranean. Its past activities have included national roundtables in Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco, and annual Civil Society Forums. The aim of the project has been to offer a multi-layered space for dialogue between the EU and partner countries in the southern Mediterranean.
<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-funded-initiative-majalat-comes-end>

Environment & Sustainability

4-Cairo: The 2nd UfM Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action takes place in Cairo, gathering ministers from the 42 member countries of the UfM. The ministers agree on a common agenda to bolster efforts to tackle the climate and environmental challenges of the Euro-Mediterranean region. The conference takes place against the backdrop of a summer dominated by climate and environmental emergencies across the Mediterranean, and as warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlights the Mediterranean as one of the world’s regions most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Ministers discuss the importance of

mainstreaming climate action across all sectoral policies, including energy, agriculture, transport or industry, and also highlighted the need for more investments and sustainable finance.
<https://ufmsecretariat.org/ministerial-climate-environment-2021/>

Environment & Sustainability

6-Monastir, Tunisia: As part of the COMMON project, a team of scientists and marine biologists from Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer and the Centre National de Veille Zoosanitaire, in Tunisia, visit local fishermen in Monastir, Tunisia, to discuss the effects of marine litter on biodiversity. COMMON is an EU-funded project aimed at tackling marine litter in the Mediterranean, working across Italy, Lebanon and Tunisia. Exchanges such as this one are central to the project’s aim to include local communities in developing solutions to mitigate marine litter.
<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/tunisia-common-project-discusses-marine-litter-and-its-impact-local>

Environment & Sustainability

11-Amman: The Jordanian Minister of Water and Irrigation signs a €24-million contract for an EU co-funded project aimed at improving access to water, water distribution performance and sewage disposal in the northern Irbid Governorate. The project is also funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). Building resilience in water systems and infrastructure in southern Mediterranean countries such as Jordan is a key priority for EU development and cooperation in the Mediterranean.
<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/jordan-eu24-million-strengthen-and-restructure-water-networks-northern>

Migration

12-Cairo: The “European Asylum Support Office (EASO) regional conference on international protection and persons with specific protection needs in North Africa and Niger” takes place in Cairo, Egypt, chaired by the head of the EU Delegation to Egypt, Ambassador Chris-

tian Berger. Topics discussed throughout the conference include cooperation between EASO and Egypt, regionally and bilaterally, as well as the need to continue the approach of jointly designing activities to support asylum-related capacities.
<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/egypt-hosts-easo-regional-conference>

Trade & Diplomacy

13/14-Madrid: The 5th MedThink 5+5 Forum is held in Madrid, bringing together diplomats, experts and practitioners from Member States of the 5+5 Dialogue (Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia), to discuss the transformation and future of the western Mediterranean region in the post-Covid-19 context. Participants emphasize the importance of the 5+5 Dialogue in the post-Covid-19 world to foster cooperation in the Mediterranean, on topics such as the enhancement of regional value chains, water security or the digital transition to achieve sustainable urban development.
<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/10/14/what-prospects-for-the-55-dialogue-in-a-mediterranean-in-transformation/>

Development & Aid

14-London: The EBRD announces it is supporting olive oil production in Tunisia with a €6.2-million loan to the Compagnie Générale des Industries Alimentaires (COGIA SA) to boost Tunisian olive oil producers. Tunisia is one of the world’s five largest olive oil producers, and these funds are therefore intended to develop a sector of major strategic importance to the Tunisian economy by promoting regional integration, strengthening export competitiveness and thus bolstering economic growth.
<https://www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-promotes-tunisia-oliveoil-sector.html>

Development & Aid, EU-Palestine

14-East Jerusalem: The EU and Germany launch the East Jerusalem Tourism Development Programme and inaugurate the Tourism Development Hub in East Jerusalem. These projects aim to

maintain the Palestinian identity and support the tourism sector of East Jerusalem. Tourism is one of the main income-generating activities in the city and is therefore vital towards maintaining a Palestinian presence. However, it has been heavily affected by Covid-19, and these programmes aim to revive the sector.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-and-germany-launch-east-jerusalem-tourism-development-programme>

Business & Entrepreneurship

19-London: The EBRD loans €80 million to Reefy Microfinance Enterprise Services, Egypt's first licensed microfinance institution, to finance women entrepreneurs in the country. The loan is provided under the EBRD's Women in Business programme, which promotes the participation of women in the economy and provides financial, advisory, training and mentoring support to women-led small businesses. Focus will be placed on supporting women outside Greater Cairo and Alexandria.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-eu-and-reefy-step-up-support-for-women-entrepreneurs-in-egypt.html

Migration

21-Barcelona: UfM Member States endorse the Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, a regional initiative to provide refugee and displaced populations with rapid access to higher education. Only 1% of refugees of relevant age worldwide have access to higher education, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has set the goal of increasing this to 15%. To this end, the project endorsed by the UfM aims at running emergency two-year scholarship programmes for 300 beneficiaries in 10 countries including Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Turkey.

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/som-oct-2021/>

Environment & Sustainability

25-Cairo: The EIB, the Delegation of the EU to Egypt, the French Development Agency and the German Development Bank organize a seminar on the

instruments and prospects of the sustainable financing of water projects, in the context of Cairo Water Week. The seminar discusses the role of the EU, EU financial instruments and EU Member States in supporting the water sector in Egypt. As one of the regions most affected by the ongoing effects of climate change, the Mediterranean, and countries like Egypt, are likely to be increasingly affected by water scarcity.

www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-350-cairo-water-week-team-europe-high-lights-importance-of-sustainable-water-financing

Environment & Sustainability

27-Online: A new EU-funded project to develop sustainable waste management in the Mediterranean, called MED4WASTE, is launched during an online meeting. The project, which targets Italy, Greece, Spain, Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon, aims to facilitate new governance models for integrated and efficient urban waste management policies across the Mediterranean.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/med4waste-new-eu-funded-project-develop-sustainable-waste-management>

Trade & Diplomacy

28-Brussels: EUHR for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell meets with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayeh in Brussels, to discuss the EU's support for the Palestinian people and for Palestinian state-building. Borrell emphasizes the EU's ongoing commitment to a negotiated and comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-state solution, as well as the need to relaunch meaningful negotiations and revive the peace process.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/palestine-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-met-prime>

November 2021

Development & Aid,

3-Brussels: The EU announces it is transferring a contribution of €15.6 million to the Palestinian Ministry of Finance to assist with payments of sala-

ries and pensions for civil servants in the health and education sectors in the West Bank. This is in response to the ongoing challenges posed by the economic crisis in occupied Palestinian territory, exacerbated by the pandemic and ongoing tensions with Israel.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/palestine-eu156-million-eu-payment-october-salaries-and-pensions>

Development & Aid

4-London: The EBRD publishes its Regional Economic Prospects report, in which it raises its growth forecast for the southern and eastern Mediterranean to 4.2% for 2021. The rise is driven by the recovery in economic activity in the region, characterized by a rebound in the agriculture and telecommunications sectors, and growth in tourism and exports. The report states that future economic growth will depend on factors such as the ongoing recovery from the pandemic, progress in vaccination rollout or advancing digitalization as a key step towards attracting investment.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-raises-forecast-for-southern-and-eastern-mediterranean-region.html

Youth & Education

10-Tunis & Online: The European Training Foundation holds its 7th Forum for the Development of Entrepreneurial Learning, which focuses on Tunisia. The forum discusses how the Tunisian government and international partners can strengthen and expand the network of entrepreneurial vocational education and training centres.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/etf-7th-forum-development-entrepreneurial-learning-focus-tunisia>

Trade & Diplomacy

11/13-Paris: The International Libya Conference, co-chaired by France, Germany, Italy, the UN and Libya takes place during the 4th edition of the Paris Peace Forum. The conference is attended by EUHR for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, and by President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. The conference discusses the

situation in Libya and calls for a resolution to ongoing security challenges.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/hrvp-josep-borrell-participates-international-libya-conference>

Health

14-Jordan: The EU partners with Radio Al-Balad in Jordan to launch a nationwide “Vaccine Misinformation Campaign.” The campaign will seek to combat Covid-19 and vaccine misinformation by sharing sound and accessible information on the safety and effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccine, and on ways of adapting to and fighting the pandemic. <https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/jordan-eu-and-radio-al-balad-join-forces-combat-vaccine-misinformation>

Migration

15-Cairo: The 3rd EU–Egypt Political Dialogue on Migration is launched by Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry and EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Ylva Johansson, in Cairo. The meeting aims to discuss all aspects of the EU’s cooperation with Egypt on migration. Topics addressed include fighting human trafficking and smuggling, promoting regular migration, the need for investment and job creation to support youth, and Egypt’s efforts to host millions of migrants, including Syrian refugees. These common challenges are central to the EU and Egypt’s partnership.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/joint-press-statement-third-eu-egypt-political-dialogue-migration>

Business & Entrepreneurship

18-London: The EBRD provides a \$3-million loan to Vitas Palestine, a microfinance institution in the West Bank and Gaza, to boost MSMEs. MSMEs in the West Bank and Gaza represent a significant portion of the economy, and their limited access to finance has been worsened by the pandemic. The funds will be distributed by Vitas Palestine to local businesses.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebrd-supports-small-businesses-in-west-bank-and-gaza.html

Culture & Heritage

28/29-Barcelona: On the occasion of the first annual celebration of the Day of the Mediterranean, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the UfM gather in Barcelona for the 6th UfM Regional Forum. The Forum produced an agreement from the ministers on the need to further intensify regional integration and cooperation in the Mediterranean. The newly established “Day of the Mediterranean” is celebrated with the aim of recognizing Mediterranean culture, embracing the rich diversity of the region. It is intended as a call for cooperation amongst the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/first-annual-celebration-of-the-day-of-the-mediterranean/>

Environment & Sustainability

29-Barcelona: A new MoU, focused on climate action, economic integration and support for women and youth is signed between the UfM and the Regional Bureau for Arab States of the UNDP. The MoU sets out to strengthen collaboration between both entities in order to address common challenges across the Mediterranean and among Arab States. One of the specific actions to be taken is the development of a Mediterranean Climate Change Hub, aiming to provide training to central and local public administration officers on climate adaptation.

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/new-agreement-between-undp-and-ufm-2021/>

December 2021

Migration

2-Brussels: The EU announces the allocation of an additional €325 million in humanitarian aid for refugees in Turkey. The funds will be used to extend the EU’s ESSN programme until early 2023. The ESSN provides monthly cash transfers to over 1.5 million refugees in Turkey, to cover essential needs such as rent, transport, bills, food and medicine. This funding is part of a €3-billion package to support refugees in Turkey, announced by President Ursula von der Leyen following the European Council of June 2021. Turkey hosts the largest

number of refugees worldwide – 4 million, of which 3.7 million are estimated to be Syrians, the majority of which live outside camps.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press-corner/detail/en/ip_21_6470

Migration, EU-Egypt

5-Cairo: The EU Delegation to Egypt launches a cooperation project titled “Governance on Migration through Institutional Support,” in Cairo. The project aims to set up cooperation and exchange of expertise and experience, with the goal of facilitating safe and orderly migration and mobility. The project is established following the EU-Egypt High Level Dialogue on Migration in November 2021. Migration partnerships with neighbouring countries is a key element of the EU’s migration strategy, and Egypt is therefore a key partner on this issue.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/egypt-governance-migration-through-institutional-support-project-launched>

Water

6-Palestine: The Palestinian Ministry of Finance signs a financing agreement with the German Development Bank, funded by the EU, to improve availability and reliability of water supply services in Gaza City and Jabalia. The project will fund the construction of a new concrete reservoir in the region. The EU and Germany are large contributors towards increasing the availability of drinking water in northern Gaza, where drinking water availability is one of the lowest in the world.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-provides-eur-9-million-improve-water-supply-services-gaza-city-and>

Development & Aid

7-London: The EBRD announces a new €49-million loan to the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture to modernize irrigation infrastructure, serving 37 oases in Tunisia’s southern governorates of Gabès, Gafsa, Kébili and Tozeur. These oases are the primary source of employment and income in the region, and the funds will therefore aim to increase access to more economic opportunities for wom-

en and young people. Overall, the loan aims to improve access to irrigation water for over 6,800 farmers and their families.

www.ebrd.com/news/2021/ebird-supports-modernisation-of-irrigation-infrastructure-in-southern-tunisia.html

Business & Entrepreneurship

9-Tunis: The EIB signs financing contracts with microfinancing institutions and tech companies in Tunisia, to support entrepreneurship, innovation and social infrastructure. This funding falls under the Microfinance Facility for the Southern Neighbourhood, set up in co-operation with the EU. The financing, totalling €63 million, will go towards Enda Tamweel, a microfinance institution; One Tech Group, a tech company; and Transtu, the Tunisian public transport authority.

www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-444-tunisie-la-bei-mobilise-63-millions-d-euros-pour-renforcer-son-soutien-a-l-entreprenariat-a-l-innovation-et-aux-infrastructures-sociales

Migration

9-Brussels: The European Council adopts a regulation which upgrades the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) into a fully-fledged agency, the EU Agency for Asylum. The new agency will be responsible for improving the functioning of the common European asylum system, by providing technical and operational assistance to Member States and assisting with the assessment of applications for international protection. The creation of the European Union Agency for Asylum was one of the key pillars of the European Commission's New Pact for Migration and Asylum.

www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/09/migration-and-asylum-pact-council-adopts-eu-asylum-agency-regulation/

Justice & Human Rights

14-Tunis: The Tunisian National Body for Combating Trafficking in Persons (INLTP) and the Council of Europe launch the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, in Tunisia. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework using a human rights approach for identifying potential victims of human trafficking, and referring them to services which can offer support adapted to their needs. The NRM is aimed at people working with victims of human trafficking, and is the first mechanism of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/tunisia-launched-new-initiative-better-detect-and-help-victims-human>

Justice & Human Rights

14-Brussels: The Council of Europe adopts sanctions against the Wagner Group, a Russia-based private military entity. The Wagner Group has operated in conflict zones around the world including in Libya and Syria, and individuals listed by the EU are linked to serious human rights abuses, such as torture and extrajudicial executions. Measures such as these mark the EU's aim to curtail the activities of the Wagner Group in its southern and eastern neighbourhoods.

<https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-imposes-restrictive-measures-against-wagner-group>

Water

17-Amman: The EIB signs a €70-million loan in Amman to invest in the reduction of water losses in Jordan. The funding will improve access to Jordan's limited water resources in communities in the Jordan Valley and major cities. In the context of climate change, investing in strengthening resilience and adapting

to increased water demand is a key priority in the region.

www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-470-jordanian-ministers-welcome-eur-70-million-eib-support-to-improve-use-of-scarce-water-in-the-jordan-valley

Migration

21-Brussels: The EC adopts two financing decisions, totaling €560 million, to provide higher education and inclusive quality education for refugees in Turkey, and to support border protection. Most of this funding (€530 million) will go towards increasing access to higher education for refugees through scholarships, while another portion of funding (€30 million) will go towards capacity building in border protection, including improving the conditions faced by migrants and refugees in Turkey's hosting centres.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press-corner/detail/en/ip_21_6931

Development & Aid

22-Brussels: The EU announces it is mobilizing €10 million in humanitarian aid to Syria, to mitigate the effects of drought on the most vulnerable. The funding will aim to increase access to water and rehabilitate critical water infrastructure, provide food and nutrition, expand medical services and provide assistance to vulnerable people in the winter with heating fuel, winter clothes, blankets and tents. Since the summer of 2021, Syria has faced its worst drought in 70 years, which has caused a major water crisis. Over 5 million people in Syria are losing access to water, food and electricity. This provides an example of how climate change is likely to affect the most vulnerable as its effects continue to increase in the Mediterranean region.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press-corner/detail/en/ip_21_7065

Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

1. NATO Mediterranean Dialogue + Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

Instability in the Mediterranean region is important to NATO Allies and partners both for humanitarian and geopolitical reasons as security in the Middle East and North Africa is organically related to security in Europe. NATO has developed a network of partnership with seven southern Mediterranean countries under the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), as well as with four countries of the Gulf region through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). Within these frameworks, these countries: share insights on areas of common interest or concern through political consultation and intelligence sharing; participate in exercises and training for future missions; contribute to current operations; support research on new capability development; integrate gender perspective into security and defence; fight against corruption in the defence sector; and enhance efforts to destroy or control arms. The MD started in 1994 with five participating countries, which included Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, followed a few years later by Algeria and Jordan. The Dialogue has the following features: it is progressive in terms of participation and content; it is generally bilateral in the NATO+1 format but also admits multilateral meetings in the NATO+7 format; the same basis is offered to all the partners according to a non-discrimination principle; however each country can decide to intensify its own participation in the spirit of self-differentiation through an Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) and NATO will not impose the extent of the cooperation; it is complementary to other regional or international initiatives; and it has both a political and practical

dimension. Until 2011, the overall responsibility for the MD fell to the Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG), established at the Madrid Summit in 1997. It was then replaced by the Political and Partnerships Committee, which is responsible for all partnerships. The Committee meets at the level of Political Counsellors on a regular basis to discuss all matters related to the Dialogue including its further development. At the 2004 Istanbul Summit, NATO's Heads of State and Government elevated the MD to a genuine partnership through the establishment of a more ambitious and expanded framework, which considerably enhanced both the MD's political and practical cooperation dimensions. Consultations of the 29 Allies (Montenegro became NATO's 29th member on 5 June), and seven MD countries take place on a regular basis on a bilateral and multilateral level, at ministerial, ambassadorial and working level formats. The political dimension also includes visits by NATO Senior Officials, including the Secretary General (SG) and the Deputy SG, to MD countries. The main purpose of these visits is to conduct high-level political consultations with the relevant host authorities on the way forward in NATO's political and practical cooperation under the Dialogue. The new Strategic Concept, adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2011, identifies cooperative security as one of three key priorities for the Alliance. Practical cooperation in the MD includes seminars, workshops and other practical activities in the fields of modernization of the armed forces, civil emergency planning, crisis management, border security, small arms & light weapons, public diplomacy, scientific and environmental cooperation, as well as consultations on terrorism and the

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The military dimension of the practical cooperation includes invitations to Dialogue countries to observe – and in some cases participate – in NATO/PfP military exercises, attend courses and other academic activities at the NATO School (SHAPE) in Oberammergau (Germany) and the NATO Defense College in Rome (Italy), and visit NATO military bodies. The Individual and Partnership Cooperation Programme (IPCP), which replaces the previous Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) framework document, is aimed at enhancing bilateral political dialogue as well as tailoring cooperation with NATO according to key national security needs. Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia have all agreed tailored ICPs with NATO. At the 2014 Wales Summit two important initiatives were endorsed: the Partnership Interoperability Initiative and the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative. The first provides measures to ensure that the connections built up over years of operations and exercises are deepened so that partners contribute to future NATO-led operations (currently only Jordan has access to enhanced cooperation). The DCB Initiative is demand-driven and aimed at NATO's commitment with partners. This package includes: seven areas of cooperation (including cyber defence, military exercises, Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices cooperation and border security...); the invitation to participate in the 2015 NATO Cyber Coalition exercise (the first MD countries to do so); and a Science for Peace and Security (SPS) project on Counter-IED. The SPS Programme is a policy tool that enhances cooperation and dialogue with all part-

ners, based on scientific research, innovation, and knowledge exchange. It provides funding, expert advice, and support to security-relevant activities. More than 30 SPS activities are held with MD countries covering areas such as cyber-defence training for Morocco, the implementation of a cyber-defence strategy in Jordan, the development of advanced security technologies in Israel and the creation of a regional crisis management centre in Mauritania. Unlike the MD, the ICI only focuses on practical cooperation and it was launched in 2004. It is addressed to the Gulf Countries and, as it stands, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have all joined the Initiative. Based on the principle of inclusiveness, the Initiative is, however, open to all interested countries of the broader Middle East region who subscribe to its aims and content, including the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Initiative offers bilateral activities that countries can choose from, which comprise a range of cooperation areas: tailored advice on defence transformation; military-to-military cooperation to contribute to interoperability through participation in selected military exercises and through participation in selected NATO and PFP exercises and in NATO-led operations on a case-by-case basis; cooperation in the fight against terrorism, including through intelligence sharing; cooperation regarding border security in connection with terrorism, small arms and light weapons and the fight against illegal trafficking; and civil emergency planning. With the approval of the new partnership policy at the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Berlin in April 2011, all NATO partners will have access in principle to the same range and number of activities. This will dramatically expand the number of activities accessible to ICI countries. ICI partners have also increasingly demonstrated their readiness to participate in NATO-led operations, acting as security providers. Today, several ICI partners actively contribute to the NATO ISAF operation in Afghanistan. Following the launch of Operation Unified Protector (OUP) in Libya, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates promptly provided air assets to the operation and were recognized as contributing nations, playing a

key role in the success of the operation. Finally, within the Parliamentary dimension of NATO a Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM) was created in 1996 as a forum for parliamentarians of NATO and the MENA region to discuss security issues. The GSM conducts seminars, bringing together parliamentarians from NATO countries with their counterparts in the region, to explore specific topics and to consider the annual GSM Report. The Group also undertakes an annual visit to a country in the region.

Main Events in 2021

- *14 January, Brussels:* President of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, visits the NATO headquarters in Brussels and discusses security cooperation with NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg highlighted Mauritania's contributions to regional security in the Sahel, especially with regards to counterterrorism. Mauritania has been a NATO partner country since 1995, and the Alliance has supported Mauritania in strengthening its capabilities through actions such as constructing munitions depots, or training military personnel.
www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_180670.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *22 January, Brussels:* NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in Brussels, to discuss issues including the military de-confliction mechanism in the Eastern Mediterranean between Greece and Turkey, as well as Afghanistan and Libya. The Secretary General expresses his concern on the situation in Libya and re-emphasises NATO's position of providing defence, security and institution building advice.
www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_180795.htm
- *22 February, Brussels:* Tunisia receives 100,000 FFP2 masks from the Pandemic Response Trust Fund, coordinated by NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), which included financial contributions from Belgium, Germany and Norway. Tunisia is the first NATO partner in the Middle East and North Africa region to receive such support to address worsening Covid-19 conditions.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_181776.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *11 March, Brussels:* Iraqi Foreign Minister Faud Hussein holds a virtual briefing with NATO, focussing on NATO-Iraq cooperation. NATO SG emphasized NATO's role in strengthening the security institutions and forces of Iraq, in order to aid the stabilization of the country, as well as prevent the return of ISIS. NATO's Mission in Iraq is a non-combat mission which carries out advising, training and capacity-building activities. NATO allies also congratulate Iraqi representatives on the recent visit of Pope Francis.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_182050.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *30 March, Brussels:* NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg takes part in a virtual meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, co-hosted by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sophie Wilmes. The SG discusses NATO's non-combat mission in Iraq, and the recent joint decision between NATO and Iraq to expand this mission. Mr Stoltenberg also emphasizes that NATO will continue to consult with key partners including the UN and the EU as it continues to coordinate with the Global Coalition going forward.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_182894.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *5 May, Brussels:* King Abdullah II of Jordan visits NATO in Brussels. NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg emphasized NATO's close partnership with Jordan, stating that Jordanian and NATO forces have served together in the Balkans, Afghanistan and over Libya. He also stated that NATO is stepping up its delivery of PPE and other medical equipment to further support Jordan's fight against Covid-19.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_183404.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *17 May, Brussels:* The first scientific cooperation activity between NATO and Algeria concludes, with the aim of developing technological solutions relevant to the fight against terrorism. In the context of the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme (SPS), experts from Algeria, France and Sweden taking part develop the first terahertz imaging

technology in North Africa. This is a scanning system enabling the detection of firearms and explosives, providing the potential for protecting vulnerable sites from terrorist threats.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_183762.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *8 June, Baghdad:* Poland delivers medical equipment and supplies to Iraq in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This support is coordinated by NATO's EADRCC and the Polish government and armed forces. The supplies, which include facemasks and protective gloves and suits, are distributed by the Polish embassy in Baghdad. This support is part of the wider set of assistance measures Allies have taken towards Iraq in order to mitigate the most severe effects of Covid-19. NATO's Pandemic Response Trust Fund is also supporting the delivery of other medical equipment to Iraq, including an oxygen generator.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_184883.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *11 June, Amman:* NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geogană inaugurates a new Military Women's Training Centre in Jordan. The centre has been operational since November 2020, and it supports Jordan's aim of attaining 3% female representation in its armed forces. It provides NATO-standard basic and leadership training to nearly 600 students per year, and it includes living quarters and a nursery. Norway and the Czech Republic are lead nations of this project, while other Allies and Partner nations helped finance it through NATO's Trust Fund II for Jordan.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_184889.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *14 June, Brussels:* The 2021 NATO Summit takes place, gathering the leaders of NATO's 30 member countries. As part of the final communiqué, Alliance leaders commit to enhancing engagement in the Middle East and North Africa region, and to strengthen dialogue and "practical cooperation" with Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Partners. The Communiqué highlights examples of actions made towards these commitments, including upgrading defence capacity building assistance in Jordan and Tunisia, or leveraging the NATO-ICI Regional Centre in

Kuwait as a hub for education, training, and public diplomacy activities.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *25 June, Brussels:* NATO civil and military officials complete a trip to Mauritania, where they discuss opportunities for potential additional training and capacity building activities in support of Mauritanian national defence and security structures and institutions. NATO officials meet with the Mauritanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Chief of Defence, and several other high level officials. NATO and Mauritania are seeking to develop and strengthen their partnership; Allied leaders pointed out at this year's NATO summit that Mauritania plays a key role in NATO's collective security interests in the Sahel region.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185516.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *30 June, Brussels:* Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi of Iraq visits NATO in Brussels. Accompanied by Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, and Defence Minister Jumaah Saadoon, the Prime Minister discussed progress being made by the NATO mission in Iraq with SG Jens Stoltenberg. NATO's non-combat mission in Iraq trains and advises Iraqi security institutions and forces, helping them to fight terrorism and stabilize the country.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185613.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *12 July, Brussels,* H.E. Yair Lapid, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Alternate Prime Minister of Israel, visits NATO headquarters in Brussels and discusses a range of issues related to NATO-Israel relations with Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. The Secretary General pointed out Israel's continued contact with NATO, including staff-to-staff and expert level exchanges, despite restrictions imposed by Covid-19, in recent months. Israel is an active member of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, and cooperates with NATO in areas including science and technology, crisis preparedness, resilience and counter-terrorism.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185780.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *12 July, Brussels:* NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg meets Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry at NATO's headquarters. During their meeting, the

Secretary General welcomes the renewal of the Individual Partnership Cooperation Programme, and discusses the regional developments affecting Egypt's security interests with Minister Sameh Shoukry. Egypt's relationship with NATO, through the Mediterranean Dialogue, spans over more than 25 years.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185779.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *15 December, Tunis:* Tunisia receives 10 ventilators from NATO's Pandemic Response Stockpile to assist the country with responding to Covid-19 infections. The donation is made by Hungary and coordinated by NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre, and is aimed at benefiting the military hospitals of Bizerte Gabes and Sfax. NATO's Pandemic Response Trust Fund, and Pandemic Stockpile, have provided several tranches of Covid-19 support to allies and partners, including in the Mediterranean.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_190271.htm?selectedLocale=en

2. OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation

The relationship between the OSCE and its MPCs dates back to the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, which recognized that security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole. Immediately after Helsinki, Mediterranean non-participating states were invited to a specific meeting on Mediterranean issues related to economic, social, environmental, scientific and cultural topics. It was at the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council meeting when Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia requested a closer cooperation and finally became partners for cooperation in 1995 (Jordan joined in 1998). In 1994 an informal contact group of experts met to conduct a dialogue with MPCs to facilitate the exchange of information of mutual interest and generate ideas: the Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG). Within the political framework of this relationship, besides the MCG, the main elements are: the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, certain annual OSCE events, the OSCE PA Mediter-

anean Forum and the visit by the Secretary General (SG). The OSCE Mediterranean Conference is generally attended by international organizations, parliamentarians, academics and NGOs, and it provides a place for the exchange of ideas and exploring new ways to enhance cooperation. At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, partners engage in high-level meetings with the OSCE Troika (incoming, current and past Chairmen-in-Office) and the OSCE SG. In 2003, OSCE participating states decided to extend the fields for cooperation with partners (counterterrorism, border issues, economic and environmental activities, trafficking in human beings, election observation, media freedom) besides encouraging them to voluntarily implement OSCE commitments. Since 2007, a special fund has been created to attend to Partners' needs to participate in specific activities. The wave of upheavals that swept across the southern Mediterranean as of 2011 confirmed the need to reinforce and adapt the Partnership to assist Partners on their way to democracy and stability. The Contact Group serves at the main venue for regular dialogue with the Partners. It generally meets seven times a year at ambassadorial level and its chairman is generally the incoming chair of the OSCE. It discusses topics relevant to OSCE Partners or members in the three OSCE dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental and human. Since 2011, Partners have displayed a readiness to share relevant information and developments within the group while OSCE participating states have reaffirmed their support to share their expertise, experience and OSCE toolbox for democratic transition. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) enhances relations between participating states and MPCs from a parliamentary perspective. MPCs are invited to participate in OSCE PA conferences, and also to country observation missions offering them the opportunity to study best practices and democratic processes.

Main Events in 2021

- *16 March, Vienna:* The first OSCE Mediterranean Partnership of Cooperation group meeting of the Polish Chair-

manship takes place, with a focus on post-Covid-19 recovery, as well as current challenges and opportunities for security and regional cooperation. Ambassador Adam Hałaciński, Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE, and Marcin Przydacz, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, emphasize Poland's commitment towards continued cooperation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean partners.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/481282

- *10 May, Vienna:* The OSCE holds a Mediterranean Partnership of Cooperation group meeting in Vienna on the theme of transnational organized crime (TOC), gathering over 150 representatives from OSCE and partner countries including Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Participants stress the importance of doubling down prevention efforts and leveraging multilateral platforms and regional platforms to bolster the fight against TOC. One of the key issues explored was how the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners could more concretely reflect implementing international provisions and conventions that facilitate transnational co-operation in their national strategies, such as the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) and the Doha Declaration.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/486035

- *13 July, Vienna:* The third meeting of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation group chaired by Poland takes place, with the theme of realizing the potential of young people towards ensuring economic success and enhancing stability in the Mediterranean region. Participants discuss current youth unemployment trends, as well as good practices for tapping into the potential of young people.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/492724

- *15 July, Vienna:* Representatives from the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation hold a meeting discussing the possibilities for broadening dialogue to include sustainable development and climate change. As highlighted by recent studies, the Mediterranean region is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change,

most notably rising temperatures and water scarcity. In combination with other factors such as inequality and resource constraints, as well as migration flows, these climate factors are likely to affect the region's security. The Partners for Cooperation shared their commitments, best practices and ways forward related to sustainable development and climate change, stressing the importance of a collective approach and the importance of dialogue.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/492958

- *12 October, Vienna:* The 2021 OSCE Mediterranean Partners Conference takes place in Vienna, in order to outline a "road to resilience" for recovery from Covid-19. The conference focusses on three areas in which the OSCE can add value to Mediterranean cooperation; the sustainable and green recovery, fighting pandemic-related organized crime, and combating human trafficking in labour markets affected by the pandemic.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/500677

3. 5+5 Dialogue

The 5+5 Dialogue comes from a French proposal and was set up on 10 October 1990 during a ministerial meeting in Rome. It gathers the ten countries of the western Mediterranean Basin: five countries from the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Libya and Tunisia) and five members of the European Union (France, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Malta who joined in 1991). The 5+5 Dialogue has a flexible and informal nature. Over the years, it has been transformed from a merely political forum to one for strengthened regional and multidisciplinary cooperation in the western Mediterranean. Its flexibility and informality have enabled a gradual opening up, and the participating ministers and senior officials now meet to discuss an increasing number of issues. Originally just a political compromise between Foreign Ministers dealing with security and stability, as well as economic integration, it later expanded to include other spheres, such as Education, the Environment and Renewable Energies, Home Affairs (since 1995), Migration (since 2002),

Inter-parliamentary Relations (since 2003), Defence (since 2004), Tourism (since 2006) and Transport (since 2007). Due to its practical and operational nature, it is a forum for the exchange of ideas and the launch of new initiatives. It can also capitalize on its restricted geographical scope, which is limited to the western Mediterranean. This initiative has encouraged the insertion of Libya and Mauritania in the regional context.

Main Events in 2021

- *29 April, Online:* In the context of the Spanish co-presidency of the 5+5 Dialogue in 2021, the MedThink 5+5 network organizes an online conference titled "Fostering Women's Economic Participation in the Western Mediterranean: Successful Policies for in-depth Transformations." The conference maps gender economic disparities in Western Mediterranean societies, mainly in the Maghreb, and highlights national initiatives already impacting the economy and public policies. The dialogue leads to policy recommendations aimed at paving the way for in-depth economic and social transformation.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/04/29/new-medthink-5-5-online-conference-fostering-womens-economic-participation/>

- *5 October, Online:* In the framework of the Medthink 5+5 network, the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) and the Centre for Transportation Studies for the Western Mediterranean (CETMO) host a thematic seminar titled "The Western Mediterranean Transport and Logistics Sector in the post-Covid-19 Era: Seizing New Opportunities, Accelerating Transitions." The seminar is held on the occasion of the 10th Conference of Ministers of Transport of the 5+5 Dialogue in Malta, and it aims to stimulate debate for the sector to better prepare and adapt itself to the post-Covid-19 era, while promoting western Mediterranean integration and co-development.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/10/05/thematic-webinar-transport-and-logistics/>

- *6 October, Malta, Online:* The 10th meeting of the Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean

(GTMO) takes place, in the context of the 5+5 Dialogue, with the title "Enhancing connectivity with GTMO African countries within the European framework." The discussion of the ministers focussed on how to enhance the connectivity and sustainability of the transport sector in the western Mediterranean.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/10/06/10th-meeting-of-the-group-of-transport-ministers-of-the-countries-of-the-western-mediterranean-gtmo-55/>

- *7 October, Alicante:* The 1st meeting of labour ministers of the 5+5 dialogue takes place in Alicante, with the aim of opening up a new field of sectorial cooperation within the Western Mediterranean Forum. The meeting emphasizes the importance of initiating labour cooperation within the 5 + 5 Dialogue in the context of the fractures caused by the Covid-19 crisis. It also focuses on exchanging good practices to promote decent job creation in accordance with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/10/07/1st-meeting-of-labour-ministers-of-the-5-5-dialogue-in-alicante/>

- *13-14 October, Madrid:* The 5th MedThink 5+5 Forum is held, bringing together over 35 diplomats and experts from think tanks of the member states of the 5+5 Dialogue, with the aim of discussing current transformations in the western Mediterranean, in the context of the region's post-Covid-19 recovery. The forum is jointly organized by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/10/14/what-prospects-for-the-55-dialogue-in-a-mediterranean-in-transformation/>

4. Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All)

After the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia and the growing tensions among ethnic, cultural and religious groups in the Balkan area, the EU, in its attempts to cope with these crises, promoted the "Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe" for south eastern European countries hoping to join the Union in the future. Within this treaty, at the Finnish EU Sum-

mit in 1999, the Italian Government presented the "Adriatic Ionian Initiative." The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) was established at the Summit on the Development and Security of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) in May 2000. At the end of the Conference, the Foreign Ministers of the participating countries, Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia signed the "Ancona Declaration" in order to strengthen regional cooperation to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration. Today, the All has eight members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The initiative's Chairmanship rotates every May/June according to alphabetical criteria. The Chairmanship of Greece started in June 2016 and ended in May 2017, with Italy taking over from June 2017 until May 2018. Following the recent EU approach to support multilateral subregional cooperation, the All started working, in 2010, on the idea of a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian Region. Since then the All Participating states, started raising awareness regarding the need to establish a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian basin. The European Council has given a mandate to the EU Commission to present a new "Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region" (EUSAIR) by the end of 2014. The EUSAIR has been endorsed by the Council on 24 October 2014 and is now in its implementation phase. Many years after the establishment of the All, the geopolitical environment has deeply changed. Slovenia in 2004 and Croatia in 2013 entered the EU and the other Adriatic-Ionian Eastside coastal Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), albeit with different timeframes and conditions, are gradually approaching the EU within the Stabilisation and Association Process framework, as a prelude to future EU membership. After the overhaul of the All Round Tables approved in 2015, the highest political body of the All was also reformed. For the first time in Dubrovnik (12-5-2016) a double hat "Adriatic and Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting" is held within the EUSAIR Forum. This now makes the two exercises

(All and EUSAIR) inseparable from each other and mutually beneficial. The All focus for 2017 is on stakeholders and civil society with the ultimate goal of bringing them into the picture and making the subsidiarity principle work. The All aims to foster this process in two ways: firstly, by strengthening All Round Tables and connecting them strictly with the EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs). In order to make them effective, the All-PS finances the participation of selected experts coming from Adriatic and Ionian Civil Society (universities, NGOs, associations, chambers of commerce) and from local administrations; and, secondly, by connecting the All Round Tables with the EUSAIR Stakeholders Platform, as soon as it is fully operational.

Main Events during the Slovenian Chairmanship

Slovenia formally takes over the one-year chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) and the EU Strategy of the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) on 1 June 2020, and holds this position until May 2021. During its presidency, it seeks to implement high-profile activities to develop regional cooperation and strengthen All as a regional structure, relying on the already agreed and initiated activities. It also places particular attention on the promotion of EU standards and values and continues to support the European Integration aspirations of Western Balkan countries. The activities planned during the one-year presidency focus on four key priorities: 1. Infrastructure connectivity; 2. The promotion of cooperation in the areas of culture and creative industries; 3. Youth issues; and 4. Digitalization. Furthermore, in light of the ongoing challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Chairmanship must deal with the current health and humanitarian situation. Thus the organization of events during its Chairmanship will depend on the region's sanitary condition. Slovenia will also promote the active participation of the Fora of civil society (Chambers of Commerce, Cities and Universities) that have proven to be key actors in addressing systemic challenges of common interest. Besides this, during its Chairman-

ship, the country will emphasize All's parliamentary aspect, which helps provide broad discussions and, as a consequence, will lead to further political support from governments

- *27-29 January, Belgrade, Online:* The 5th Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) takes place under the slogan "Strengthening the resilience of the Adriatic and Ionian Region through cooperation." The Forum brings together Ministers in charge of Foreign Affairs and European Funds, officials of the European Commission, relevant stakeholders and the general public to take part in discussing the future of the Strategy and its role in addressing the key issues in the region.

www.aii-ps.org/news/354

- *11 February, Online:* The second Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) Committee of Senior Officials under the Slovenian Chairmanship takes place online, back-to-back with the first session of the 14th EUSAIR Governing Board. Topics discussed include: the next Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting, the Exclusive Economic Zone in the Adriatic Sea, and the implementation of the project "Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and All areas."

www.aii-ps.org/news/355

- *25 March, Online:* The All Trio meeting, which consists of a meeting between representatives of past, present and future All Chairmanships (Serbia, Slovenia, Albania), takes place online. Topics discussed include youth and relations with regional actors. The aim of the Trio Meeting is to ensure a smooth transition and continuity between Chairmanships.

www.aii-ps.org/news/358

- *15 April, Online:* The 17th Conference of Presidents of Parliaments of the All takes place, bringing together delegations of the parliaments of the countries participating in the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative. Participants discuss the digital transition, its opportunities and its challenges for young people entering the labour market. They also discuss the issue of youth and employment more generally, touching on the possibilities of job creation and better conditions in the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

www.aii-ps.org/news/359

- *26 April, Online:* Adriatic Ionian Initiative Secretary General, Ambassador Giovanni Castellaneta, takes part in a parliamentary workshop organized by the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the Italian Chamber of Deputies (Lower House of the Italian Parliament), titled "Western Balkans: between multipolarism and the European integration process." During his intervention, the All Secretary General stresses that the future of the Western Balkans is in Europe, and that Member States need to step up the integration process.

www.aii-ps.org/news/361

- *11-12 May, Izola (Slovenia), Online:* The 6th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), organized by the Republic of Slovenia and the European Commission, is held. The forum concludes with the publication of the Izola Declaration, laying out the priorities of participating countries. Topics of focus in the forum and of the declaration are Green Connectivity, the continuation of the European integration process of the Western Balkans, and the ongoing Covid-19 related challenges.

www.aii-ps.org/news/363

Main Events during the Albanian Chairmanship

Albania officially assumes the one-year chairmanship of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (All), of which it is a founding member, and of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) on 1 June 2021, after the 21st anniversary of the Ancona Declaration of May 2000. The country is due to hold the position until the end of May 2022. In line with Albanian foreign policy, which has prioritized regional cooperation and integration in its diplomacy, Albania's incentives and actions are aimed at deepening the cooperation within the All/EUSAIR community to find joint solutions and to adequately address the economic and social consequences of the pandemic, facilitating and supporting a sustainable recovery. The activities planned during the one-year presidency focus on four keys priorities: 1: Youth; tackling issues such as brain drain and labour migration in the Western Balkans, and recognizing that youth is a key driver of regional cooperation and peacebuilding. Tirana is

also set to be the European Youth Capital for 2022. 2: European Integration and Green Agenda; supporting Western Balkan countries in their path towards EU integration, and deepening efforts towards promoting innovative maritime and marine growth in the AI region. 3: Tourism and Culture; promoting the AI region as a major tourist destination. 4: Connectivity and digitalization; promoting further digital transformation, building on the achievements of the Digital Agenda.

▪ *23 June, Online:* The Secretary General of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) attends the annual meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states of the Central European Initiative (CEI), held under the Montenegrin CEI Presidency. The meeting tackles the topic of "Shaping Europe's Future, Building Prosperous Region: Enlargement, Rapprochement, Recovery." Key issues addressed are regional cooperation as a tool in fighting Covid-19, EU integration of the Western Balkans, and relations with Eastern Partnership countries.

www.aii-ps.org/news/365-aii-secretary-general-attending-cei-meeting-of-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-23-june-2021

▪ *6 July, Online:* A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is signed between the All and Marche Polytechnic University in Italy in order to strengthen collaboration and develop new scientific teaching activities on issues related to European integration. The MoU foresees the creation of 10 two-year scholarships, which will be granted to students coming from the Adriatic-Ionian region and the Western Balkans for enrolment in one of the four master's degree courses taught in English at the Marche Polytechnic University (International Economics and Commerce, Biomedical Engineering, Environmental Engineering and Food and Beverage Innovation and Management). The All will also finance a university course on European integration.

www.aii-ps.org/news/367

▪ *18-22 August, Ancona:* The 15th edition of the "Adriatico Mediterraneo" Festival is held, celebrating relations between Albania and Italy. The festival includes the granting of the Adriatico Mediterraneo prize, to academics, experts and authors who write on issues

relating to Albanian-Italian relations, and other activities including seminars and discussions on topics such as Albania and European Integration.

www.aii-ps.org/news/368

▪ *11-14 October, Brussels, Online:* The European Week of Regions and Cities (#EURegionsWeek), the biggest annual Brussels-based event dedicated to cohesion policy, takes place online. The agenda features over 300 sessions and online networking activities on four main themes; cohesion, green transition, digital transition, and citizen's engagement. The programme is focused on the capacity of the EU, as well as national and regional governments, to support citizens and their local communities with policies aimed at investing in a fairer, greener and more digital future for recovery.

www.aii-ps.org/news/369

▪ *19 October, Online:* The first Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) Committee of Senior Officials meeting under the Albanian chairmanship takes place. The meeting discusses the four key priorities of the Albanian chairmanship (youth, European integration and the green agenda, tourism and culture, connectivity and the digital transition). Senior officials are also briefed on recent activities of the All, including the agreement to fund scholarships for students from the Adriatic-Ionian region and Western Balkans enrolling in master's degrees at Marche Polytechnic University.

www.aii-ps.org/news/373-aii-committee-of-senior-official-tirana-online-18-october-2021

▪ *22-26 November, Rome:* Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) Secretary General Ambassador Castellaneta attends the EU-Balkan youth forum, which gathers European youth to discuss common issues, talk with policymakers, and encourage the emergence of a young transnational network to design new initiatives as well as foster fresh views on both the future of the EU and Balkan integration. Secretary General Castellaneta attends a session on EU enlargement, where he emphasizes the role of the All and EUSAIR as tools towards promoting development of the Western Balkans and thus accelerating the enlargement process.

www.aii-ps.org/news/375-eu-balkan-forum

5. League of Arab States

The League of Arab States (LAS) is an association of 22 countries established in 1945 with the aim of improving coordination among its members on matters of common interest. The founding members of the League (Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Yemen) agreed to seek closer cooperation on issues regarding economics, communication, culture, nationality, social welfare and health. The LAS traditionally embodies both the idea of Pan-Arabism (the principle of an Arab homeland) and Arab nationalism (respect for each member state's sovereignty). Among the LAS main achievements, the 1950 Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation Treaty; 1995 Draft Agreement on turning the Middle East into a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction; and the 1999 Arab Agreement on Combatting Terrorism, should be mentioned. The highest body of the League is the Council, composed of representatives of member states, generally foreign ministers. Each member state has one vote, regardless of the size of the country. The Council meets twice a year, in March and September but it may also convene a special session at the request of two members. The General Secretariat runs the daily activities of the League. It is the executive body of the Council and administrative body of the League. The Current SG is the Egyptian Ahmed About Gheit since July 2016, who succeeded Nabil Elaraby. The Arab league struggles with dysfunction and disunity among its members. In 2002 it achieved remarkable consensus on the Arab Peace Initiative. The 2011 Arab revolts in the Middle East and North Africa offered an occasion to propose actions and initiatives: it backed the UN action against Gaddafi's forces in Libya and sent, for the first time in history, a mission of observers to Syria (after suspending its membership in the League). Further information:

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/Pages/default.aspx>

Main Events in 2021

▪ *1 February, Cairo:* Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed About Gheit holds a meeting of general cooperation

between the Arab League and the African Union, with Moussa Faki, Chairman of the African Union Commission. This meeting is held periodically and in alternation between Cairo and Addis Ababa. The talks deal with issues of common interest between the two organizations, such as implementing the ceasefire in Libya, or supporting the political transition in Sudan.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2731

- *3 February, Cairo:* Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit receives Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, in the context of his visit to Cairo. Discussions between the two leaders revolved mainly about the Lebanese situation, including the latest developments in the formation of the government, and on the country's hopes to resolve its economic and social crisis. Secretary General Aboul Gheit expresses the Arab League's continued support for Lebanon as it confronts these challenges.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2737

- *8 March, Cairo:* On the occasion of his visit to Cairo, Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias visits Cairo and is received by Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit. Topics of discussion include how to advance relations between Greece and the Arab League by supporting efforts for security, stability, development and settling crises in the Arab Region.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2795

- *24 March, Online:* The General Secretariat of the Arab League and the European External Action Service hold a workshop on the EU's New Agenda for the Mediterranean. Participants from the Secretariat of the Arab League are given a summary of the New Agenda, and take part in a discussion on how it can benefit Arab League states at a regional and national level.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2820

- *25 March, Cairo:* The 3rd Arab Women Forum takes place under the theme of "Women, Digital Transformation and Financial Inclusion". The forum is organized in close collaboration between the General Secretariat of the Arab League

and civil society organizations, and brings together regional and national CSOs and actors, as well as leaders and experts across Arab League states in a series of debates and discussions.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2819

- *30 March, Brussels, Online:* Representatives of the Arab League participate in the 5th Brussels Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region." chaired by the European Union and the United Nations. The conference deals with how the international community can mobilize its support and continue to provide humanitarian aid to Syrians inside and outside Syria, including by supporting Syrian refugees and displaced persons. In his intervention, Arab League Assistant Secretary-General Ambassador Hossam Zaki, stresses the scale of human suffering inflicted on Syrians by the ongoing war in the last decade, emphasizes the Arab League's concern, and renews the Arab League's call for further international action in support of ending the conflict.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2827

- *14 April, Cairo:* Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit receives Jan Kubis, United Nations special envoy to Libya, during his visit to Cairo. Aboul Gheit and Kubis discuss the role of the Arab League and the United Nations in supporting the settlement process in Libya. Aboul Gheit also stresses the Arab League's eagerness to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations in this regard.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2854

- *4 May, Tunis:* Tunisian President Kaïs Saïed hosts Arab League Secretary General Aboul Gheit in Tunis. The leaders discuss regional issues of common interest and various crises, including the situations in Libya and Palestine, where they both express their agreement on the need to restore stability throughout the Arab region, as well as the importance of the role of the Arab League in this respect.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2837

- *13 June, Cairo:* The Arab League issues a statement condemning the European Parliament's resolution criticising the alleged breach of the UN Con-

vention on the Rights of the Child by Moroccan authorities in the migratory crisis in Ceuta. The statement emphasizes the complex nature of migration issues, as well as the need for cooperation between the EU and Morocco. It concludes by calling on the EU to adopt a practical position to enhance cooperation and coordination with Morocco with respect to migration.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2938

- *20 June, Cairo:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit receives Sven Koopmans, the new European Union envoy to the Middle East. The pair discuss issues relating to the EU's position vis à vis the Israel-Palestine conflict, and Aboul Gheit stresses the need to mobilize the international community to encourage both parties to sit at the negotiating table.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2956

- *28 June, Rome:* Secretary General of the Arab League Aboul Gheit participates in the conference of the international coalition against ISIS in Rome, attended by over 40 foreign ministers and heads of international organizations. In his intervention, Aboul Gheit emphasizes that the fight against ISIS as an organization must be in lockstep with the fight against ISIS as an ideology, stressing that the unity of international action is the key to eliminating ISIS.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2967

- *15-16 July, New York:* Arab League Secretary General Aboul Gheit attends the United Nations Security Council in New York, where he has various meetings with rulers, ministers and officials. Among them is United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, with whom Aboul Gheit discusses matters of common interest and cooperation including on the Libyan political dialogue, the Palestinian issue, the situation in Lebanon and the Iranian elections. In addition, Aboul Gheit meets with the Prime Minister of the Libyan National Unity Government, Abdel Hamid Debayyeh, with whom he discusses relations between Libya and the Arab League.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2997

- *30 August, Algiers:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit meets with Ramtane

Lamamra, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, to mark the beginning of his visit to Algeria to participate in the consultative ministerial meeting of the neighbouring countries of Libya. The meeting mostly includes discussions on Libya and the approaching elections.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3030

- *14 October, Cairo:* The 32nd session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs takes place in Cairo. The session goes over topics including climate change, sustainable development goals, desertification and biodiversity, and sets out the Arab League's position in preparation for COP26 in Glasgow, United Kingdom.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3095

- *21 October, Tripoli:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit visits Libya and participates in the Conference to Support the Stability of Libya, where he holds meetings with Libyan leaders. The Secretary General, in his interventions, stresses the importance the Arab League attaches to the Libyan elections scheduled for December, as well as the League's support for ending all forms of foreign military presence in Libya.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3127

- *10 November, Online:* Secretary General of the Arab League Aboul Gheit participates in the ministerial conference on the Covid-19 pandemic organized online by the United States State Department. In his speech, the Secretary General stresses the importance of supporting the material and human capacities of health sectors worldwide, and of strengthening regional cooperation, towards confronting the pandemic. He also calls for a unified international effort for a fair and equitable distribution of vaccines across the world, taking into account the least developed countries and countries in conflict.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3161

- *12 November, Paris:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit participates in the Paris International Conference on Libya, where he meets with heads of state and government. On the sidelines of the conference, Aboul Gheit held a session of talks with Charles Michel, President

of the European Council. The leaders discussed future prospects for Arab-European cooperation, as the Arab League and European Union prepare a ministerial meeting and Arab-European summit next year. Topics discussed include Sudan, Libya, Palestine and other issues of common interest.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3163

- *29-30 November, Barcelona:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit takes part in the 6th Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean. The Secretary General delivers a speech in which he discusses the EU's New Agenda for the Mediterranean, and in which he welcomes recent cooperation in energy and gas through the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum. Other topics addressed include Palestine, Syria and Libya, as well as migration. On the sidelines of the forum the Secretary General meets with Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares, with whom he discusses the possibility of deepening bilateral relations, and during which the Aboul Gheit re-emphasizes the Arab League's position vis à vis the Israel-Palestine conflict and the crises in Libya and Syria.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3195

- *1 December, Cairo:* Secretary General of the Arab League Aboul Gheit receives Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, during his visit to Cairo. They discuss the deep historical and cultural ties between Spain and the Arab world, and the willingness to strengthen these ties through institutions such as Casa Árabe in Madrid. In addition, the leaders discuss the situations in Palestine and Libya.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3202

6. Summit of the Southern European Union Countries

The 1st Mediterranean EU Countries' Summit took place in September 2016 in Malta to enhance their cooperation and contribute to the dialogue on the future of the EU. The recovery from the crisis, high migration flows, instability in the southern Mediterranean, Brexit and Euro-scepticism need a united response

from south European countries. With the Athens Declaration, the Heads of State and Government (HoSG) of the Republic of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain underline their strong commitment to European unity. They are convinced that the EU needs fresh energy to address the common challenges the Member States are facing and uphold its values of freedom, democracy and rule of law, and tolerance and solidarity. The countries, therefore, propose the following priorities and measures: ensuring the internal and external security of Europe, reinforcing cooperation in the Mediterranean and with African countries, fostering growth and investment in Europe, strengthening programmes for youth and addressing the challenge of migration.

Athens Declaration 2016: <https://southeu.summit.com/about/athens-declaration/>

- *17 September, Athens:* The 8th Summit of the Southern European Countries takes place in Athens, bringing together the heads of state of Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain. The Summit produces a declaration which is aimed at facing the various challenges faced by southern European Union countries, including climate, health, economy, security and stability. The main issues tackled by the declaration are the following; peace, security and stability in the Mediterranean, with particular attention paid to maritime zones and issues between Turkey and Cyprus, as well as the Israel-Palestine conflict, the crises in Lebanon, Syria and Libya, the democratic process in Tunisia, and the concerning end to the Afghanistan war, and the prevention of extremism and terrorism, including in the Sahel region. Turning its focus towards the European Agenda, the declaration treats issues such as the pandemic recovery and the Next Generation EU instrument, as well as the green and digital transitions, and the European Pact on Migration and Asylum. Finally, the declaration affirms its support for the New Agenda for the Mediterranean, and emphasizes the importance of the EU's Southern Neighbourhood.

www.pio.gov.cy/assets/pdf/newsroom/2021/09/17092021_EUMED%20Joint%20Declaration.pdf

Mediterranean Electoral Observatory

This chapter provides details of the results of presidential and legislative elections that took place in 2021 in independent states, presented in circum-Mediterranean order. The list also includes referenda and those elections held in autonomous entities or in any other relevant territory that are of particular political significance.

Portugal

Presidential elections

24 January 2021

Previous elections: 24 January 2016
Parliamentary Republic. The President is elected for a five-year term.

Candidates	% 1st round
Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa (Social Democratic Party, People's Party)	60.66
Ana Gomes (People–Animals–Nature, LIVRE)	12.96
André Ventura (CHEGA)	11.93
João Ferreira (Portuguese Communist Party, Ecologist Party "The Greens")	4.31
Marisa Matias (Left Bloc, Socialist Alternative Movement)	3.96
Tiago Mayan Gonçalves (Liberal Initiative)	3.23
Vitorino Silva (React, Include, Recycle)	2.95

Turnout: 39.26%

Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244

Legislative elections

14 February 2021

Previous elections: 6 October 2019
Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 is a parliamentary republic. It has a unicameral legislative system (Kuvendi i Kosovës) with 120 seats elected through an open-list proportional representation system to serve four-year term. 10 of those deputies are elected by the Serbian community and other 10 by other minorities. There is a 5% threshold for political parties repre-

senting the Albanian majority, and no threshold for the minorities.

Parties	%	Seats
Self-Determination Movement (LV) (Nationalism)	50.28	58
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) (Conservatism)	17.01	19
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) (Conservatism)	12.73	15
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) (Conservatism)	7.12	8
Serbian List (SL) (Minority interests, Serbian nationalism)	5.09	10
Turkish Democratic Party of Kosovo (Turkish minority)	0.75	2
Vakat Coalition (Bosnian minority)	0.62	1
New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (Ashkali minority)	0.38	1
Other Minority Parties	1.62	5

Turnout: 48.84%

Republic of Albania

Legislative elections

25 April 2021

Previous elections: 25 June 2017

The Albanian republic is a parliamentary democracy. Elections are held every four years to a unicameral 140-seat chamber (Kuvendi i Shqipërisë) through a closed-list proportional representation system. There are 12 multi-member constituencies corresponding to the country's 12 administrative regions. Within any constituency, parties must meet a threshold of 3%, and pre-election coalitions must meet a threshold of 5%.

Parties	%	Seats
Socialist Party of Albania (social-democrat, pro-Europeanism. Centre-left)	48.67	74
Democratic Party of Albania (conservative. Centre-right)	39.43	59
Socialist Movement for Integration (social-democrat, pro-Europeanism. Centre-left)	6.81	4

Social Democratic Party of Albania (social-democracy, centre-left)	2.25	3
--	------	---

Turnout: 46.29%

Cyprus

Legislative elections

30 May 2021

Previous elections: 22 May 2016

Presidential democratic republic with a unicameral legislature. 59 members of the House of Representatives (Vouli Antiprosópon/Temsilciler Meclisi) are elected by proportional representation for five-year terms of office, with the exception of the three representatives of the Maronite, Roman-Catholic and Armenian minorities. 24 seats are allocated to the Turkish minority in the Northern part of the island, although they have remained vacant since 1963.

Parties	%	Seats
Democratic Rally (DISY, conservatives of the liberal party)	27.77	17
Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL, socialist)	22.34	15
Democratic Party (DIKO, liberal)	11.29	9
National Popular Front (ELAM, ultranationalism)	6.78	4
Movement of Social Democracy (EDEK); Citizens' Alliance (SYPOL, centre-left)	6.72	4
Democratic Front	6.10	4
Movement of Ecologists - Citizens' Cooperation (KOSP, green)	4.41	3

Turnout: 65.72%

Syria

Legislative elections

26 May 2021

Previous elections: 3 June 2014

Syria is a presidential republic. The President is elected by a majoritarian electoral system to serve a seven-year term. The elections occurred under the authoritarian regime of al-Assad and were not considered to be free and fair.

Candidates	% 1st round
Bashar Hafez al-Assad, Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party	95.19
Mahmoud Ahmad Marei	3.31
Abdullah Sallum Abdullah, Socialist Unionist Party	1.50

Turnout: 78.64%

Israel

Legislative elections

23 March 2021

Previous elections: 2 March 2020

Israel is a parliamentary republic with a unicameral legislature (Knesset). Elections are called to elect the 120 members through a closed-list proportional representation system to serve four-year terms. There is a 2% threshold.

Parties	%	Seats
Likud (Right wing)	24.19	30
Yesh Atid (Liberalism)	13.93	17
Shas (Religious, right wing)	7.17	9
Blue & White (Centrist, liberal)	6.63	8
Yamina (Union of right-wing parties)	6.21	7
Israeli Labor Party (Social democracy)	6.09	7
United Torah Judaism (Religious, right wing)	5.63	7
Yisrael Beiteinu (Right wing)	5.63	7
Religious Zionist Party (Religious right wing)	5.12	6
Joint List, (Balad, Hadash, Taal) (Arab interests)	4.82	6
New Hope (Conservative liberalism)	4.74	6
Meretz (Social democracy)	4.59	6
United Arab List (Arab interests)	3.79	4

Turnout: 67.44%

Algeria

Legislative elections

12 June 2021

Previous elections: 4 May 2017

Semi-presidential republic. Bicameral legislature. 407 seats to be filled in the People's National Assembly (al-Majlis al-Sha'abi al-Watani/Assemblée Populaire Nationale) for five-year terms by means of proportional representation. Eight seats are reserved for Algerians living abroad. These are the first elections since the modification of the electoral law,

which introduced open lists and the electoral threshold. There is a 5% threshold.

Parties	%	Seats
National Liberation Front (FLN)	6.24	98
Movement of Society for Peace (MSP, Islamist)	4.52	65
National Rally for Democracy (RND)	4.31	58
El Moustakbel Front (FM, "Future", centrist)	3.34	48
National Construction Movement (Islamic democracy)	2.30	39
Voice of the People	0.28	3
Freedom and Justice Party	0.23	2
New Algeria Front	0.17	1
Justice and Development Front (FJD, Islamist)	0.17	2
El Fadjr El Djadid	0.16	2
El Karama Party ("Dignity", conservatism)	0.13	1
Good Governance Front	0.08	2
Jil Jadid	0.08	1
Algerian National Front (right wing)	0.03	1
Minor independent lists that won seats	5.57	84

Turnout 22.99%

Morocco

Legislative elections – Assembly of representatives

8 September 2021

Previous elections: 7 October 2016

Parliamentary Monarchy with bicameral legislature: the Assembly of representatives (Majlis al-Nuwab/Assemblée des Représentants) and the Assembly of Councillors (Majlis al-Mustasharin). In the 2021 elections the 395 members of the Assembly of representatives are elected with direct universal suffrage: 305 from party lists in 92 local constituencies and the remaining 90 seats from a 12 constituencies based on the regions. Of these 90 seats, a minimum of one third must be women.

Parties	% Regional lists	% Local lists	Seats
National Rally of Independents (RNI, Centre-right, liberal)	27.58	27.69	102
Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM, liberal)	18.30	18.47	87
Istiqlal Party (PI, Centre-right, nationalism)	16.74	16.87	81

Socialist Union of People's Forces (USFP)	7.80	7.89	34
Popular Movement (MP, conservative)	6.98	7.05	28
Constitutional Union (UC, centrist)	5.59	5.53	18
Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS, communist)	5.15	5.00	22
Justice and Development Party (PJD, Islamist)	4.30	4.26	13
Democratic and Social Movement (MDS, centrist)	1.18	1.67	5
Federation of the Democratic Left	1.10	1.10	1
Unified Socialist Party (Democratic socialism)	0.92	0.80	1
Front of Democratic Forces (socialism)	0.85	0.93	3

Turnout: 50.35%

Sources

Electoral Calendar

www.mherrera.org/elections.html

Electoral Geography 2.0

www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/

Fondation Robert Schuman

www.robert-schuman.eu

Freedom House

<https://freedomhouse.org>

Inter-Parliamentary Union – PARLINE database on national parliaments

www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) – Election Guide

www.electionguide.org

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

www.idea.int

National Democratic Institute

www.ndi.org

Observatory on Politics and Elections in the Arab and Muslim World (OPEMAM)

www.opemam.org

Parties and Elections in Europe

www.parties-and-elections.eu

Psephos Adam Carr's Election Archive

<http://psephos.adam-carr.net>

Project on Middle East Democracy

<http://pomed.org>

Cooperation in the Mediterranean

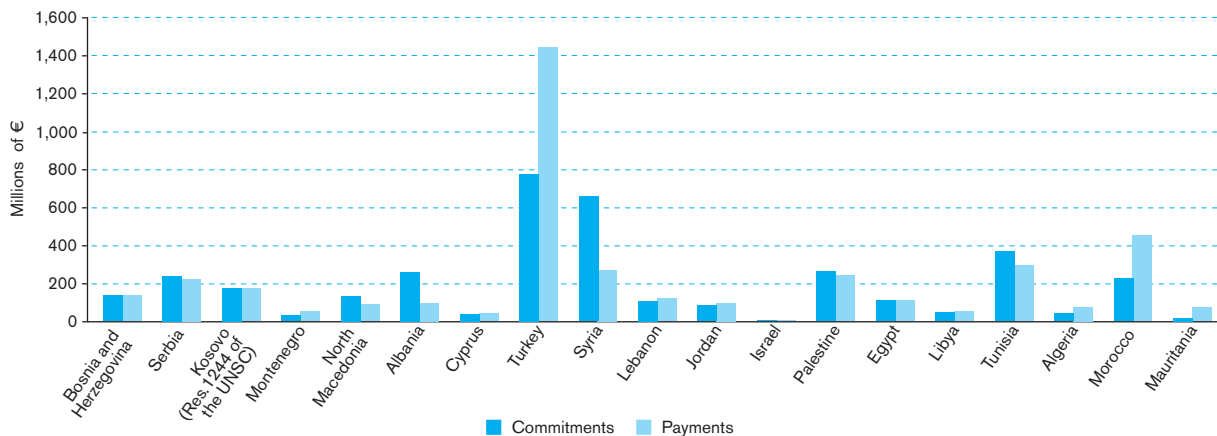
European Union Cooperation

TABLE A1 Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries Financed under the European Commission Development Aid in 2020

(in millions of euros)	Commitments	Payments
Croatia	-	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	136	136
Serbia	237	223
Kosovo (Res.1244 of the UNSC)	175	171
Montenegro	31	50
North Macedonia	133	87
Albania	258	95
Cyprus	37	42
Turkey	775	1,440
Syria	655	269
Lebanon	106	118
Jordan	84	96
Israel	2	4
Palestine	263	240
Egypt	110	109
Libya	44	51
Tunisia	366	292
Algeria	40	75
Morocco	223	450
Mauritania	16	71

Own production. Source: 2021 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments in 2020 https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/2021-annual-report-implementation-european-unions-external-action-instruments-2020_en

CHART A1 Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries Financed under the European Commission Development Aid in 2020



Own production. Source: 2021 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments in 2020 https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/2021-annual-report-implementation-european-unions-external-action-instruments-2020_en

TABLE A2 European External Assistance in the Mediterranean Countries by Country and Instrument** – Commitments

Country/ Region	ENI	DCI - Geo	DCI - Thema	EIDHR	ICSP	INSC	CFSP	IPA 2	HUMA	Other	EDF	Grand Total
Croatia												
Bosnia and Herzegovina								136				136
Serbia	0		0					236		0	0	237
Kosovo*					2		81	92				175
Montenegro								31				31
North Macedonia	0		0					133		0	0	133
Albania	17							241				258
Cyprus										37		37
Turkey	3		1		11			223	536	0	1	775
Syria	350				12				293			655
Lebanon	102				4							406
Jordan	84									0		84
Israel	2											2
Palestine	235				4				23			263
Egypt	110											110
Libya	20				14		10					44
Tunisia	365				0							366
Algeria	40											40
Morocco	223											223
Mauritania											15	16

Own production. *Res.1244 of the UNSC. Source: 2021 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments in 2020 https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/2021-annual-report-implementation-european-unions-external-action-instruments-2020_en

**ENI: European Neighbourhood Instrument; DCI: Development Cooperation Instrument; EIDHR: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights; ICSP: Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace; INSC: Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation; CFSP: Common foreign and security policy; IPA 2: Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance; HUMA: Humanitarian aid; EDF: European Development Fund.

TABLE A3 European External Assistance in the Mediterranean Countries by Country and Instrument** – Disbursements

Country/ Region	ENI	DCI - Geo	DCI - Thema	EIDHR	ICSP	INSC	CFSP	IPA 2	HUMA	Other	EDF	Grand Total
Croatia								0				0
Bosnia and Herzegovina				1	0		7	124	5			136
Serbia	0		0	0				222		0	0	223
Kosovo*				1	1		81	87				171
Montenegro				0				50		0		50
North Macedonia	0		0	0				86		0	0	87
Albania	0			1				93	0	0		95
Cyprus										42		42
Turkey	3		1	1	18	0		971	444	1	1	1,440
Syria	100		10	1	10				147			269
Lebanon	31		0	1	13				72			118
Jordan	72		1	1	1	0			21			96
Israel	2		1	1							0	4
Palestine	214		1	1	5				18			240
Egypt	101		2	2	0				5			109
Libya	16		2	1	14		18		9			51
Tunisia	174	2	1	2	1				1	0		292
Algeria	67		0	0	0				7			75
Morocco	449		0	0	1	0				0		450
Mauritania			4	0					34		33	71

Own production. *Res.1244 of the UNSC. Source: 2021 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments in 2020 https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/2021-annual-report-implementation-european-unions-external-action-instruments-2020_en

**ENI: European Neighbourhood Instrument; DCI: Development Cooperation Instrument; EIDHR: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights; ICSP: Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace; INSC: Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation; CFSP: Common foreign and security policy; IPA 2: Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance; HUMA: Humanitarian aid; EDF: European Development Fund.

TABLE A4 Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) – 2021-2027

Implementing Decision on the Financing of the Annual Action Plan for 2021	
Candidate Countries Actions	Millions of euros
Albania	64.9
EU for Justice	8.0
EU for Property Rights Phase II	10.0
EU for Nature	6.0
EU for Circular Economy and Green Growth	30.9
EU for Innovation Phase II	10.0
North Macedonia	90.45
EU for Rule of Law and Anti-corruption	8.5
EU against Organised Crime, in Support of Trade	10.6
EU Integration Facility	5.5
EU for Environmental Standards and Clean Air	22.0
EU for Prespa	18.0
EU for Green Economy	25.85
Montenegro	32.41
EU Integration Facility	3.65
Acquis related activities for Environment and Climate Action policies	6.275
EU for Support to Sustainable Connectivity and Green Economy	3.485
EU for Support to the Agricultural Sector	9.0
EU Reform Facility	10.0
Serbia	122.14
EU Integration Facility	31.3
EU for Connectivity and Green Agenda	63.2
EU for Sustainable Economy, Agriculture and Rural Development	15.64
EU for Enabling a More Responsive Healthcare System	12.0
Turkey	134.5
EU Support for Participation in EU Programmes and Agencies	30.157
Civil Society	11.0
Product Safety in E-Commerce	2.25
Environment and Climate Change	27.0
Sustainable Green Energy and Transport	27.5
Employment, Education and Social Policies	19.293
Smart and Sustainable Economic Transformation	17.3
Potential Candidate Countries	Millions of euros
Bosnia and Herzegovina	73.0
EU for Migration, Border management and Mine Action	15.0
EU for Electoral Process	2.0
EU Integration Facility	8.5
EU for Regional Development	2.0
EU for Energy	9.0
EU for Transport	10.0
EU for Mitigating Socio-Economic Consequences of Covid-19 pandemic: Employment, Social Protection and Inclusion Policies	12.5
EU for Private Sector Development (Post Covid-19)	10.0
EU for Animal Disease Control	4.0
Kosovo (res.1244 of the UNSC)	63.96
Demining Action	3.9
EU for Better Municipal Governance	15.0
EU for Approximation	14.36
EU for Environment	16.0
EU for Trade and Internal Market	5.5
EU for Agriculture and Rural Development	9.2

Own production. Source: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance_en

TABLE A5		European Investment Bank Loans toward Mediterranean Countries in 2021	
Loans by Sector		Millions of euros	
Albania		8.0	
UKT Water Distribution		8.0	
Bosnia and Herzegovina		516.8	
Procredit WB Covid19 response for SMEs & Mid-Caps		15.0	
Corridor VC Medakovo - Poprikuse		340.0	
RLBH loan for SMEs Mid-Caps & Priority Projects II		10.0	
Corridor VC Centre		151.8	
Montenegro		50.2	
IDF Loan for SMEs Climate & Priority Projects VI		50.0	
Air Traffic Control Upgrade		0.2	
North Macedonia		141.3	
Gas Interconnector Greece-North Macedonia Nmpart		41.3	
Covid-19 Response North Macedonia - DBNM		100.0	
Serbia		395.1	
Telekom Srbija Broadband Evolution		70.0	
BIB Covid19 Response SME & Mid-Cap Loan		40.0	
UCBS Covid19 Response SME & Mid-Cap Loan		50.0	
Covid-19 Serbian Government Support SMEs & Mid-Caps		200.0	
Air Traffic Control Upgrade		10.1	
Gas Interconnector Nis-Dimitrovgrad-Bulgaria		25.0	
Kosovo*		59.8	
Wastewater Treatment Facility Mitrovica		19.8	
Kosovo Covid19 Response for SMEs		40.0	
Israel		179.5	
SOREK II Desalination Plant		150.0	
POCARED (Infectious Disease Finance Facility)		22.0	
New Thermal Storage Manufacturing Plant (EDP)		7.5	
Jordan		243.6	
Jordan Valley Water Resources		70.2	
Tamweelcom Microfinance Loan		6.0	
Jordan Loan for SME Resilience Facility		156.9	
ERI SME Guarantee - Capital Bank of Jordan		10.5	
Palestine		225.5	
Jordan Loan for SME Resilience Facility		19.4	
Palestine SME Covid-19 Sustainability Programme		173.3	
Palestine Covid-19 Guarantee Facility		16.0	
Palestine Private Sector Covid-19 Response		16.8	
Egypt		1,003.0	
Mobile Broadband Rollout		150.0	
Urban Transport Infrastructure Framework		528.0	
Banque Misr Covid19 Loan for SMEs and Mid-Caps		325.0	
Morocco		435.0	
Morocco SME Public Support Covid-19 Response		150.0	
Programme de Scolarisation Rurale		102.5	
CIH L4 SMEs & MIDCAP-Covid19 Response		60.0	
ONEE-AEP Amelioration et Assainissement II		37.5	
ADM Modernisation Informatique - Covid19		85.0	
Tunisia		63.0	
Transtu - Materiel Roulant Ferroviaire		45.0	
ENDA Tamweel Microfinance Loan		9.0	
Mechatronic and Cable Manufacturing Maghreb		9.0	

Source: www.eib.org/en/projects/loans

TABLE A6		Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO)	
Indicative Allocations in Mediterranean Areas		Millions of euros	
Area		2022	
Palestine		25.0	
Syrian Regional Crisis (Syria, Lebanon and Jordan)		197.5	
North Africa (Algeria, Libya and Egypt)		18.0	
Turkey		125.0	
Total		365.5	

Own Production. Source: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/hip2022/c_2021_8933_annex_en.pdf

Cooperation in the Mediterranean

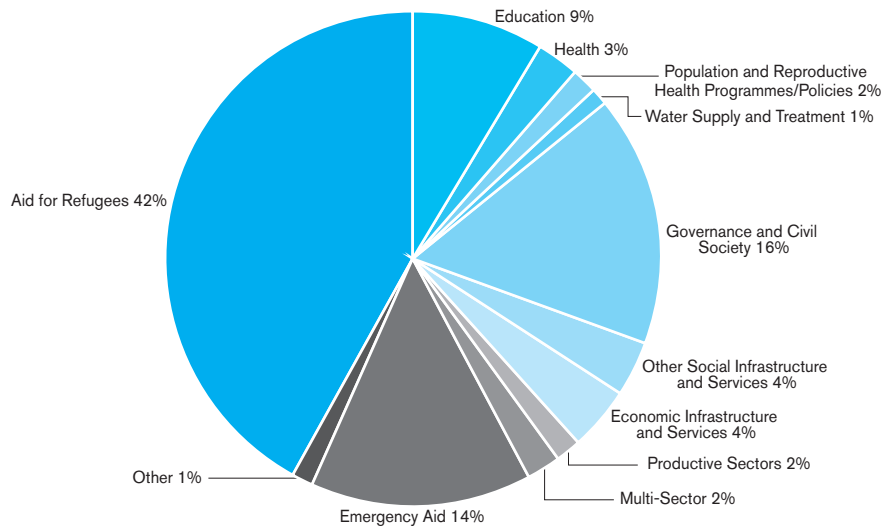
Spanish Cooperation in the Mediterranean

TABLE B1 Breakdown of Net Spanish Development Assistance in the Mediterranean Region

	2018	2019	2018-2019
	€		%
Maghreb and Middle East			
Algeria	5,184,042	7,833,082	51.10
Egypt	2,794,051	3,234,285	15.76
Jordan	1,603,706	121,846	-92.40
Lebanon	10,534,523	11,534,991	9.50
Libya	975,858	644,672	-33.94
Morocco	20,099,121	29,272,744	45.64
Palestine	38,110,595	29,707,293	-22.05
Western Saharan Refugees	10,787,032	11,632,800	7.84
Syria	30,474,487	27,399,410	-10.09
Tunisia	2,811,835	10,147,089	260.87
Total	123,375,250	131,528,212	6.61
Balkans and Turkey			
Albania	615,029	509,337	-17.18
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-5,299,791	-1,837,849	65.32
North Macedonia	86,446	66,155	-23.47
Montenegro	0	0	-
Serbia	-1,803,109	806,948	144.75
Kosovo (Res.1244 of the UNSC)	50,897	150,477	195.65
Turkey	36,908,917	26,351,982	-28.60
Total	30,558,389	26,047,050	-14.76

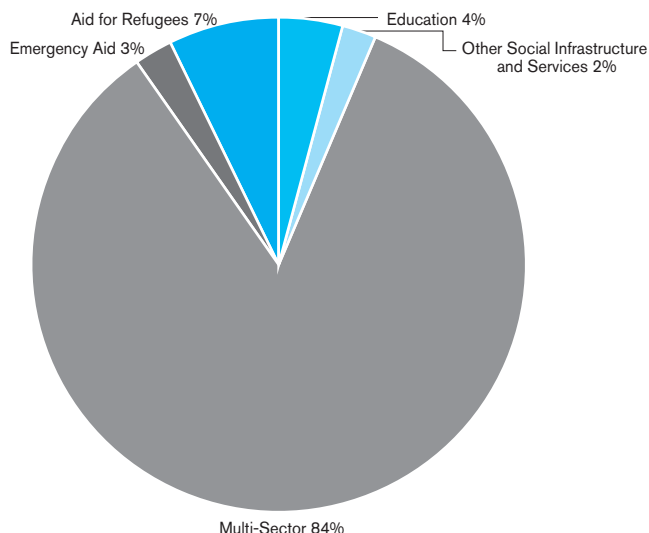
Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation. *Seguimiento de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo 2019* www.cooperacionspanola.es/sites/default/files/informe_aod_seguinto_2019.pdf.

CHART B1 Breakdown of Spanish Gross Development Aid in the Maghreb and the Middle East by Sector (2019)



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation. *Seguimiento de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo 2019* www.cooperacionspanola.es/sites/default/files/informe_aod_seguinto_2019.pdf.

CHART B2 Breakdown of Spanish Gross Development Aid in the Balkans and Turkey, by Sector (2019)



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. Sistema de información de la ayuda oficial al desarrollo. <https://infoad.maec.es>.

TABLE B2 Breakdown of Spanish Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region by Sustainable Development Goal (2019)

	Albania	North Macedonia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo*	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Western Saharan Refugees	Tunisia	Morocco	Jordan	Lebanon	Palestine	Syria
End poverty						700	23,782,880	32,000		36,059	1,357,274		14,875		3,199,613	5,144,767	6,071,791
End hunger											4,493,181		113,559		500	2,795,271	463,506
Health and well-being			24,994								2,040,593		1,685,294	14,417	653,572	2,299,157	1,000,000
Quality education	3,766	3,290	13,253			629,936	1,064,538	1,288,706	690,513	16,618	718,797	650,315	6,975,300	330,982	1,392,613	1,380,345	804,907
Gender equality			60,000						90,458		268,738	1,171,763	2,549,981	336,179	170,000	4,737,209	521,744
Water and sanitation											633,116		14,740	103,205	5,000	578,791	45,000
Energy													300,000	11,467		118,750	
Economic growth and decent work			99,678				464		698,133		112,050	22,732	4,279,900			119,732	
Infrastructure, industrialization and innovation													54,183	58,171	2,138,402	249,546	
Reduce inequality	492,574	50,868	500,000			158,435	1,484,177	6,478,961	1,533,871	541,995	1,401,721	7,246,829	11,622,641	78,759	531,932	6,959,863	18,392,462
Sustainable cities and settlements	12,997	11,997	14,575			17,876	19,867	32,671	19,943		310,532	420,450	176,016	14,841	60,871	14,950	100,000
Sustainable consumption															400,000	2,269	
Combat climate change																	
Sustainably use of marine resources																	
Sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems													75,000				
Peace and Justice								744	201,367	50,000	121,857	485,000	1,166,484	1,387,217	1,701,887	4,904,567	
Global partnership for sustainable development							57				75,100		44,770		136,363		

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation. Seguimiento de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo 2019 www.cooperacionespanola.es/sites/default/files/informe_aod_seguinto_2019.pdf.

Migration in the Mediterranean

TABLE C1 Number of Foreigners from MPCs in the European Union mid year 2020, by Nationality

	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia	Lybia	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Palestine	Syria	Israel	Turkey	Total Euromed immigrants	Total EU-27 immigrants
Austria	1,581	2,411	4,181	910	14,779	958	1,942	352	53,259	2,226	159,999	242,598	774,764
Belgium	27,491	225,217	16,137	1,291	5,188	1,388	8,301	2,808	33,724	3,418	101,925	426,888	886,925
Bulgaria	460	156	150	294	358	293	1,026	83	17,848	824	14,454	35,946	55,454
Croatia	50	25		139	232	62	60	39	167	49	79	902	65,909
Czechia	805	449	1,135	205	1,145	223	433	119	1,358	796	3,077	9,745	205,042
Denmark	1,004	5,885	975	309	1,944	1,324	13,092		36,184	1,753	33,385	95,855	228,521
Estonia	32	37	26	9	161	28	41	11	174	102	468	1,089	24,539
Finland	1,014	2,528	808	249	1,505	348	731	67	6,223	793	7,644	21,910	122,196
France	1,637,211	1,059,918	444,572	2,688	35,390	1,647	53,953	1,339	21,488	10,520	340,271	3,608,997	2,040,731
Germany	25,819	127,095	45,857	13,788	25,905	14,047	88,243		707,457	16,529	1,837,282	2,902,022	6,718,289
Greece	407	2,114	647	652	28,834	827	2,092	4,286	42,861	725	34,081	117,526	297,036
Hungary	929	441	273	395	2,220	868	521	182	2,693	1,898	2,075	12,495	320,330
Ireland	673	312	113	501	609	124	151	75	2,937	250	559	6,304	339,071
Italy	22,363	451,960	108,129	34,542	128,857	3,058	7,685	1,176	8,276	4,107	20,513	790,666	1,792,490
Latvia	18	24	4	4	80	4	39	3	63	108	229	576	23,502
Lithuania	11	14	8	5	86	8	14	8	431	146	233	964	17,455
Luxembourg	1,113	2,499	1,212	80	347	47	341	31	1,839	236	1,435	9,180	214,801
Malta	155	671	969	3,801	1,410	115	191	120	3,242	31	692	11,397	21,939
Netherlands	4,219	174,914	5,148	1,864	15,893	1,559	4,593	338	88,993	6,270	199,280	503,071	595,804
Poland	766	416	538	315	594	178	501		773	454	1,149	5,684	272,773
Portugal	261	2,256	155	106	480	213	246		531	387	789	5,424	208,629
Romania	554	1,265	1,924	138	592	435	662	239	3,138	4,901	9,206	23,054	248,787
Slovakia	125	73	200	87	260	68	157	54	289	242	405	1,960	152,101
Slovenia	40	36	86	56	142	67	26	5	247	50	237	992	68,238
Spain	61,611	785,884	3,688	1,302	5,571	3,050	4,508	2,569	16,938	3,856	5,356	894,333	1,728,058
Sweden	3,451	11,306	5,734	3,790	8,361	5,001	28,836	8,108	190,882	2,803	51,223	319,495	536,240
Total	1,792,163	2,857,906	642,669	67,520	280,943	35,940	218,385	22,012	1,242,015	63,474	2,826,046	10,049,073	17,959,624

Own production. Source: United Nations Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin*.

TABLE C2

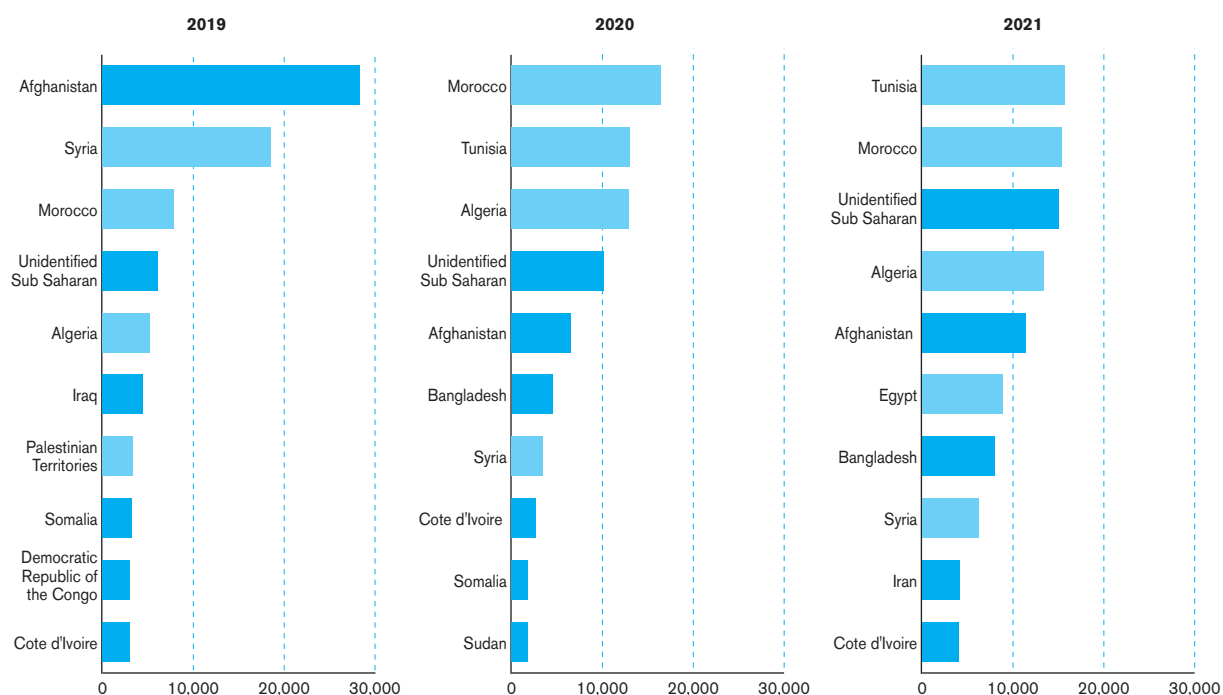
Number of Foreigners from Southern Mediterranean Countries in MENA Countries, mid year 2020

	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia	Libya	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Palestine	Syria	Total number from Southern Mediterranean countries	as % of total foreigners	Total number in the country
Algeria	0	0	0	2,281	0	2,216	1,199	31,097	7,757	44,550	17.8	250,368
Morocco	14,497	0	2,781	1,268	2,005	0	1,455	0	3,676	25,682	25.1	102,358
Tunisia	11,060	6,146	0	9,688	1,206	0	0	589	1,382	30,071	50.0	60,145
Libya	3,830	5,229	3,292	0	22,420	21,783	11,812	305,476	44,450	418,292	50.6	826,537
Total Maghreb	29,387	11,375	6,073	13,237	25,631	23,999	14,466	337,162	57,265	518,595	41.8	1,239,408
Egypt	889	1,066	785	5,047	0	5,277	3,197	135,932	125,673	277,866	51.1	543,937
Jordan	345	601	259	19,564	101,340	0	1,849	2,272,411	698,701	3,095,070	89.5	3,457,691
Lebanon	0	132	0	214	70,643	408	0	476,033	1,042,785	1,590,215	92.8	1,712,762
Palestine	0	0	801	0	21,588	59,543	2,213	0	5,731	89,876	32.9	272,784
Syria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	596,357	0	596,357	68.6	868,711
Total Mashreq	1,234	1,799	1,845	24,825	193,571	65,228	7,259	3,480,733	1,872,890	5,649,384	82.4	6,855,885
Bahrain	0	939	618	0	94,638	17,769	4,413	6,129	5,553	130,059	13.9	936,094
Kuwait	0	3,032	1,935	0	421,025	54,688	12,512	15,465	23,156	531,813	17.1	3,110,159
Oman	0	0	0	0	88,261	21,868	0	0	0	110,129	4.6	2,372,836
Qatar	0	1,462	994	0	183,544	32,808	8,425	5,696	24,749	257,678	11.6	2,226,192
Saudi Arabia	0	0	0	0	962,432	240,606	153,988	0	823,261	2,180,287	16.2	13,454,842
United Arab Emirates	0	8,942	5,874	0	899,612	168,968	41,913	58,308	52,925	1,236,542	14.2	8,716,332
Total GCC	0	14,375	9,421	0	2,649,512	536,707	221,251	85,598	929,644	4,446,508	14.4	30,816,455
Turkey	887	659	708	4,220	1,079	1,257	1,554	1,013	3,792,505	3,803,882	62.8	6,052,652
Total	31,508	28,208	18,047	42,282	2,869,793	627,191	244,530	3,904,506	6,652,304	14,418,369	32.1	44,964,400

Source: United Nations. Population Division. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock.

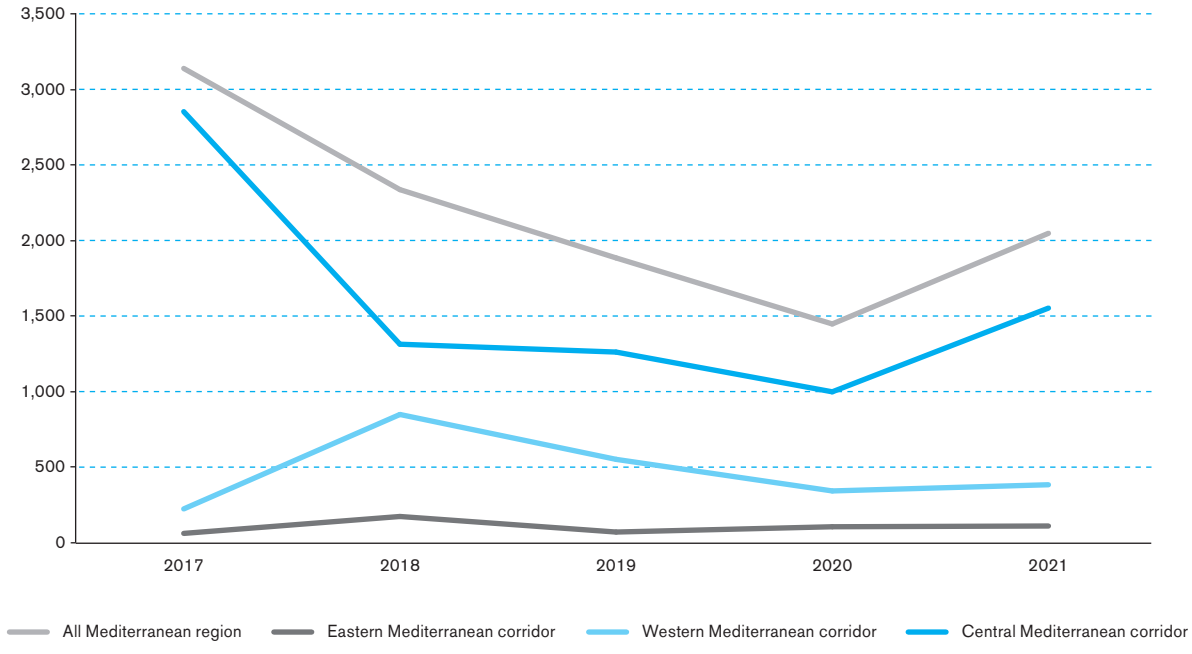
CHART C1

Arrivals to Europe (Sea and Land Mediterranean Border), 2019-2020-2021



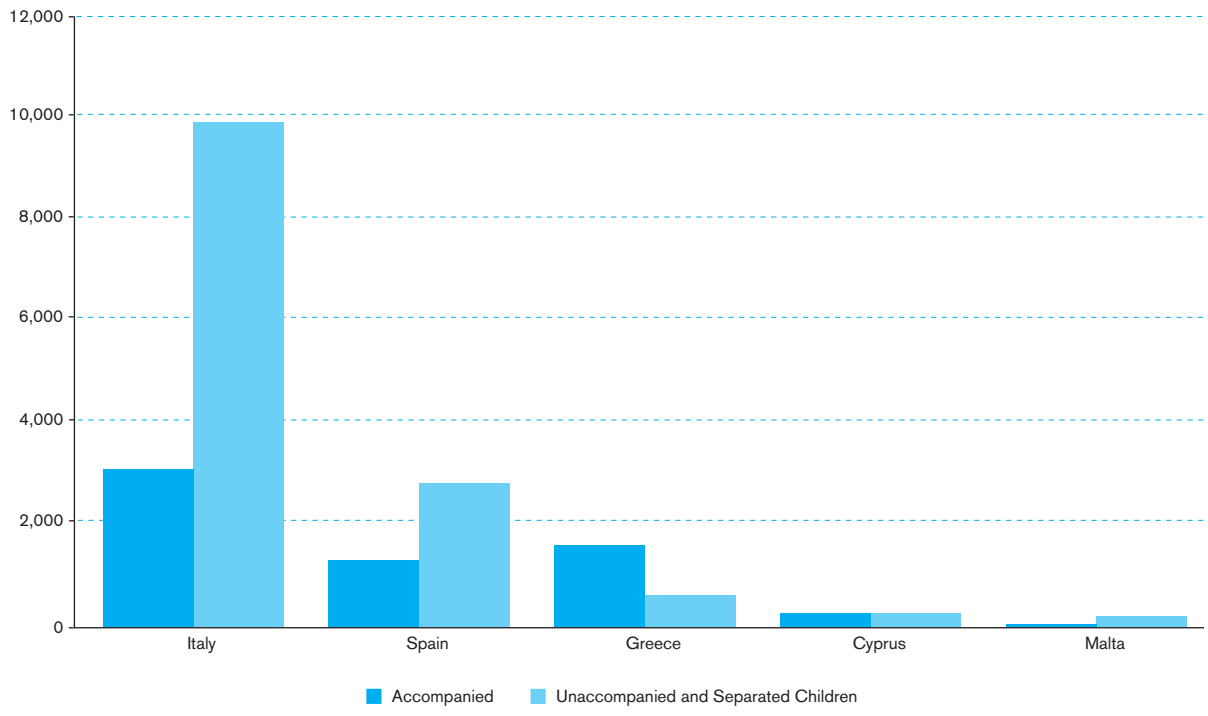
Own production. Source: IOM, UN Migration flow monitoring. www.migration.iom.int/europe/arrivals.

CHART C2 Dead and Missing Migrants in the Mediterranean, 2017-2021



Own production. Source: IOM, Missing Migrants project www.missingmigrants.iom.int/data.

CHART C3 Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival, 2021



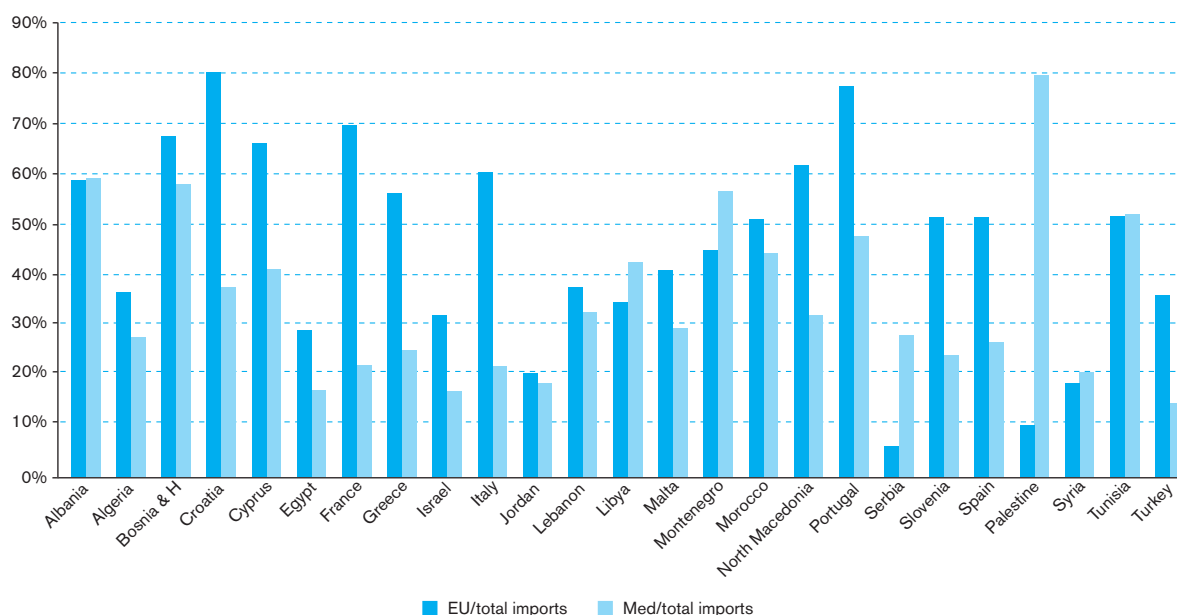
Own production. Source: UNHCR www.data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/94351.

Commercial Relations of the Mediterranean Countries

TABLE D1 Merchandise Trade between Mediterranean Countries - thousands US(\$) **2020**

Exporters \ Importers	Importers														
	Albania	Algeria	Bosnia & H	Croatia	Cyprus	Egypt	France	Greece	Israel	Italy	Jordan	Lebanon	Libya	Malta	
Albania	-	71	195,262	12,699	504	3,924	35,861	146,485	2,136	1,104,293	7	458	3,104	3,920	
Algeria	21,827	-	523	12,939	2,335	156,651	3,065,278	700,973	9,629	3,589,792	124,625	45,899	15,369	1,342	
Bosnia & H.	23,880	339	-	762,419	756	25,869	108,126	15,738	3,648	688,487	796	1,659	1,678	115	
Croatia	56,862	53,600	1,441,645	-	6,485	72,432	448,689	64,557	48,318	1,926,629	1,652	28,183	4,218	21,960	
Cyprus	2,556	6,969	634	17,820	-	8,879	98,003	382,473	115,221	77,353	12,036	88,618	171,701	8,167	
Egypt	19,238	412,765	6,111	22,231	25,329	-	586,089	699,623	94,731	1,833,190	595,506	279,447	524,475	121,382	
France	109,628	4,359,276	118,779	680,719	149,841	1,734,394	-	2,357,610	1,663,219	35,778,914	268,162	376,228	169,177	202,560	
Greece	504,009	74,420	52,644	270,147	1,626,518	477,194	2,003,001	-	432,144	2,873,330	49,182	736,965	713,047	93,622	
Israel	18,037	..	3,046	25,920	269,974	65,707	1,143,652	303,211	-	834,377	382,112	..	..	38,955
Italy	1,406,668	2,691,592	916,743	3,186,679	623,090	2,815,509	48,601,326	4,602,631	2,789,238	-	512,199	577,715	998,581	653,176	
Jordan	324	82,771	1,764	144	1,395	117,912	15,504	22,287	85,316	38,275	-	77,140	41,192	194	
Lebanon	2,235	37,072	42	162	22,024	98,769	50,030	82,568	..	59,200	72,848	-	8,374	272	
Libya	40,049	138	244	234	1	32,694	522,839	58,317	..	1,970,853	5,161	30,688	-	37,054	
Malta	835	2,751	2,331	7,753	9,139	13,906	308,589	50,808	23,753	252,617	3,661	24,696	151,602	-	
Montenegro	21,250	..	27,016	4,820	72	1,259	647	8,206	320	17,135	..	779	1,747	563	
Morocco	4,193	102,580	8,107	19,901	1,977	133,042	5,193,099	60,031	56,323	1,192,822	19,322	66,386	71,381	3,966	
North Macedonia	83,988	..	96,102	94,417	1,804	718	57,693	251,473	6,153	174,448	246	367	2,969	298	
Portugal	19,270	53	7,449	35,420	21,075	173,141	7,094,685	113,835	328,749	2,385,103	44,045	22,721	34,146	12,449	
Serbia	289,489	1	1,447,026	675,571	22,300	45,469	453,311	244,966	51,809	1,422,562	2,723	20,787	28,333	2,046	
Slovenia	43,485	5	798,679	2,935,367	13,337	51,794	1,754,749	163,310	127,214	3,259,085	8,425	18,041	14,167	6,871	
Spain	90,593	1,330	89,245	531,149	239,776	1,415,674	45,922,713	1,830,222	1,603,987	22,389,201	372,010	283,242	388,157	181,001	
Palestine	4	..	..	..	6	35	4,694	749	..	1,850	50,445	..	..	234
Syria	11	189,310	200	..	1,022	66,364	6,264	3,223	..	5,075	44,776	151,971	..	11	
Tunisia	18,948	1,719,238	1,680	32,029	1,958	61,331	4,039,377	28,691	17,994	2,385,819	13,934	59,235	642,325	6,074	
Turkey	536,307	5,911	513,780	413,078	46,724	2,798,806	7,623,068	1,771,786	4,454,364	8,518,586	559,029	811,704	1,574,862	139,487	
Med. countries	3,313,686	9,740,669	5,729,052	9,741,618	3,087,442	10,371,473	129,137,287	13,963,773	11,914,266	92,778,996	3,142,902	3,702,929	5,560,605	1,535,719	
World	5,602,160	35,117,197	9,867,492	25,986,635	7,503,603	60,279,554	582,775,306	55,533,638	70,162,157	422,648,102	17,006,883	11,354,653	13,091,576	5,223,111	
EU28 (EU)	3,293,972	12,817,234	6,664,168	20,838,592	4,958,857	17,526,062	405,613,039	31,187,082	22,452,261	255,399,305	3,494,784	4,272,861	4,526,102	2,138,750	

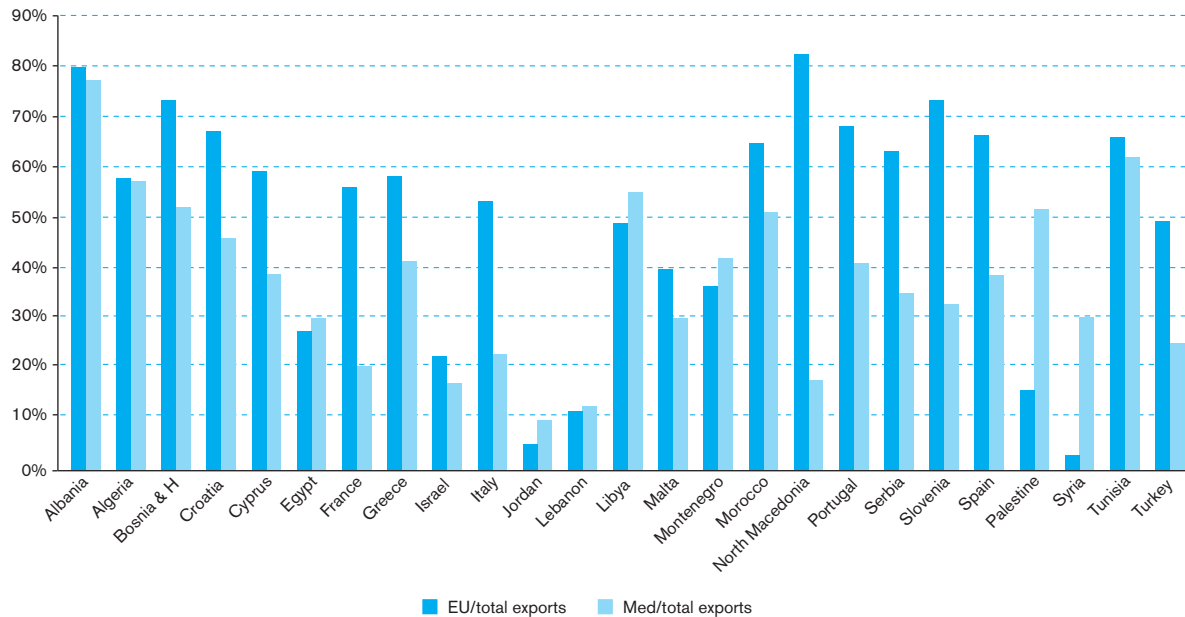
CHART D1 Import Ratio from EU and from the Mediterranean, 2019



Source: UNCTAD.

Exporters	Importers												2020		
	Montenegro	Morocco	North Macedonia	Portugal	Serbia	Slovenia	Spain	Palestine	Syria	Tunisia	Turkey	Med Countries	World	EU28 (EU)	
Albania	45,220	1,178	79,582	781	51,425	8,527	163,835	300	..	716	33,589	1,893,677	2,453,338	1,958,308	
Algeria	2,297	506,351	16,175	319,713	552	497	2,869,001	..	..	1,134,055	567,384	13,141,380	22,941,062	13,253,505
Bosnia & H.	135,897	1,121	73,747	5,834	609,415	594,962	41,931	23	..	644	203,069	3,276,273	6,305,259	4,614,509	
Croatia	131,270	5,624	106,570	47,294	565,527	1,385,530	188,736	1,756	..	27,301	241,349	6,819,325	14,856,518	9,977,322	
Cyprus	315	2,561	1,472	7,773	5,218	11,314	152,075	969	1,519	490	80,082	1,250,143	3,221,572	1,903,820	
Egypt	2,375	701,008	7,440	66,010	64,691	109,240	774,669	117,991	317,408	535,239	1,722,944	9,302,486	30,977,819	8,518,124	
France	50,378	5,439,114	134,213	5,726,577	730,661	1,113,448	32,583,677	62,804	207,528	2,879,330	6,988,092	103,566,973	506,390,192	283,555,264	
Greece	104,658	51,214	516,064	136,256	341,167	324,486	870,508	4,450	41,820	55,036	1,320,976	13,127,029	31,782,095	18,461,309	
Israel	2,502	..	8,730	83,265	38,725	106,709	740,135	3,888,415	..	..	1,496,260	9,431,695	54,822,968	12,349,815
Italy	153,376	2,022,008	387,757	4,055,496	2,203,269	3,957,339	20,338,283	89,076	198,885	2,591,304	9,199,670	113,966,057	497,000,805	264,864,511	
Jordan	52	25,674	75	11,692	1,093	1,544	86,774	197,298	40,147	8,566	94,201	910,863	9,264,903	461,458	
Lebanon	195	37,444	67	16,196	247	491	42,825	..	225,024	13,339	51,549	593,714	4,680,908	545,626	
Libya	..	18	1,092	1	291	..	705,180	..	..	152,092	1,674,297	5,191,194	9,452,274	4,627,921
Malta	5	592	152	41,364	12,468	7,973	101,575	397	..	192,426	107,129	1,315,687	4,388,544	1,743,366	
Montenegro	..	6	6,896	3	73,878	26,961	2,439	..	..	..	18,020	190,767	454,539	165,371
Morocco	376	..	27,870	209,329	25,332	69,139	7,269,547	3,661	..	63,300	642,097	15,239,588	29,822,121	19,291,316	
North Macedonia	29,285	..	..	6,823	248,129	126,205	99,860	..	..	1,984	130,733	1,329,707	7,471,349	6,155,957
Portugal	3,057	1,090,583	39,618	..	63,060	116,338	12,276,196	12,126	..	130,886	960,101	24,964,836	60,898,283	41,468,359	
Serbia	473,027	10,155	676,693	33,664	..	681,506	303,890	..	..	44,522	445,909	7,086,270	20,290,305	12,792,710
Slovenia	46,547	39,077	157,823	100,535	727,989	..	496,397	1,766	..	12,883	390,164	11,124,225	33,874,203	24,811,542	
Spain	49,814	7,082,749	93,093	25,325,634	427,877	629,753	..	50,722	51,362	700,515	5,039,416	114,647,280	296,662,596	196,518,945	
Palestine	..	..	..	..	..	14	184	..	..	..	..	35,993	182,120	28,816
Syria	0	1,777	36	1,164	17,838	121	8,732	..	..	1,305	245,610	744,799	2,462,859	71,682
Tunisia	787	235,030	14,029	37,621	18,154	23,679	722,876	317	38,461	..	150,605	10,212,783	16,499,611	10,886,723	
Turkey	123,116	2,337,516	444,999	827,412	1,148,899	870,506	7,213,386	437,285	..	1,006,472	..	43,640,776	174,103,861	85,689,420	
Med. countries	1,354,549	19,590,800	2,794,193	37,060,437	7,375,905	10,166,282	88,052,511	4,869,156	1,122,154	9,552,405	31,839,239	..	1,841,260,104	1,024,715,699	
World	2,394,120	44,125,573	8,709,069	77,612,121	26,228,037	42,120,440	329,738,801	6,112,242	5,417,990	18,367,266	219,514,373	2,102,492,099	..	5,664,189,882	
EU28 (EU)	1,077,066	22,536,259	5,383,297	60,090,041	1,595,539	21,640,235	169,756,898	627,816	1,009,625	9,485,692	79,000,064	1,167,385,601	5,425,373,195	..	

CHART D2 Export Ratio from EU and from the Mediterranean, 2019



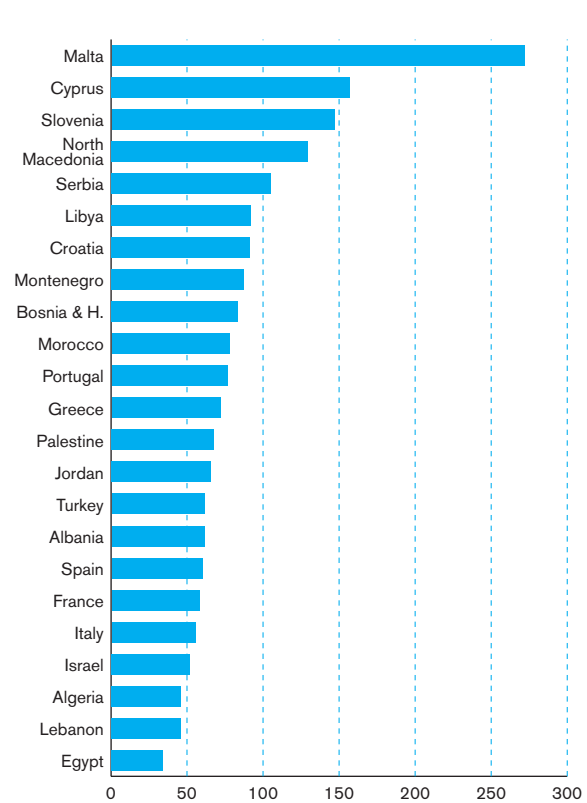
Source: UNCTAD.

TABLE D2 Export Disaggregation (%), 2020

	Food and animals	Beverages and tobacco	Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	Minerals fuels, lubricants and related materials	Animal and Vegetables	Chemicals and related products, n.e.s.	Manufactured goods	Machinery and transport equipment	Miscellaneous manufactured articles	Commodities and transactions, n.e.s.
Albania	11	1	5	7	0	1	16	5	40	14
Algeria	1	0	0	91	0	7	0	0	0	..
Bosnia & H.	6	1	9	6	1	8	22	18	29	1
Croatia	12	2	7	9	1	14	17	24	14	1
Cyprus	15	2	2	15	0	17	1	39	3	4
Egypt	16	0	4	19	1	17	16	7	8	11
France	10	3	2	2	0	20	10	35	13	5
Greece	17	3	4	22	2	16	16	11	7	3
Israel	3	0	2	..	0	27	17	32	17	2
Italy	7	3	1	2	0	16	16	33	17	4
Jordan	13	1	6	1	0	35	7	7	24	6
Lebanon	15	2	6	0	1	10	14	13	10	28
Libya	1	0	4	72	0	1	2	0	0	20
Malta	7	1	1	27	0	13	3	33	14	1
Montenegro	8	5	22	17	0	9	22	11	6	0
Morocco	21	0	4	0	1	16	6	33	18	0
North Macedonia	6	3	5	1	0	24	13	35	13	0
Portugal	9	3	4	5	1	10	22	29	17	0
Serbia	24	6	6	4	2	15	33	44	20	2
Slovenia	3	0	2	3	0	23	14	29	9	17
Spain	16	2	2	4	2	14	14	30	10	7
Palestine	17	3	9	0	5	7	33	4	20	2
Syria	32	19	4	7	4	7	12	8	7	0
Tunisia	7	0	2	4	5	8	11	35	26	0
Turkey	10	1	3	3	1	7	25	29	18	3

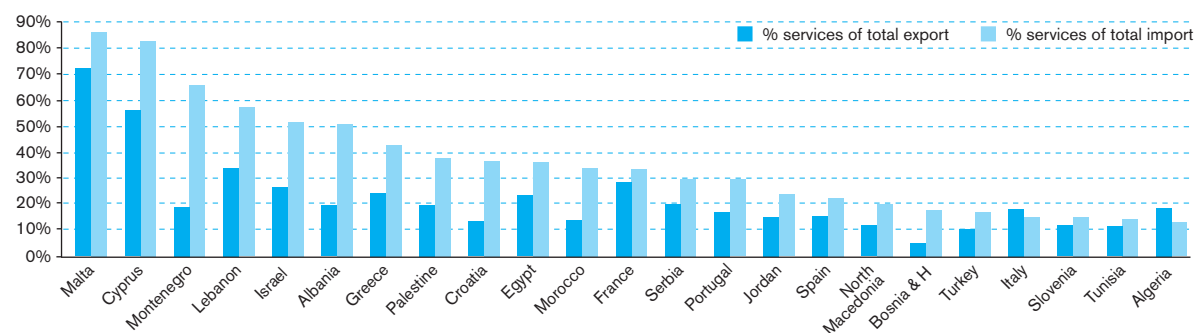
Source: UNCTAD.

CHART D3 Trade Openness (Trade as a % of GDP), 2020



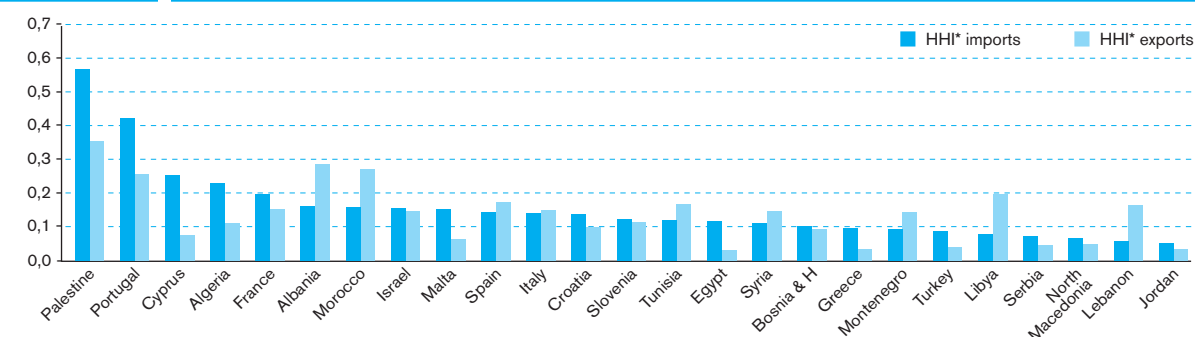
Trade is the sum of exports and imports of goods and services measured as a share of gross domestic product (GDP). Own production. Source: World Bank.

CHART D4 Percentage of Services in Total Exports and Total Imports, 2020



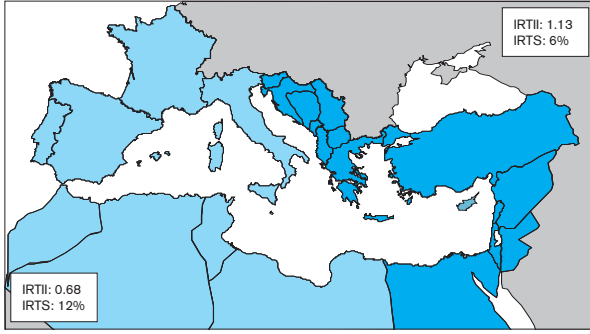
Source: UNCTAD.

CHART D5 Herfindahl Hirschmann Index (HHI) of Geographical Concentration in the Mediterranean, 2019

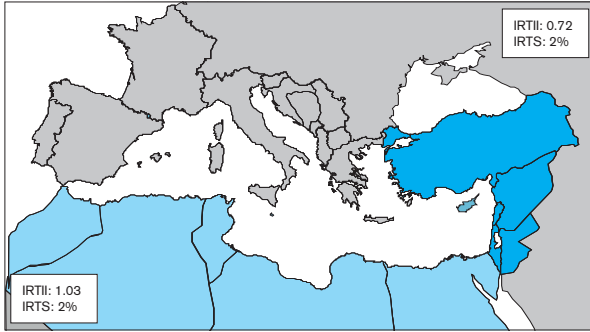


The Herfindahl-Hirschmann Index (HHI) is calculated as $H^* = \frac{(H-1)N}{1-H}$, where $H = \sum_{i=1}^N s_i^2$ and s_i is the share of each import (export) flows of country i in total imports (exports) of country i . The HHI is an index of concentration and ranges from 0 to 1. Values closer to 1 indicate highly concentrated flows. Here it is calculated with Mediterranean trading partners only. Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

MAP D1 Intra-regional Trade Intensity Index (IRTII, 2020) and Intra-regional Trade Shares (IRTS, 2020)



Intra-Med trade: 540 billion \$ in 2020: 24% inter sub-regions
68% intra West
9% intra East



Intra-Med trade: 540 billion \$ in 2020: 3.2% inter sub-regions
2.3% intra Middle East
0.9% inter North Africa



Intra-Med trade: 540 billion \$ in 2020: 23% inter sub-regions
76% intra North
2% intra South

CHART D6 Intra-regional Trade Shares (ITRS), 2006-2020

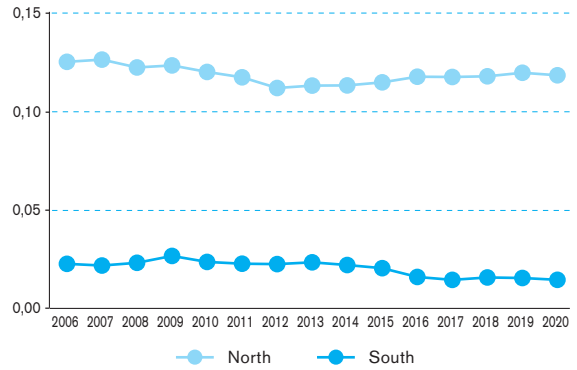
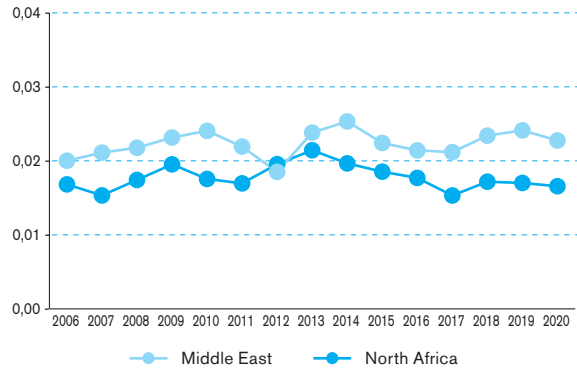
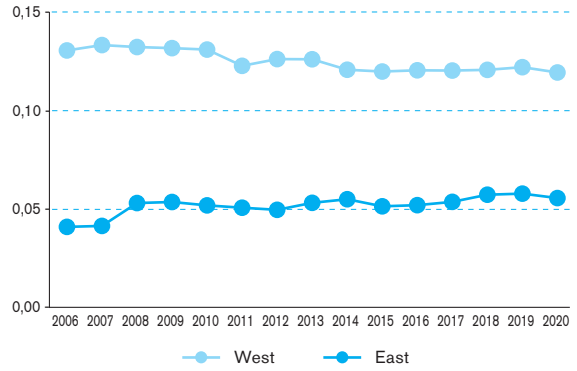
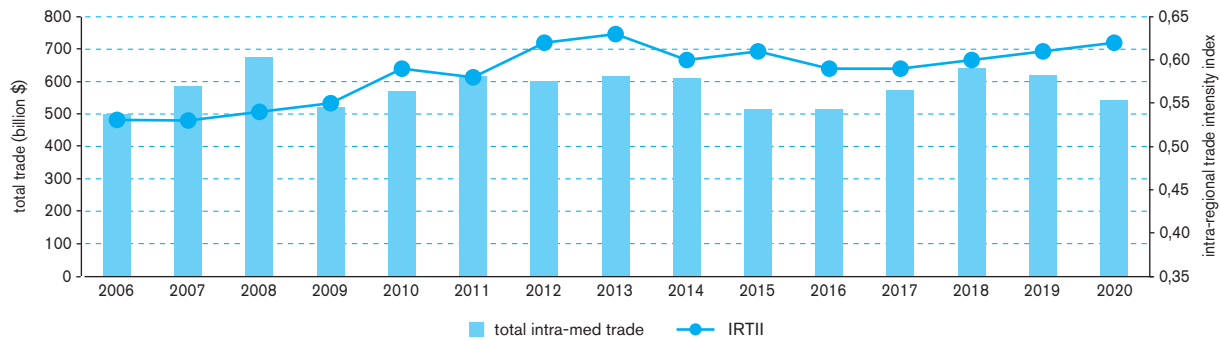


CHART D7 Intra-Mediterranean Total Trade and Intra-regional Trade Intensity Index (IRTII), 2006-2020



The IRTS (intra-regional trade share) (T_{ii}/T_i) is the share of intra-regional trade to total trade of the region. T_{ii} is the sum of exports and imports of region i with region i . T_i is the sum of imports and exports of region i vis à vis the rest of the world. A higher share indicates a higher degree of dependency on regional trade. The IRTII (intra-regional trade intensity index) is calculated as $(T_{ii}/T_i)/(T_i/T_{ii})$, where T_{ii} is the sum of world exports and imports. If it is greater than 1, flows are greater than expected. An IRTII larger than 1 indicates shares that are greater than expected. Own production. Source: UNCTAD. Own calculations using UNCTAD data.

Signature of Multilateral Treaties and Conventions

TABLE E1 Multilateral Treaties on Human Rights and Penal Matters^a

	Racial discrimination ^c	Civil and political rights ^d	Economic, social and cultural rights ^e	Discrimination against women ^f	Torture and other mistreatment ^g	Rights of the child ^h	Crime of genocide ⁱ	International Criminal Court ^j	Financing of terrorism ^k
Date of adoption	1966	1966	1966	1979	1984	1989	1948	1998	1999
Portugal	1982	1978	1978	1980	1989	1990	1999	2002	2002
Spain	1968	1977	1977	1984	1987	1990	1968	2000	2002
France	1971	1980	1980	1983	1986	1990	1950	2000	2002
Italy	1976	1978	1978	1985	1989	1991	1952	1999	2003
Malta	1971	1990	1990	1991	1990	1990	2014	2002	2001
Slovenia	1992	1992	1992	1992	1993	1992	1992	2001	2004
Croatia	1992	1992	1992	1992	1992	1992	1992	2001	2003
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1993	1993	1993	1993	1993	1993	1992	2002	2003
Serbia	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2002
Montenegro	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006
North Macedonia	1994	1994	1994	1994	1994	1993	1994	2002	2004
Albania	1994	1991	1991	1994	1994	1992	1955	2003	2002
Greece	1970	1997	1985	1983	1988	1993	1954	2002	2004
Cyprus	1967	1969	1969	1985	1991	1991	1982	2002	2001
Turkey	2002	2003	2003	1985	1988	1995	1950		2002
Syria	1969	1969	1969	2003	2004	1993	1955	2000 ^b	2005
Lebanon	1971	1972	1972	1997	2000	1991	1953		2019
Jordan	1974	1975	1975	1992	1991	1991	1950	2002	2003
Israel	1979	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	1950	2000 ^b	2003
Palestine	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2015	
Egypt	1967	1982	1982	1981	1986	1990	1952	2000 ^b	2005
Libya	1968	1970	1970	1989	1989	1993	1989		2002
Tunisia	1967	1969	1969	1985-2014 ^l	1988	1992	1956	2011	2003
Algeria	1972	1989	1989	1996	1989	1993	1963	2000 ^b	2001
Morocco	1970	1979	1979	1993	1993	1993	1958	2000 ^b	2002

Source: UN UN UN UN UN UN UN UN UN UN
 a. Ratification, acceptance, approval, accession or succession. b. Signature. c. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. d. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. e. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. f. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. g. Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. h. Convention on the Rights of the Child. i. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. j. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. k. Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. l. Partial withdrawal of declaration and withdrawal of reservations.

TABLE E2 Multilateral Treaties on Labour Rights (year of ratification)

	Freedom of association and collective bargaining		Elimination of forced or obligatory labour		Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation		Abolition of child labour		Rights of immigrant workers ^{ij}
	Convention 87 ^a	Convention 98 ^b	Convention 29 ^c	Convention 105 ^d	Convention 100 ^e	Convention 111 ^f	Convention 138 ^g	Convention 182 ^h	
Date of adoption	1948	1949	1930	1957	1951	1958	1973	1999	1990
Portugal	1977	1964	1956	1959	1967	1959	1998	2000	
Spain	1977	1977	1932	1967	1967	1967	1977	2001	
France	1951	1951	1937	1969	1953	1981	1990	2001	
Italy	1958	1958	1934	1968	1956	1963	1981	2000	
Malta	1965	1965	1965	1965	1988	1968	1988	2001	
Slovenia	1992	1992	1992	1997	1992	1992	1992	2001	
Croatia	1991	1991	1991	1997	1991	1991	1991	2001	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1993	1993	1993	2000	1993	1993	1993	2001	
Serbia	2000	2000	2000	2003	2000	2000	2000	2003	1996
Montenegro	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006 ^k
North Macedonia	1991	1991	1991	2003	1991	1991	1991	2002	
Albania	1957	1957	1957	1997	1957	1997	1998	2001	2007
Greece	1962	1962	1952	1962	1975	1984	1986	2001	
Cyprus	1966	1966	1960	1960	1987	1968	1997	2000	
Turkey	1993	1952	1998	1961	1967	1967	1998	2001	2004
Syria	1960	1957	1960	1958	1957	1960	2001	2003	2005
Lebanon		1977	1977	1977	1977	1977	2003	2001	
Jordan		1968	1966	1958	1966	1963	1998	2000	
Israel	1957	1957	1955	1958	1965	1959	1979	2005	
Palestine									
Egypt	1957	1954	1955	1958	1960	1960	1999	2002	1993
Libya	2000	1962	1961	1961	1962	1961	1975	2000	2004
Tunisia	1957	1957	1962	1959	1968	1959	1995	2000	
Algeria	1962	1962	1962	1969	1962	1969	1984	2001	2005
Morocco		1957	1957	1966	1979	1963	2000	2001	1993

Source: ILO ILO ILO ILO ILO ILO ILO ILO ILO OHCHR
 a. Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention. b. Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention. c. Forced Labour Convention. d. Abolition of Forced Labour Convention. e. Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value. f. Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention. g. Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. h. Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. i. Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. j. Ratification, acceptance, approval, accession or succession. k. Signature.

TABLE E3

Multilateral Environmental Treaties^j

	Climate change ^a	Kyoto Protocol ^b	Biological diversity ^c	Biosafety Protocol ^d	CITES ^e	Desertification ^f	Persistent organic pollutants ^g	Ozone layer ^h	Control of hazardous wastes and their disposal ⁱ
Date of adoption	1992	1997	1992	2000	1973	1994	2001	1985	1989
Portugal	1993	2002	1993	2004	1980	1996	2004	1988	1994
Spain	1993	2002	1993	2002	1986	1996	2004	1988	1994
France	1994	2002	1994	2003	1978	1997	2004	1987	1991
Italy	1994	2002	1994	2004	1979	1997	2001 ^k	1988	1994
Malta	1994	2001	2000	2007	1989	1998	2001 ^k	1988	2000
Slovenia	1995	2002	1996	2002	2000	2001	2004	1992	1993
Croatia	1996	2007	1996	2002	2000	2000	2007	1992	1994
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2000	2007	2002	2009	2009	2002	2010	1993	2001
Serbia	2001	2007	2002	2006	2006	2007	2009	2001	2000
Montenegro	2006	2007	2006	2006	2007	2007	2011	2006	2006
North Macedonia	1998	2004	1997	2005	2000	2002	2004	1994	1997
Albania	1994	2005	1994	2005	2003	2000	2004	1999	1999
Greece	1994	2002	1994	2004	1992	1997	2006	1988	1994
Cyprus	1997	1999	1996	2003	1974	2000	2005	1992	1992
Turkey	2004	2009	1997	2003	1996	1998	2009	1991	1994
Syria	1996	2006	1996	2004	2003	1997	2005	1989	1992
Lebanon	1994	2006	1994	2013	2013	1996	2003	1993	1994
Jordan	1993	2003	1993	2003	1978	1996	2004	1989	1989
Israel	1996	2004	1995		1979	1996	2001 ^k	1992	1994
Palestine	2015		2015	2015		2017	2017	2019	2015
Egypt	1994	2005	1994	2003	1978	1995	2003	1988	1993
Libya	1999	2006	2001	2005	2003	1996	2005	1990	2001
Tunisia	1993	2003	1993	2003	1974	1995	2004	1989	1995
Algeria	1993	2005	1995	2004	1983	1996	2006	1992	1998
Morocco	1995	2002	1995	2011	1975	1996	2004	1995	1995
Source:	UN	UN	UN	UN	CITES	UN	UN	UN	UN

a. Framework Convention on Climate Change. b. From the Framework Convention on Climate Change. c. Convention on Biological Diversity. d. Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity. e. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna. f. Convention to Combat Desertification. g. Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. h. Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. i. Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. j. Ratification, acceptance, approval, accession or succession. k. Signature. l. Ratified in 2004, and withdrawal of declaration in 2014.

TABLE E4

Multilateral Disarmament Treaties^a

	Geneva Protocol ^c	Nuclear weapons ^d	Bacteriological weapons ^e	Conventional weapons ^f	Chemical weapons ^g	Nuclear testing ^h	Antipersonnel mines ⁱ
Date of adoption	1925	1968	1972	1980	1992	1996	1997
Portugal	1930	1977	1972	1997	1996	2000	1999
Spain	1929	1987	1979	1993	1994	1998	1999
France	1926	1992	1984	1988	1995	1998	1998
Italy	1928	1975	1975	1995	1995	1999	1999
Malta	1970	1970	1975	1995	1997	2001	2001
Slovenia	2008	1992	1992	1992	1997	1999	1998
Croatia	2006	1992	1993	1993	1995	2001	1998
Bosnia and Herzegovina		1994	1994	1993	1997	2006	1998
Serbia	2006	1970	1973	2001	2000	2004	2003
Montenegro		2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006
North Macedonia	2015	1995	1997	1996	1997	2000	1998
Albania	1989	1990	1992	2002	1994	2003	2000
Greece	1931	1970	1975	1992	1994	1999	2003
Cyprus	1966	1970	1973	1988	1998	2003	2003
Turkey	1929	1980	1974	2005	1997	2000	2003
Syria	1968	1968	1972 ^b		2013		
Lebanon	1969	1970	1975	2017	2008	2008	
Jordan	1977	1970	1975	1995	1997	1998	1998
Israel	1969			1995	1993 ^b	1996 ^b	
Palestine	2018	2015	2018	2015	2018		2017
Egypt	1928	1981	1972 ^b	1981 ^b		1996 ^b	
Libya	1971	1975	1982		2004	2004	
Tunisia	1967	1970	1973	1987	1997	2004	1999
Algeria	1992	1995	2001	2015	1995	2003	2001
Morocco	1970	1970	2002	2002	1995	2000	
Source:	UN	UN	UN	UN	UN	UN	UN

a. Ratification, acceptance, approval, accession or succession. b. Signature. c. Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. d. Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. e. Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. f. Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. g. Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. h. Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. i. Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

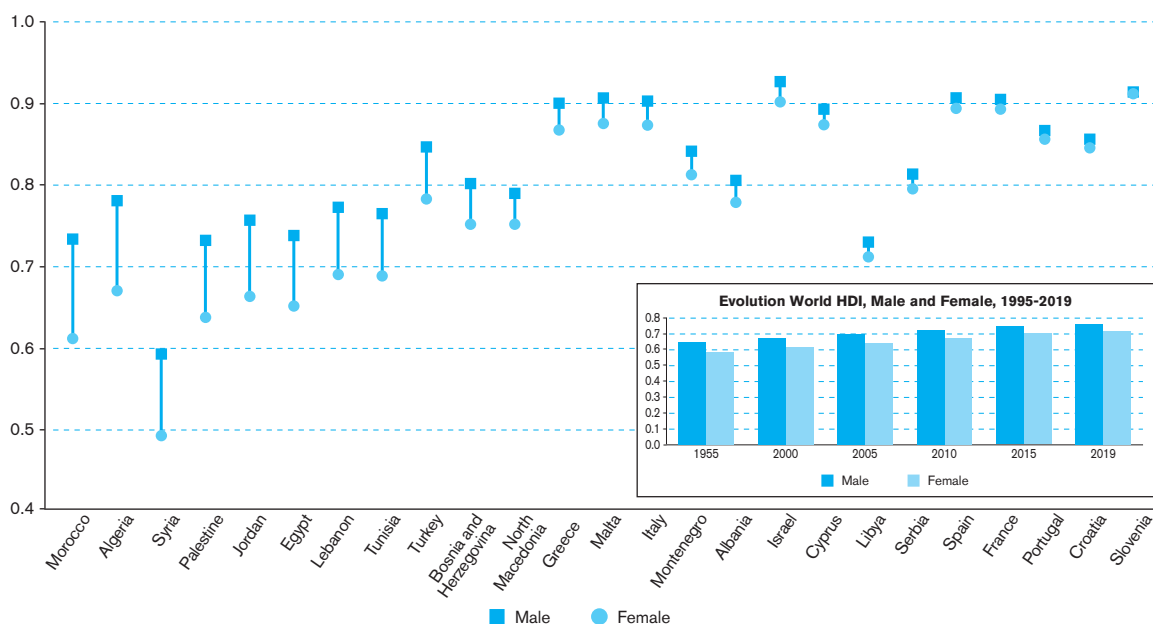
The Mediterranean in Brief

TABLE F1 Human Development Index (HDI)

	Life expectancy at birth	Mean years of schooling	Expected years of schooling	GNI per capita	Human Development Index (HDI)	HDI rank
	(years)	(years)	(years)	(2011 PPP \$)	Value	
	2019	2019 ^a	2019 ^a	2019	2019	
Portugal	82.1	9.3	16.5	33,967	0.864	38
Spain	83.6	10.3	17.6	40,975	0.904	25
France	82.7	11.5	15.6	47,173	0.901	26
Italy	83.5	10.4	16.1	42,776	0.892	29
Malta	82.5	11.3	16.1	39,555	0.895	28
Slovenia	81.3	12.7	17.6	38,080	0.917	22
Croatia	78.5	11.4	15.2	28,070	0.851	43
Bosnia and Herzegovina	77.4	9.8	13.8	14,872	0.780	73
Serbia	76.0	11.2	14.7	17,192	0.806	64
Montenegro	76.9	11.6	15.0	21,399	0.829	48
North Macedonia	75.8	9.8	13.6	15,865	0.774	82
Albania	78.6	10.1	14.7	13,998	0.795	69
Greece	82.2	10.6	17.9	30,155	0.888	32
Cyprus	81.0	12.2	15.2	38,207	0.887	33
Turkey	77.7	8.1	16.6	27,701	0.820	54
Syria	72.7	5.1	8.9	3,613	0.567	151
Lebanon	78.9	8.7	11.3	14,655	0.744	92
Jordan	74.5	10.5	11.4	9,858	0.729	102
Israel	83.0	13.0	16.2	40,187	0.919	19
Palestine	74.1	9.2	13.4	6,417	0.708	115
Egypt	72.0	7.4	13.3	11,466	0.707	116
Libya	72.9	7.6	12.9	15,688	0.724	105
Tunisia	76.7	7.2	15.1	10,414	0.740	95
Algeria	76.9	8.0	14.6	11,174	0.748	91
Morocco	76.7	5.6	13.7	7,368	0.686	121

Own production. Source: UNDP. ^a Data refer to 2019 or the most recent year available.

CHART F1 Human Development Index, Male and Female, 2019



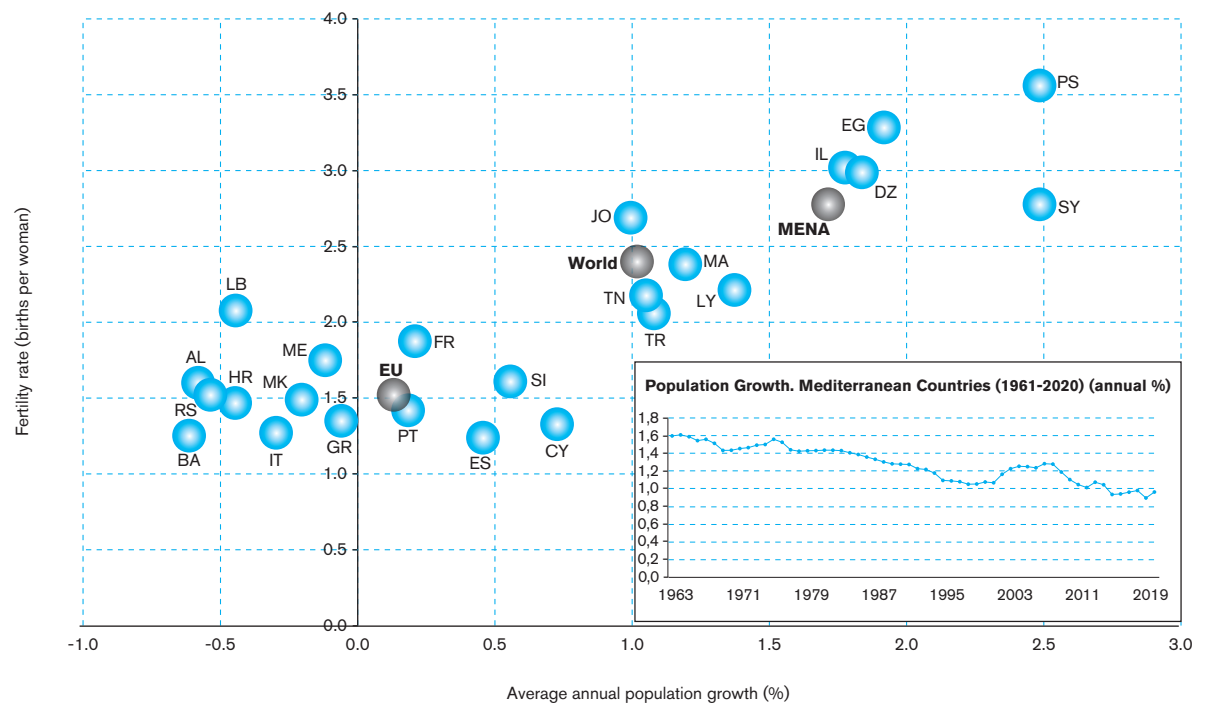
Own production. Source: UNDP.

TABLE F2 Population: Demography

	Total population	Estimated population for 2050	Crude birth rate	Crude death rate	Average annual population growth	Total fertility rate	International migrant stock	Net number of migrants	Net migration rate	
	millions	millions	per 1,000 people	per 1,000 people	%	births per woman	thousands	% of total population	per 1,000 population	
	2020	2020	2019	2019	2020	2019	2020	2020	2015/20 ^a	2015/20 ^b
Portugal	10.3	9.1	8.4	10.9	0.2	1.42	1,002	9.8	-30	-0.6
Spain	47.4	43.6	7.6	8.8	0.5	1.24	6,842	14.6	200	0.9
France	67.4	67.6	11.2	9.1	0.2	1.87	8,525	13.1	183	0.6
Italy	59.6	54.4	7.0	10.5	-0.3	1.27	6,387	10.6	745	2.5
Malta	0.5	0.4	8.6	7.3	4.1	1.10	115	26.0	5	2.1
Slovenia	2.1	1.9	9.3	9.9	0.6	1.61	278	13.4	10	1.0
Croatia	4.0	3.4	8.9	12.7	-0.4	1.47	528	12.9	-40	-1.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.3	2.7	7.9	10.9	-0.6	1.25	36	1.1	-108	-6.4
Serbia	6.9	7.1	9.3	14.6	-0.5	1.52	823	9.4	20	0.5
Montenegro	0.6	0.6	11.7	10.8	-0.1	1.75	71	11.3	-2	-0.8
North Macedonia	2.1	1.9	10.7	10.1	-0.2	1.49	131	6.3	-5	-0.5
Albania	2.8	2.4	11.6	8.1	-0.6	1.60	49	1.7	-70	-4.9
Greece	10.7	9.0	7.8	11.7	-0.1	1.35	1,340	12.9	-80	-1.5
Cyprus	1.2	1.4	10.2	7.1	0.7	1.32	190	15.8	25	4.2
Turkey	84.3	97.1	15.8	5.4	1.1	2.06	6,053	7.2	1420	3.5
Syria	17.5	33.1	23.2	5.1	2.5	2.77	869	5.0	-2,137	-24.1
Lebanon	6.8	6.5	17.4	4.5	-0.4	2.08	1,713	25.1	-150	-4.5
Jordan	10.2	12.9	21.5	3.9	1.0	2.69	3,458	33.9	51	1.0
Israel	9.2	12.7	20.1	5.1	1.8	3.01	1,954	22.6	50	1.2
Palestine	4.8	8.8	28.7	3.5	2.5	3.56	273	5.3	-53	-2.2
Egypt	102.3	160.0	25.7	5.8	1.9	3.28	544	0.5	-190	-0.4
Libya	6.9	8.5	18.3	5.1	1.4	2.21	827	12.0	-10	-0.3
Tunisia	11.8	13.8	17.1	6.3	1.1	2.17	60	0.5	-20	-0.3
Algeria	43.9	60.9	23.6	4.7	1.8	2.99	250	0.6	-50	-0.2
Morocco	36.9	46.2	18.5	5.1	1.2	2.38	102	0.3	-257	-1.4

Own production. Source: WB UNPOP WB WB WB WB UNPOP UNPOP UNPOP UNPOP
 a. The number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants. Projections made using medium fertility variant. b. Net annual average number of migrants: the number of immigrants less the annual number of emigrants, divided by the population of the receiving country. Projections made using medium fertility variant.

CHART F2 Population Growth and Fertility (2019-2020)



Own production. Source: WB.

TABLE F3

Population: Structure and Distribution

	Population age composition			Rural population	Population in urban agglomerations of more than 1 million	Population located in the Mediterranean coastal regions		Urban population using at least basic sanitation services	Population density	
	age 0-14	age 15-64	≥ age 65			% of total population	thousands			%
	%	%	%							
	2020	2020	2020							
Portugal	13.1	64.2	22.8	33.7	41.4		99.5	112		
Spain	14.4	65.6	20.0	19.2	25.8	19,732	41.7	99.9	95	
France	17.7	61.6	20.8	19.0	22.9	7,447	10.9	98.6	123	
Italy	13.0	63.7	23.3	29.0	19.1	32,611	55.4	99.9	200	
Malta	14.4	64.3	21.3	5.3		516	100.0	100.0	1,642	
Slovenia	15.1	64.1	20.7	44.9		118	5.6	..	104	
Croatia	14.5	64.2	21.3	42.4		1,328	32.8	97.8	72	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	14.5	67.6	17.9	51.0		216	9.9	98.9	64	
Serbia	15.4	65.6	19.1	43.6	20.2			99.6	79	
Montenegro	18.0	66.2	15.8	32.5		447	72.0	99.6	46	
North Macedonia	16.3	69.2	14.5	41.5				99.4	82	
Albania	17.2	68.1	14.7	37.9		1,996	70.5	99.3	104	
Greece	13.7	64.1	22.3	20.3	29.4	9,186	85.7	99.2	83	
Cyprus	16.6	69.0	14.4	33.2		1,207	100.0	99.7	131	
Turkey	23.9	67.1	9.0	23.9	37.2	39,672	46.8	99.8	110	
Syria	30.8	64.4	4.9	44.5	32.3	2,616 ^c	12.1 ^c	89.5	95	
Lebanon	25.1	67.4	7.5	11.1	35.5	3,921 ^d	81.0 ^d	..	667	
Jordan	32.9	63.2	4.0	8.6	21.1			97.3	115	
Israel	27.8	59.8	12.4	7.4	57.8	7,655	82.4	100.0	426	
Palestine	38.4	58.4	3.2	23.3		2,107	40.3	98.8	798	
Egypt	33.9	60.7	5.3	57.2	25.6	34,729	34.2	99.7	103	
Libya	27.8	67.7	4.5	19.3	17.0	5,863	84.6	..	4	
Tunisia	24.3	66.8	8.9	30.4	20.0	8,708	74.7	97.6	76	
Algeria	30.8	62.5	6.7	26.3	6.3	13,489 ^e	39.6 ^e	88.3	18	
Morocco	26.8	65.6	7.6	36.5	21.8	4,154	11.4	96.4	83	

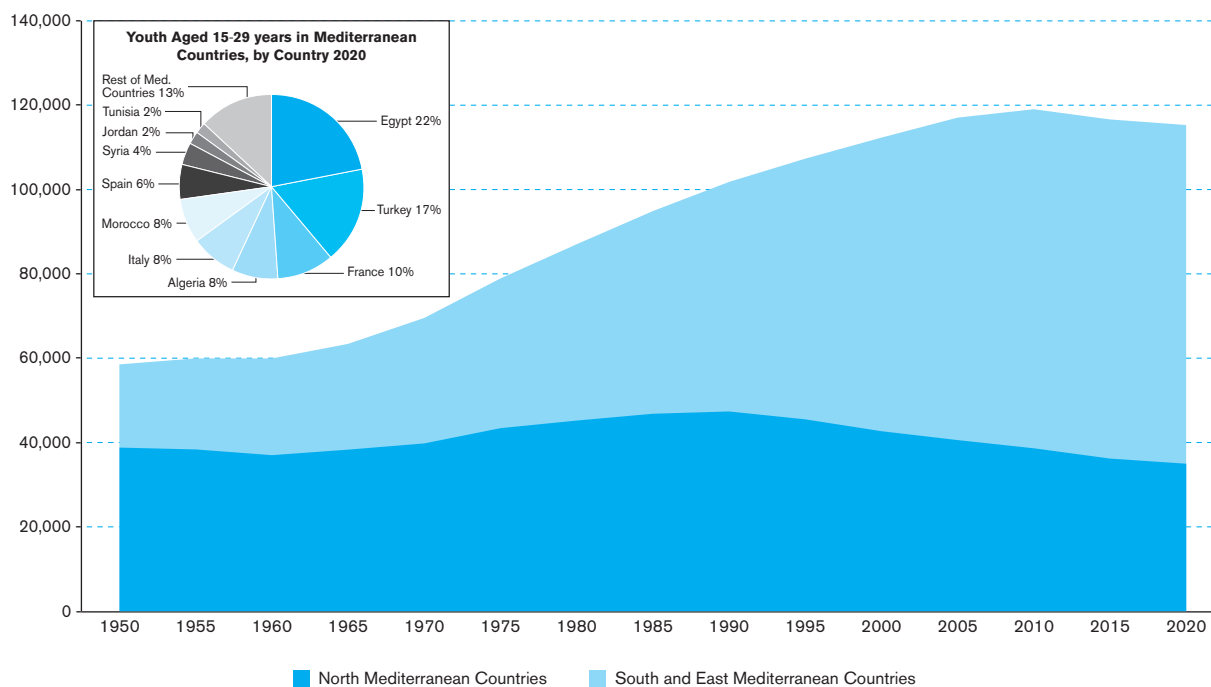
Own production. Source:

WB WB WB WB WB WB IEMed^b IEMed^b WB WB

a. Latest data available from this period. b. Own production according to National Statistical Offices data. c. Data from 2017. d. Data from 2018. e. Data from 2008. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F3

Youth Aged 15-29 years in Mediterranean Countries, 1950-2020 (thousands)



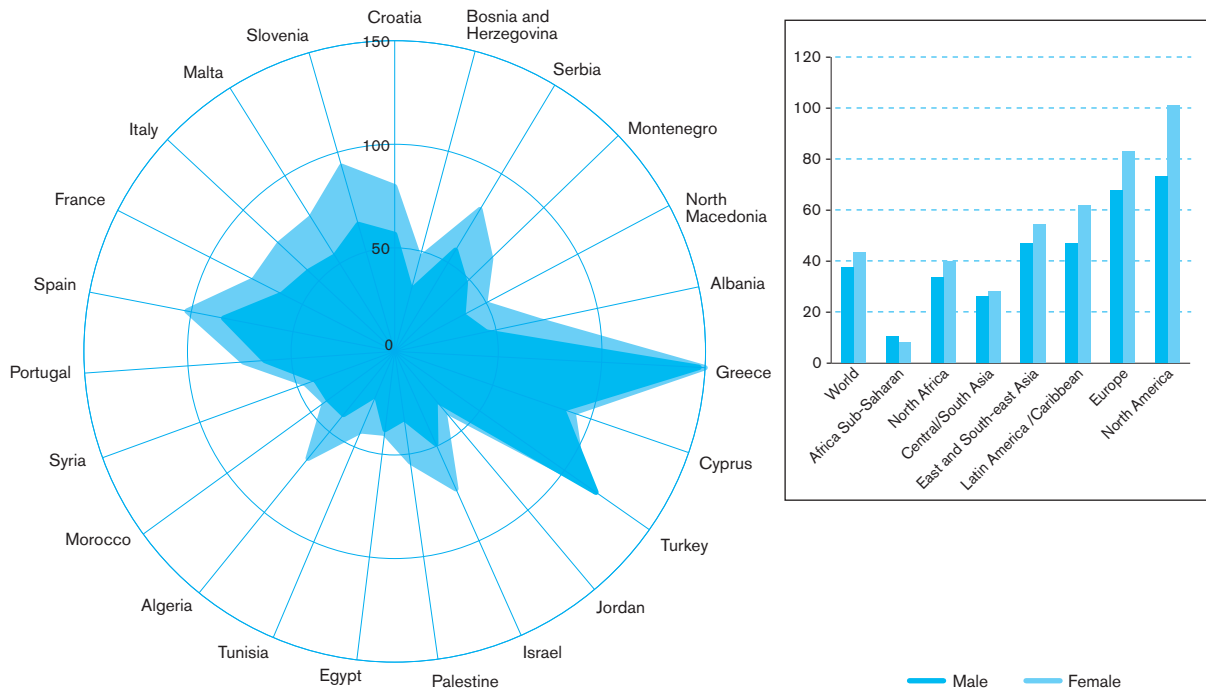
Own production. Source: UNPOP.

TABLE F4 Education and Training of Human Capital

	Net enrolment rate						Public expenditure on education				
	primary	lower secondary	upper secondary	Primary pupil-teacher ratio	Duration of compulsory education	R&D personnel headcount	R&D expenditures	Pre-primary and primary	Secondary and post-secondary	Tertiary	
	%	%		pupils per teacher	years	per million inhabitants	% of GDP	% of GDP	% of all levels	% of all levels	% of all levels
	2019/20 ^a	2019/20 ^a	2019/20 ^a	2017/18 ^a	2020/21 ^a	2017/18 ^a	2017/18 ^a	2017/19 ^a	2017/19 ^a	2017/19 ^a	2017/19 ^a
Portugal	99.6	99.9	99.7	12.4	12	10,619	1.4	4.7	37.6	43.8	16.7
Spain	97.2	99.6	99.2	13.1	10	7,596	1.2	4.2	37.3	37.0	22.1
France	99.9	99.5	95.9	18.2 ^c	13	9,540	2.2	5.4	34.2	43.1	22.7
Italy	96.5	97.6	94.3	11.5	12	7,956	1.4	4.3	33.7	48.1	18.2
Malta	99.5	98.5	91.7	12.9	11	5,661	0.6	4.7	27.0	39.9	26.1
Slovenia	99.9	98.9	98.8	13.8 ^b	9	10,592	2.0	4.9	39.3	34.2	20.5
Croatia	97.8	98.9	87.8	13.5 ^b	8	4,688	1.0	3.9	55.9	..	22.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	..	..	81.5	16.9	9	858	0.2	..	..	..	..
Serbia	97.1	97.2	85.6	14.3	8	3,299	0.9	3.6	1.7	68.3	28.8
Montenegro	99.9	93.9	88.3	..	9	3,560	0.4	..	..	..	..
North Macedonia	99.3 ^e	..	..	14.9	13	1,971	0.4	..	..	..	..
Albania	96.2	96.5	81.3	17.6	9	..	..	4.0	56.9	22.5	18.7
Greece	99.1	96.8	99.0	9.4	10	8,947	1.2	3.6	42.1	39.3	18.6
Cyprus	99.5	99.4	82.6	12.0	10	3,842	0.6	5.8	38.0	41.7	20.1
Turkey	95.2	96.5	81.8	17.0	12	3,285	1.0	4.3	23.0	42.2	34.7
Syria	72.4 ^c	61.9 ^c	33.6 ^c	..	9	493 ^d	0.0 ^d	..	..	..	..
Lebanon	..	..	..	12.5	10	..	..	2.6	..	17.1 ^c	28.7 ^c
Jordan	79.9	72.2	56.6	18.5	10	1,096	0.7 ^b	3.0	47.3	44.1	8.5
Israel	99.5	99.9	76.5	12.1 ^b	15	..	4.9	6.2	53.9	31.5	13.7
Palestine	95.3	96.9	98.0	24.5	10	2,011 ^c	0.5 ^c	5.3	..	..	..
Egypt	99.3	97.6	76.6	23.7	12	2,469	0.7	..	..	..	..
Libya	..	..	..	..	9	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tunisia	99.2	..	..	16.9	9	3,179	0.6	7.3 ^b	..	..	..
Algeria	99.8	..	..	24.3	10	2,432	0.5	6.1	..	..	..
Morocco	99.6	92.8	74.6	26.8	9	1,508 ^b	..	..	..	..	..

Own production. Source: UNESCO. ^a Latest data available from this period. ^b 2016. ^c 2013. ^d 2015. ^e 2018. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F4 Gross Enrolment Ratio for Tertiary Education by Sex (2018-2022)^a



Own production. Source: UNESCO. ^a Latest data available from this period.

TABLE F5

Health and Survival

	Child mortality rate ^a		Maternal mortality ratio	People living with HIV/AIDS		Prevalence of smoking	
	infant per 1,000 live births	under-five per 1,000 live births		Total prevalence of HIV	Estimated number	men	women
			per 100,000 live births	% of population ages 15-49	all ages	% of adults	% of adults
	2020	2020	2017	2020	2020	2020	2020
Portugal	2.7	3.3	8	0.5	41,700	27.4	15.4
Spain	2.7	3.2	4	0.4	152,700	27.1	22.0
France	3.4	4.4	8	..	..	31.3	26.3
Italy	2.5	2.9	2	0.2	137,700	25.3	17.3
Malta	5.6	6.5	6	..	..	25.2	18.7
Slovenia	1.8	2.2	7	<0.1	<1,000	22.7	16.6
Croatia	3.9	4.6	8	<0.1	1,700	35.6	30.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4.9	5.7	10	..	..	43.4	28.0
Serbia	4.9	5.6	12	<0.1	3,300	39.7	35.7
Montenegro	2.0	2.4	6	<0.1	<500	31.5	33.2
North Macedonia	5.2	5.9	7	..	..	..	..
Albania	8.8	9.8	15	<0.1	1,400	39.8	6.6
Greece	3.6	4.1	3	0.2	16,700	35.2	26.7
Cyprus	2.3	2.8	6	..	..	46.6	21.9
Turkey	8.1	9.5	17	..	..	12.8	18.9
Syria	18.4	22.4	31	<0.1	<1,000	..	..
Lebanon	6.0	7.0	29	<0.1	2,700	42.8	25.9
Jordan	12.9	15.0	46	<0.1	<1,000	57.4	12.7
Israel	2.9	3.6	3	..	..	28.7	13.1
Palestine	14.2	16.5	27	..	..	..	..
Egypt	16.6	19.5	37	<0.1	23,600	41.8	0.3
Libya	9.5	11.1	72	0.1	6,700	..	..
Tunisia	14.3	16.6	43	<0.1	4,500	40.9	1.7
Algeria	19.5	22.7	112	<0.1	18,300	30.5	0.6
Morocco	16.0	18.7	70	<0.1	21,900	24.0	0.7

Own production. Source:

CME

CME

WB

WHO

UNAIDS

WHO

WHO

a. Estimates generated by the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) in 2019. Medium estimation. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F5

Percentage of Deaths by Age (2019)

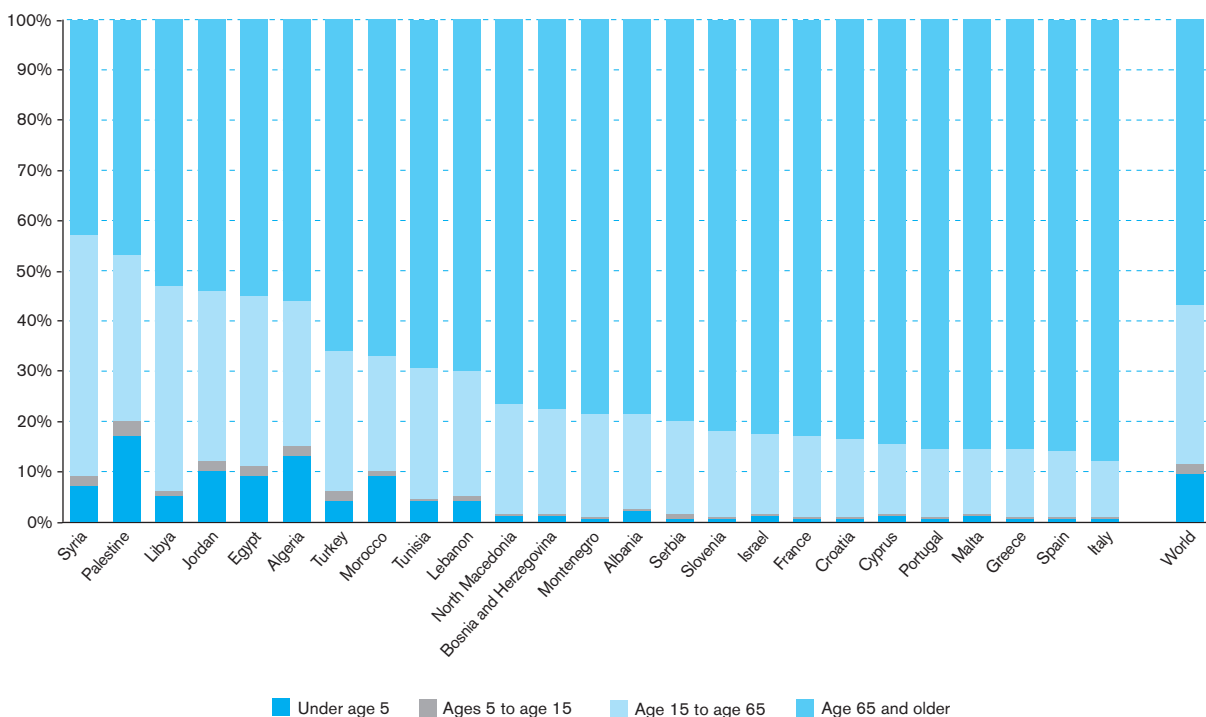
Own production. Source: UN Population Division, *World Mortality 2019: Data Booklet*.

TABLE F6

Nutrition and Food Security

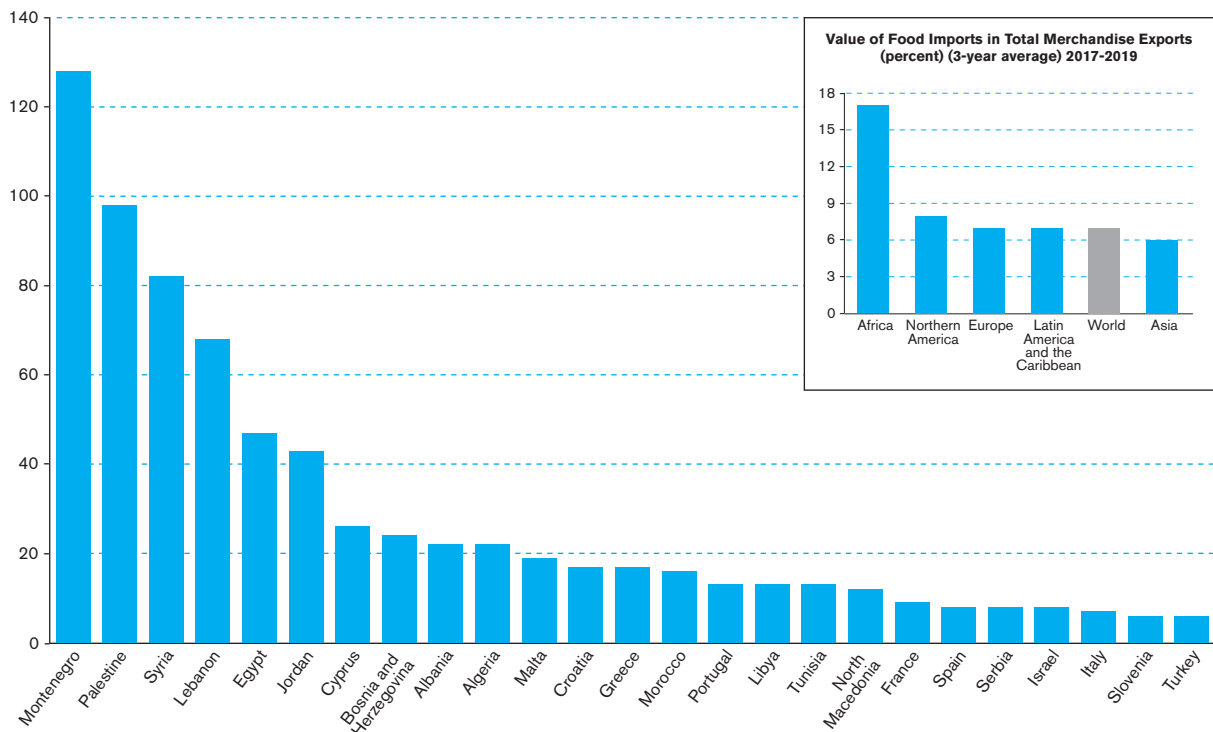
	Food supply kcal/person/ day	Cereal trade				Children underweight	Children overweight
		Imports		Exports		% of children aged < 5	% of children aged < 5
		mt	thousands \$	mt	thousands \$	2012/20 ^a	2020
		2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Portugal	3,458	3,891,883	917,760	331,072	122,591	0.4	8.5
Spain	3,348	14,035,316	3,084,993	1,481,687	651,116	..	..
France	3,532	2,188,830	1,232,928	31,924,938	7,880,590	..	..
Italy	3,505	14,877,156	3,589,958	1,376,802	1,033,171	..	..
Malta	3,379	104,913	28,649	30	12	..	..
Slovenia	3,149	1,009,967	214,134	1,004,111	198,546	..	..
Croatia	3,128	307,658	98,200	1,957,471	374,456	..	..
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,320	614,276	135,335	80,674	19,636	1.6	12.8
Serbia	2,865	39,882	32,985	4,401,542	826,991	1.0	10.8
Montenegro	3,520	117,684	27,308	648	185	3.7	10.2
North Macedonia	3,095	217,472	49,374	30,149	7,955	0.9	10.0
Albania	3,338	371,464	101,408			1.5	14.6
Greece	3,396	1,738,082	433,164	476,507	184,768	..	13.9
Cyprus	3,046	502,110	117,465	6,830	2,534	..	..
Turkey	3,734	13,418,460	3,285,157	5,058,399	1,273,457	1.5	..
Syria	2760	798,665	251,777	526,066	81,188	..	18.2
Lebanon	2,870	1,409,464	364,287	44,870	20,228	..	19.7
Jordan	2,529	2,390,322	699,028	71,384	20,950	3.0	7.1
Israel	3,558	4,015,290	936,289	2,890	1,823	..	..
Palestine	..	341,927	90,925	4,005	3,518	2.1	8.5
Egypt	3,307	17,043,801	4,641,366	563,739	146,490	7.0	17.8
Libya	3,141	2,844,893	649,139	-	-	11.7	25.4
Tunisia	3,499	4,000,181	934,622	7,649	1,234	1.6	16.5
Algeria	3,493	13,071,491	3,027,345	43,016	7,776	2.7	12.9
Morocco	3,365	9,607,854	2,286,075	6,198	2,662	2.6	11.3

Own production. Source: FAO

a. Latest data available for this period. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F6

Food Imports in Total Merchandise Exports (percent) (3-year average) (2017-2019)



Own production. Source: FAO.

TABLE F7

Access to Health Resources

	Medical doctors	Population using safely managed drinking-water service	Population using safely managed sanitation services	Births attended by skilled health personnel	Contraceptive prevalence, any method	Adolescent fertility rate	Current health expenditure
	per 10,000 population	%	%	%	% of married or in-union women of reproductive age	births per 1,000 women aged 15-19	% of GDP
	2018-20 ^a	2020	2020	2017-19 ^a	2014-20 ^a	2019	2019
Portugal	54.8	95	85	99.9	74	8	9.5
Spain	44.4	100	96	99.9	72	7	9.1
France	32.7	99	79	98.1	78 ^g	5	11.1
Italy	39.5	96	96	99.9 ^b	65 ^e	5	8.7
Malta	28.6 ^c	100	92	99.7	..	12	8.2
Slovenia	32.8	98	72	99.8 ^f	..	4	8.5
Croatia	34.7	..	68	100.0	..	8	7.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	21.6 ^c	89	..	99.9	46 ^e	9	9.1
Serbia	31.1 ^b	75	18	99.9	62	14	8.7
Montenegro	28.7	85	45	98.8	21	8	8.3
North Macedonia	28.7 ^c	77	12	100.0	60	15	7.3
Albania	18.8	71	48	99.8	46	20	5.2
Greece	63.1	100	92	99.9	..	7	7.8
Cyprus	31.4	100	77	99.3	..	4	7.0
Turkey	19.3	..	78	98.0	70	25	4.3
Syria	12.9 ^b	..	..	..	..	37	3.6 ^f
Lebanon	22.1	48	16	..	..	14	8.7
Jordan	4.0	86	82	99.7	52	26	7.6
Israel	36.3	99	95	..	..	9	7.5
Palestine	..	80	67	99.6 ^d	57	51	..
Egypt	7.5	..	67	91.5 ^d	59	52	4.7
Libya	20.9	..	22	99.9 ^e	28	6	6.1 ^g
Tunisia	13.0	79	81	99.5	51	8	7.0
Algeria	17.2	72	18	98.8	57 ^e	10	6.2
Morocco	7.3	80	39	86.6	71	30	5.3

Own production. Source:

WHO

WHO

WHO

WHO

UNPOP

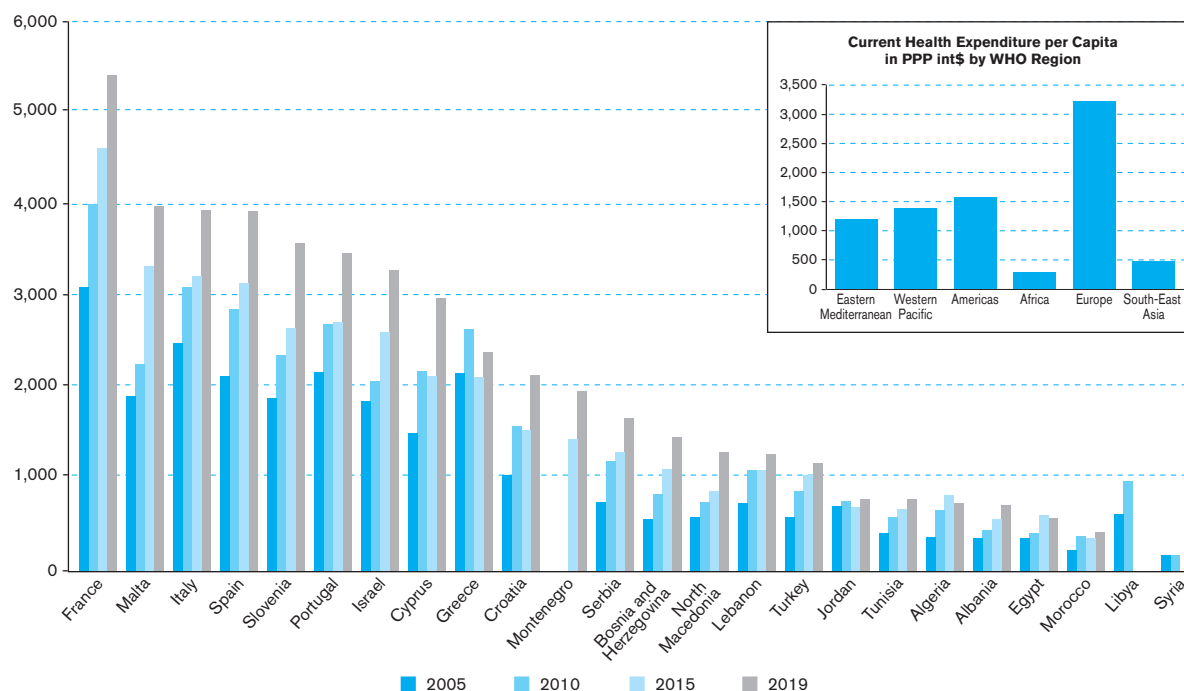
WB

WHO

a. Latest data available for this period. b. Data from 2016. c. Data from 2015. d. Data from 2014. e. Data from 2013. f. Data from 2012. g. Data from 2011. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F7

Evolution of Current Health Expenditure per Capita in PPP int\$



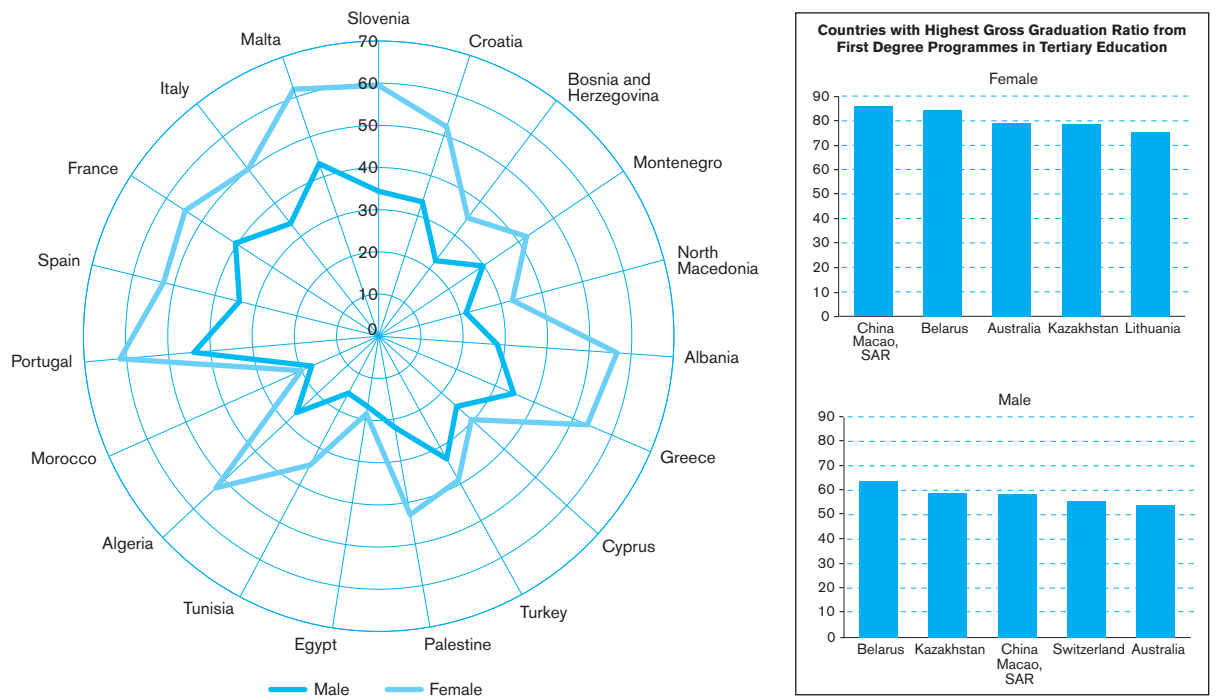
Own production. Source: WHO.

TABLE F8 Gender: Social Development

	Life expectancy at birth				Adult literacy rate		Combined gross enrolment ratio, primary to tertiary		Year women received right to vote	Year women received right to stand for election	Year first woman elected or appointed to parliament	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments %
	women		men		% of females 15+	% of males 15+	women	men				
	years	years			%	%						
	2020	2020	2017-20 ^f	2017-20 ^f	2017-20 ^f	2013-17 ^f						
Portugal	85.0	79.3	95.1	97.4	101.2	99.2	1931 ^c , 1976	1931 ^c , 1976	1934	37.0		
Spain	86.4	81.0	98.2	99.0	111.7	104.0	1931	1931	1931	43.0		
France	85.6	79.9	..	..	96.1	91.8	1944	1944	1945	39.5
Italy	85.7	81.5	99.0	99.4	93.4	89.0	1945	1945	1946	36.4		
Malta	84.4	80.9	96.0	93.0	97.8	90.6	1947	1947	1966	13.4		
Slovenia	84.2	78.8	..	..	104.3	95.5	1945	1945	1992 ^a	28.9
Croatia	81.7	75.5	..	..	93.0	83.0	1945	1945	1992 ^a	31.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	80.0	75.0	..	..	..	..	1946	1946	1990	26.2
Serbia	78.8	73.6	99.1	99.9	90.1	82.7	1946	1946	1946	40.0		
Montenegro	79.4	74.6	98.3	99.5	86.2	80.6	1946	1946	2006 ^a	27.2		
North Macedonia	78.0	73.9	97.6	99.1	74.5	71.9	1946	1946	1990 ^a	41.7		
Albania	80.3	77.2	97.8	98.5	88.3	78.2	1920	1920	1945	35.7		
Greece	84.8	80.0	97.4	98.5	121.8	121.8	1952	1952	1952	21.0		
Cyprus	83.2	79.1	..	..	96.7	96.5	1960	1960	1963	14.3
Turkey	80.8	75.0	94.4	99.1	103.5	107.8	1930	1934	1935 ^b	17.4		
Syria	78.4	69.4	..	..	..	104.7	1949 ^c , 1953	1953	1973	11.2
Lebanon	80.9	77.2	93.3	96.9	..	..	1952	1952	1963	4.7
Jordan	76.4	73.0	97.8	98.6	64.6	62.6	1974	1974	1989 ^b	12.3		
Israel	84.6	81.5	..	..	97.3	90.1	1948	1948	1949	30.0
Palestine	75.9	72.6	96.2	98.8	84.7	75.3	..	..	..	..
Egypt	74.5	69.9	65.5	76.5	81.7	81.6	1956	1956	1957	27.7		
Libya	76.1	70.3	..	..	..	..	1964	1964	..	16.5
Tunisia	78.9	74.9	..	..	..	78.2	1959	1959	1959	26.3
Algeria	78.3	75.9	75.3	87.4	..	..	1949 ^c , 1962	1962	1962 ^b	8.1
Morocco	78.1	75.6	64.6	83.3	82.8	85.3	1963	1963	1993	24.1		

Own production. Source: WB, WB, WB, WB, UNESCO, UNESCO, IPU, IPU, UNDP, IPU.
 a. Referring to the first year appointed in the current parliamentary system. b. The date refers to the first year in which a woman was nominated to Parliament. c. First partial recognition of the right to vote or stand for election. d. Situation as of 1 January 2022. e. The values shown refer to lower or single chamber. f. Latest data available from this period. (.) Data unavailable.

CHART F8 Gross Graduation Ratio from First Degree Programmes (ISCED 6 and 7) in Tertiary Education, in % (2016-2020)*



Own production. Source: UNESCO. *Latest data available for this period.

TABLE F9

Technology and Communications

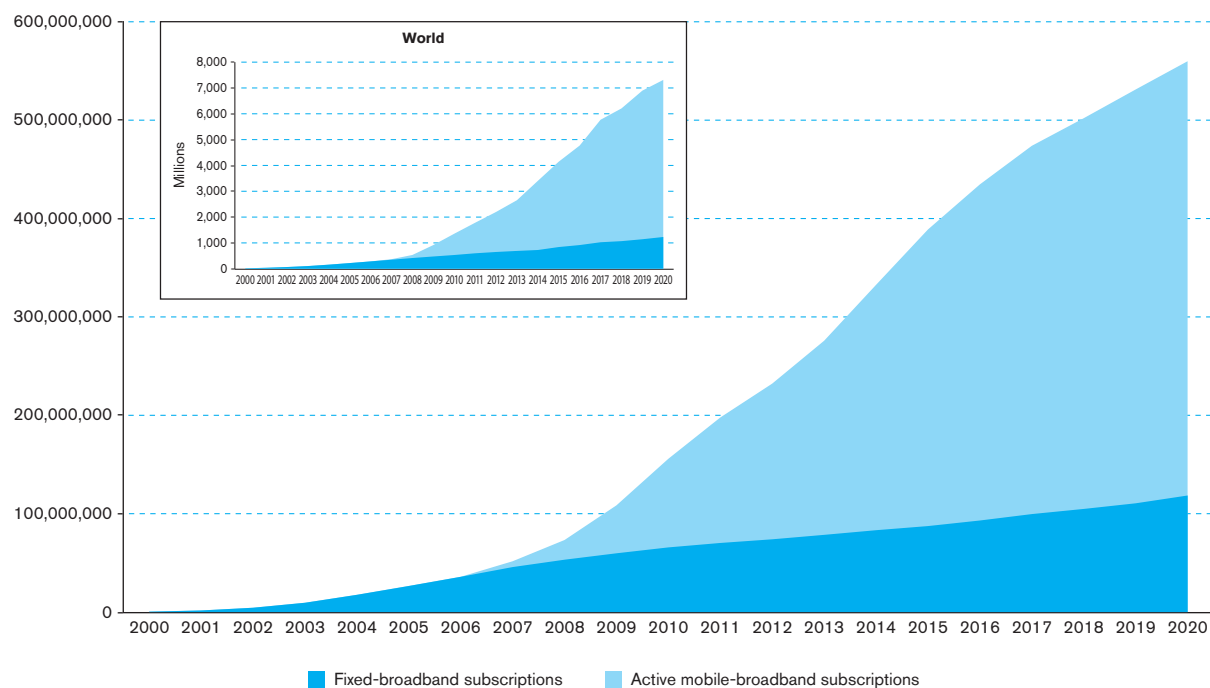
	Fixed-telephone subscriptions		Mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions		Fixed-broadband subscriptions	Active mobile-broadband subscriptions	Proportion of households with			Share of ICT goods as percentage of total trade	
	total	per 100 inhabitants	total	per 100 inhabitants	per 100 inhabitants	per 100 inhabitants	computer	internet access	Internet users	exports	imports
							%	%	%	%	%
	2019	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2017-20 ^a	2017-20 ^a	2018-20 ^a	2019-20 ^a	2019-20 ^a
Portugal	5,212,507	51.12	11,854,999	116.26	40.8	79.0	71.5	84.5	78.3	3.69	6.92
Spain	19,455,658	41.61	55,647,705	119.02	34.6	105.3	81.4	95.4	93.2	1.72	5.80
France	37,759,000	57.85	72,751,000	111.46	46.9	99.3	77.5	84.0	83.3	3.77	6.68
Italy	19,607,341	32.43	77,581,048	128.31	30.0	93.2	66.6	79.0	70.5	2.16	5.62
Malta	259,456	58.76	633,123	143.39	48.3	96.5	82.9	90.4	86.9	13.59	6.20
Slovenia	704,909	33.91	2,550,895	122.70	31.3	87.8	79.5	90.0	86.6	1.81	3.79
Croatia	1,299,329	31.65	4,375,699	106.59	25.1	105.7	77.0	85.0	78.3	2.44	5.23
Bosnia and Herzegovina	706,135	21.52	3,509,674	106.98	23.5	49.5	62.2	72.8	73.2	0.16	3.05
Serbia	2,572,254	37.43	8,260,758	120.22	25.2	94.8	74.3	81.0	78.4	1.53	4.17
Montenegro	191,768	30.53	1,080,089	171.97	29.3	85.9	61.1	80.3	77.6	1.07	4.74
North Macedonia	415,390	19.94	1,862,138	89.38	22.8	66.2	69.5	79.9	81.4	0.72	4.10
Albania	223,469	7.77	2,618,880	91.00	17.7	69.4	20.2	83.3	72.2	0.05	2.61
Greece	5,028,332	48.24	11,412,995	109.50	40.8	88.6	70.5	80.4	78.1	3.51	5.60
Cyprus	311,439	35.07	1,239,960	139.64	37.4	118.2	78.1	92.8	90.8	1.84	4.53
Turkey	12,448,604	14.76	82,128,104	97.38	19.8	77.8	52.1	90.7	77.7	1.00	4.57
Syria	2,857,193	16.33	16,660,253	95.20	8.9	10.1	..	..	..	..	..
Lebanon	875,480	12.83	4,288,221	62.83	6.3	63.7	..	..	..	0.69	1.92
Jordan	391,486	3.84	6,987,891	68.49	6.2	68.5	42.9	37.4	..	1.00	4.99
Israel	3,370,000	38.93	12,270,000	141.76	30.1	121.3	80.6	82.5	90.1	14.01	10.34
Palestine	466,283	9.14	4,274,119	83.78	7.4	18.9	33.2	79.6	70.6	0.46	4.11
Egypt	9,858,331	9.63	95,357,427	93.18	9.1	64.8	70.2	73.0	71.9	2.95	3.99
Libya	1,576,000	23	2,922,000	43	5	16.6	..	..	..	..	..
Tunisia	1,533,273	12.97	14,852,857	125.67	11.3	76.0	52.1	51.5	66.7	4.24	5.47
Algeria	4,784,306	10.91	45,555,673	103.89	8.6	90.6	42.2	74.4	49.0	..	..
Morocco	2,357,286	6.39	49,421,023	133.89	5.7	75.2	64.2	84.5	84.1	2.43	4.03

Own production. Source:

a. Latest data available for this period. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F9

Evolution of Broadband Subscriptions in Mediterranean Countries (2000-2020)



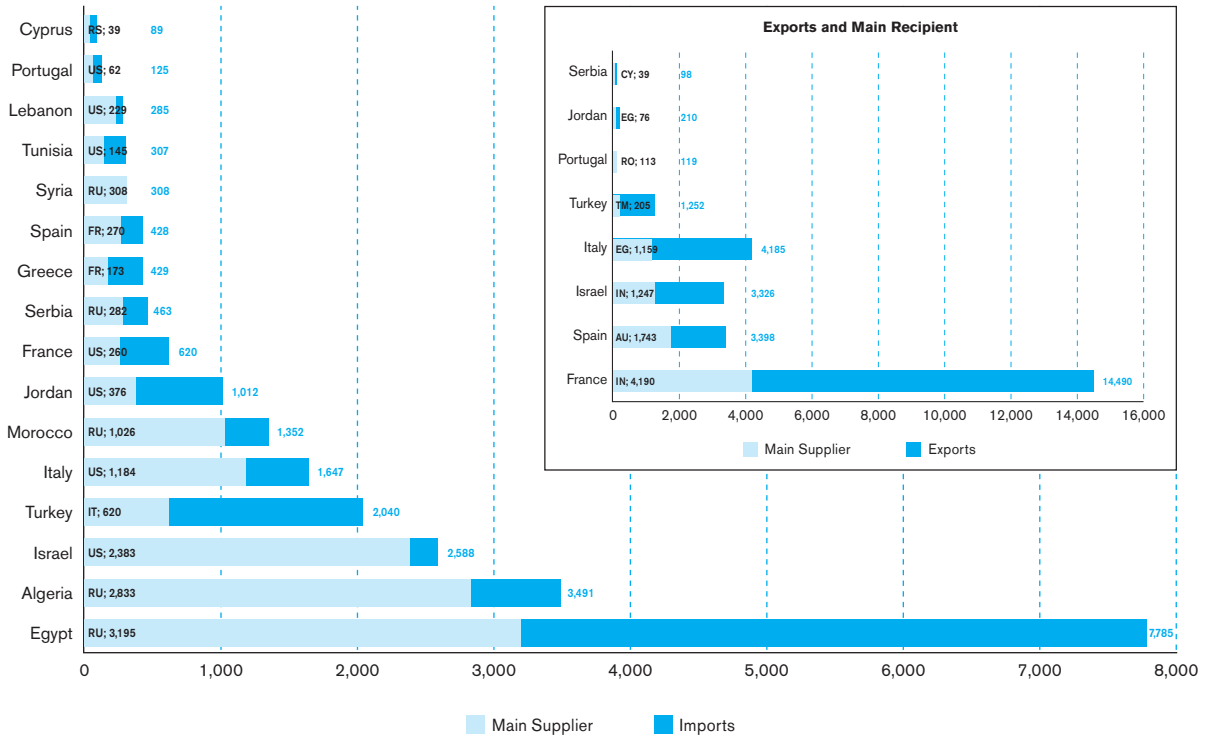
Own production. Source: ITU.

TABLE F10 Security and Military Expenditure

	Internally displaced people thousands	Refugee		Total armed forces thousands	Conventional arms transfer		Military expenditure	
		by country of asylum thousands	by country of origin thousands		exports millions TIV	imports millions TIV	millions \$	% of GDP
		2020	2019		2020	2019	2017-21 ^c	2017-21 ^c
Portugal		2.4	0.0	52	119	125	4,909	2.1
Spain		103.6	0.1	199	3,398	428	19,544	1.4
France		436.1	0.0	304	14,490	620	56,647	1.9
Italy		128.0	0.1	342	4,185	1,647	32,006 ^f	1.5 ^f
Malta		9.2	0.0	2	..	8	85 ^b	0.5 ^b
Slovenia		0.8	0.0	7	0	8	734	1.2
Croatia	5	1.0	23.5	18	3	20	1,740	2.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	99	5.2	15.6	11	..	15	192 ^{b,e}	0.9 ^{b,e}
Serbia		26.1 ^g	30.0 ^g	32	98	463	1,271	2.1
Montenegro		0.2	0.5	12	0	23	99	1.7
North Macedonia		0.3	1.6	16	..	0	215	1.5
Albania	..	0.1	15.5	8	..	11	236 ^{e,d}	1.4 ^{e,d}
Greece	5	103.1	0.1	147	30	429	8,080	4.0
Cyprus	228	14.0	-	16	..	89	518 ^b	2.0 ^b
Turkey	1,143	3,652.4	93.7	512	1,252	2,040	15,479	2.1
Syria	6,568	15.3	6,702.9	269	..	308	..	..
Lebanon	7	870.4	5.5	80	..	285	..	..
Jordan		702.5	2.5	116	210	1,012	2,177	5.0
Israel		1.8	0.4	178	3,326	2,588	24,341	5.2
Palestine	131	-	100.2	..	..	2	..	..
Egypt	12	272.8	26.6	836	2	7,785	5,165 ^e	1.3 ^e
Libya	278	4.1	17.5	..	..	..	..	..
Tunisia		2.6	1.6	48	..	307	1,250	2.8
Algeria		97.7	4.6	317	..	3,491	9,112 ^d	5.6 ^d
Morocco		6.5	4.5	246	..	1,352	5,378	4.2

Own production. Source: IDMC UNHCR UNHCR WB SIPRI SIPRI SIPRI SIPRI
 a. Data only refer to Palestinian refugees under UNHCR mandate. b. Military pensions not included. c. Total exports or imports for the entire period. d. Data refer to the approved budget, not real spending. e. Excluding paramilitary forces. f. Include civil defence spending, which usually accounts for about 4.5% of the total. g. Including Kosovo. (.) Data unavailable.

CHART F10 Main Conventional Arms Transfers in Mediterranean Countries. Imports (millions SIPRI TIV) and Main Supplier



Own production. Source: SIPRI.

TABLE F11

Economic Structure and Production

	GDP, current prices millions \$	GDP per capita, current prices \$	GDP growth annual %	Share in GDP by sector			Consumer price index %
				agriculture	industry	services	
				%	%	%	
	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Portugal	228,356	22,177	-8.4	2.4	22.2	75.4	-0.1
Spain	1,280,459	27,039	-10.8	3.4	22.3	74.2	-0.3
France	2,621,961	40,162	-7.9	1.8	18.4	79.8	0.5
Italy	1,891,057	31,707	-8.9	2.2	23.9	73.9	-0.1
Malta	14,905	28,966	-7.0	0.5	14.0	85.5	0.8
Slovenia	53,547	25,549	-4.2	2.4	33.2	64.4	-0.1
Croatia	57,204	14,131	-8.1	3.8	25.3	70.9	0.1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	19,951	5,721	-3.2	7.3	28.0	64.7	-1.1
Serbia	53,335	7,700	-0.9	7.8	30.4	61.8	1.6
Montenegro	4,777	7,689	-15.3	8.2	19.2	72.7	-0.2
North Macedonia	12,138	5,867	-5.2	10.8	21.6	67.6	1.2
Albania	15,161	5,268	-4.0	21.9	22.9	55.2	1.6
Greece	188,684	17,603	-9.0	4.8	17.1	78.1	-1.3
Cyprus	24,672	27,784	-5.2	2.2	14.2	83.6	-1.1
Turkey	719,919	8,610	1.8	7.5	31.5	61.0	12.3
Syria	..	..	..	20.6	30.1	49.3	..
Lebanon	27,320	4,003	-21.5	2.6	7.5	89.9	84.9
Jordan	43,759	4,289	-1.6	5.7	26.4	67.9	0.4
Israel	407,101	44,181	-2.2	1.2	20.6	78.1	-0.6
Palestine	15,532	3,045	-11.5	8.3	22.0	68.6	-0.7
Egypt	364,023	3,619	3.6	12.1	33.5	54.4	5.7
Libya	19,210	2,891	-31.3	3.9	38.5	57.6	2.8
Tunisia	42,502	3,571	-9.2	12.4	22.9	64.7	5.6
Algeria	147,600	3,366	-5.1	14.6	33.5	51.9	2.4
Morocco	114,724	3,191	-6.3	13.2	29.5	57.3	0.6

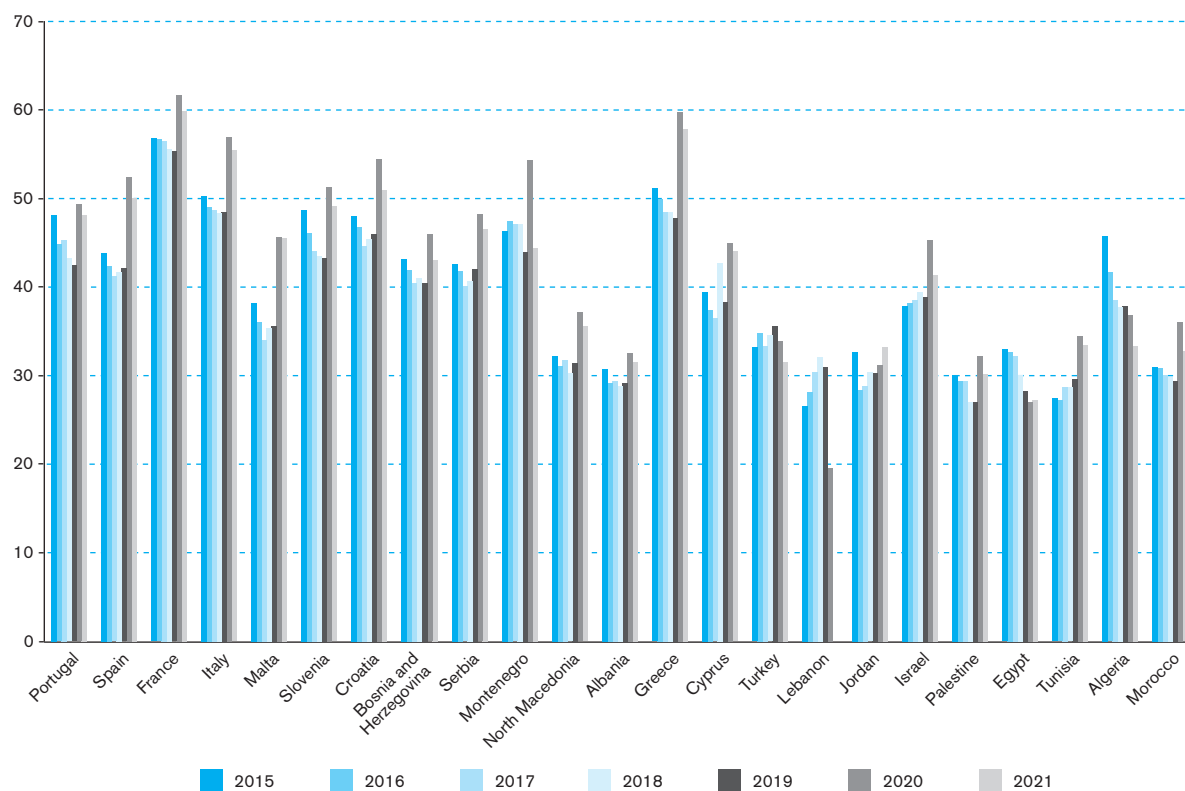
Own production. Source:

IMF IMF UNCTAD UNCTAD UNCTAD UNCTAD IMF

(..) Data unavailable.

CHART F11

General Government Total Expenditure, Percentage of GDP (2015-2021)



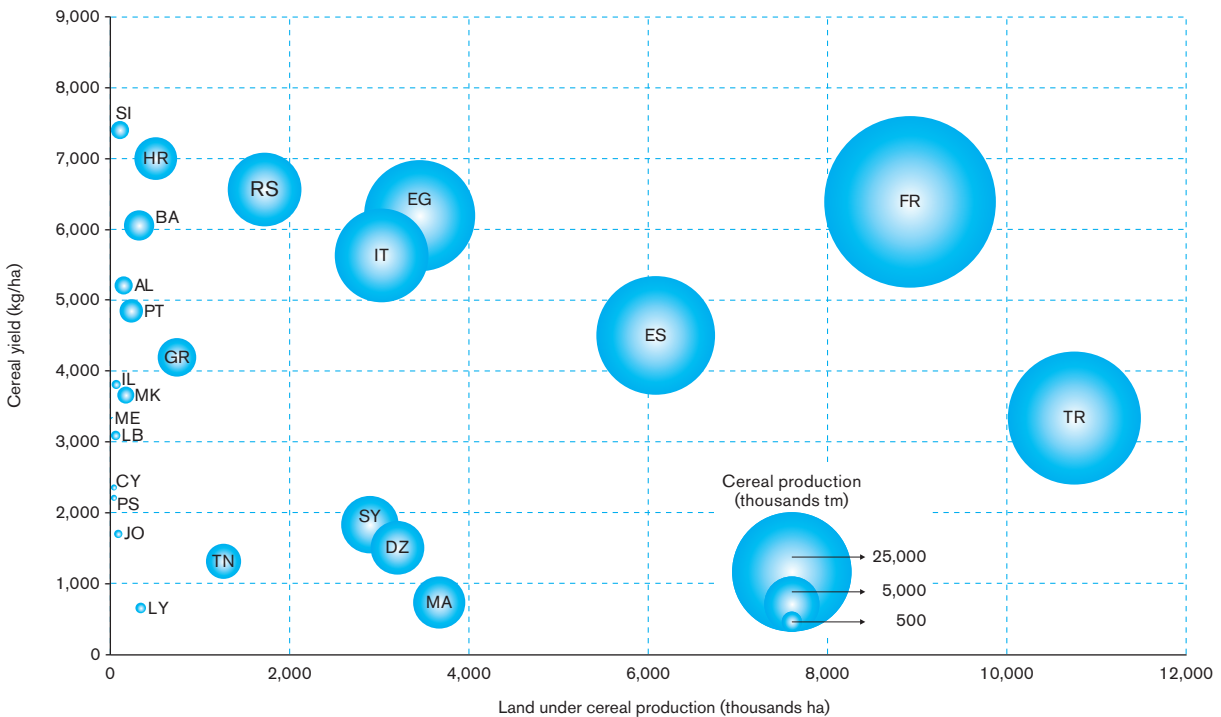
Own production. Source: IMF.

TABLE F12 **Agriculture**

	Land area	Agricultural area ^a	Arable and permanent crops	Permanent pasture	Total area for irrigation	Land under cereal production	Cereal production	Cereal yield	Fertilizer consumption	Economically active population in agriculture
	thousands ha	thousands ha	thousands ha	thousands ha	thousands ha	thousands ha	thousands tm	kg/ha	kg/ha	thousands
	2019	2019	2019	2018	2019	2019	2019	2019	2018	2019
Portugal	9,161	3,574	1,698	1,876	548	218	1,056	4,849	199	270
Spain	49,957	26,207	16,760	9,447	3,923	6,069	27,321	4,502	158	797
France	54,756	28,621	19,075	9,546	2,691	8,905	56,850	6,384	173	702
Italy	29,572	13,121	9,329	3,792	4,124	3,012	16,945	5,627	131	915
Malta	32	10	10	..	4	-	-	-	168	2
Slovenia	2,014	612	234	378	7	99	642	7,393	262	42
Croatia	5,596	1,504	897	607	30	491	3,513	6,992	221	105
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5,120	2,216	1,121	1,095	3	310	1,666	6,051	85	203
Serbia	8,746	3,482	2,785	675	63	1,706	10,458	6,560	73	572
Montenegro	1,345	257	15	243	2	2	7	3,338	247	17
North Macedonia	2,522	1,265	460	805	128	158	563	3,664	61	111
Albania	2,740	1,174	696	478	357	132	666	5,209	67	465
Greece	12,890	6,104	3,222	2,882	1,530	728	2,944	4,197	133	452
Cyprus	924	125	124	2	38	23	61	2,369	158	14
Turkey	76,963	37,716	23,099	14,617	5,215	10,747	34,399	3,342	110	5,218
Syria	18,363	13,921	5,733	8,188	1,310	2,886	6,359	1,832	2	486
Lebanon	1,023	658	258	400	90	56	165	3,100	286	258
Jordan	8,879	1,030	288	742	107	70	114	1,710	114	54
Israel	2,164	638	478	160	306	51	178	3,817	241	34
Palestine	602	462	185	277	136	23	51	2,223	..	61
Egypt	99,545	3,836	3,836	..	3,823	3,435	24,126	6,188	569	5,537
Libya	175,954	15,350	2,050	13,300	400	323	220	672	10	325
Tunisia	15,536	9,743	4,993	4,750	487	1,249	2,420	1,327	44	480
Algeria	238,174	41,359	8,517	32,842	1,365	3,187	5,634	1,520	21	1,059
Morocco	44,630	29,612	8,612	21,000	1,946	3,654	5,313	743	75	3,659

Own production. Source: FAO FAO FAO FAO FAO FAO FAO FAO FAO WB ILO
 a. Agricultural area is divided into "arable land and permanent crops" and "permanent meadows and pastures." (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F12 **Cereal Production (2019)**



Own production. Source: FAO.

TABLE F13

Livestock

	Live animals					Live animals trade	
	bovine, caprine, and ovine ^a	pigs	poultry ^b	equines and camels ^c	beehives	exports	imports
	thousands	thousands	thousands	thousands	thousands	thousands \$	thousands \$
	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Portugal	4,174	2,216	16,693	49 ^e	213 ^e	287,026	219,204
Spain	24,728	31,246	137,533	558 ^e	2,966 ^d	845,951	639,591
France	26,523	13,510	282,034	432 ^e	868 ^d	2,451,941	332,737
Italy	14,907	8,510	174,361	396 ^e	410 ^e	37,606	1,695,995
Malta	33	35	1,022	2 ^e	..	119	877
Slovenia	625	240	4,321	19 ^e	87 ^e	61,901	38,138
Croatia	1,171	1,022	13,054	23 ^e	419 ^f	123,183	137,438
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1,513	543	16,839	14	423	2,456	40,155
Serbia	2,773	2,903	15,170	13	977	55,784	24,386
Montenegro	295	23	767	4	70	793	27,479
North Macedonia	948	136	1,643	9	96	1,610	3,796
Albania	2,695	184	7,195	128	288	658	26,907
Greece	12,371	733	37,434	25 ^e	1,686 ^f	16,775	65,527
Cyprus	638	352	2,786	7 ^e	57	550	2,283
Turkey	72,271	2	386,081	225	8,179	83,406	446,859
Syria	18,961	0	18,979	113	500	10,528	12,109
Lebanon	1,053	6	68,047	23	384	32,945	244,363
Jordan	3,708	-	29,009	24	45	152,940	265,905
Israel	1,175	166	55,290	16	121	19,182	276,413
Palestine	1,006	..	7,423	..	46	98	190,813
Egypt	8,122	8	185,282	1,356	785	27,636	157,562
Libya	10,241	..	36,548	130	37	62	190,026
Tunisia	8,087	5	108,720	620	606	988	17,885
Algeria	37,554	5	137,472	584	420	54	87,939
Morocco	31,216	8	218,221	1,564	387	14,750	100,953

Own production. Source:

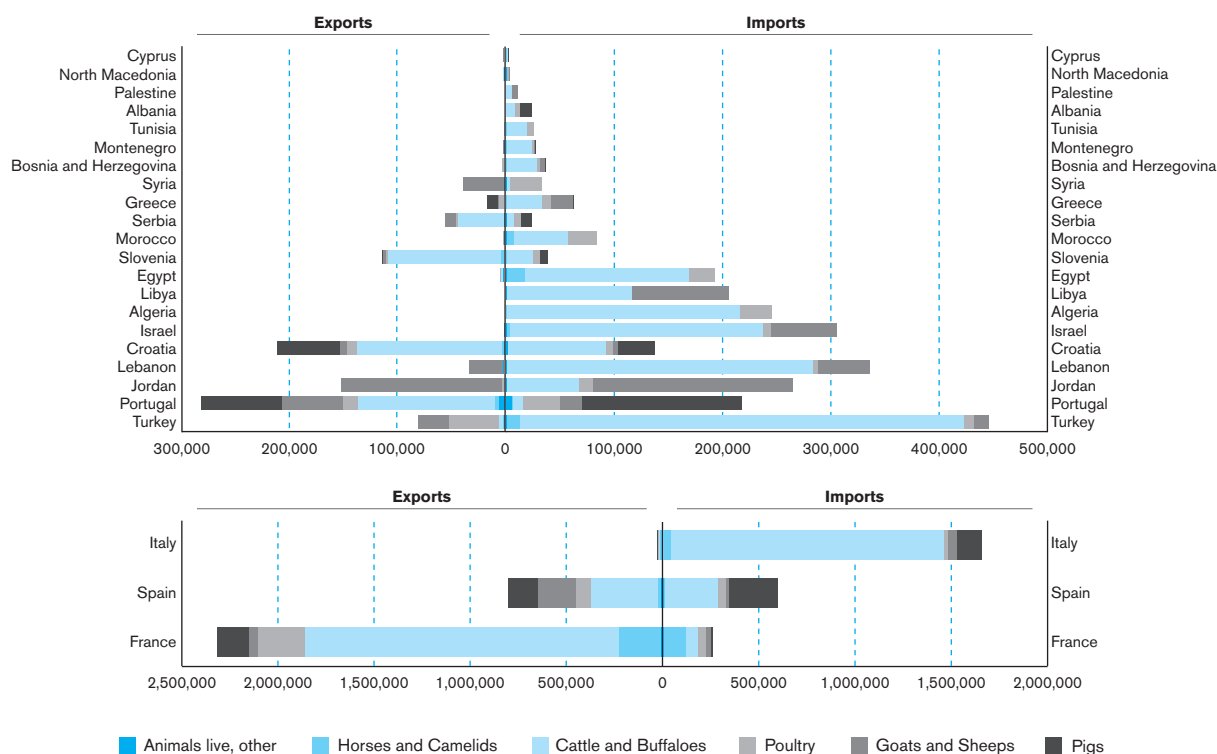
FAO FAO FAO FAO FAO UNCTAD UNCTAD

a. Included bovine, caprine, ovine and buffalo livestock. b. Includes chickens, hens, ducks, turkeys and geese. c. Includes horses, asses, mules and camels. d. Data from 2018. e. Data from 2017. f. Data from 2019.

(.) Data unavailable.

CHART F13

Livestock Trade (2020)



Own production. Source: FAO.

TABLE F14

Fisheries

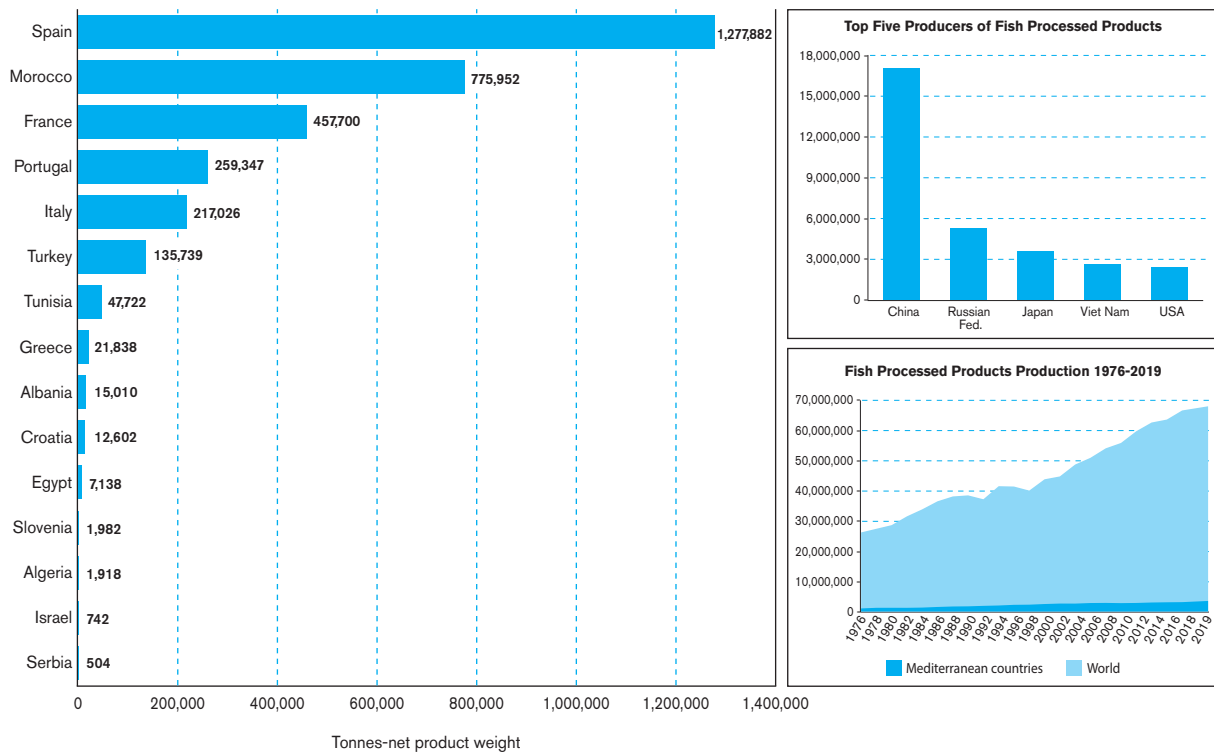
	Total fisheries		Mediterranean and Black Sea catches	Aquaculture production		Trade in fish and derivative products		Fish and seafood supply quantity
	marine	freshwater		quantity	value	export value	import value	
	mt	mt	mt	mt	thousands US\$	million US\$	million US\$	
	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2019	2019	2019
Portugal	159,947	1	41	14,552	99,240	1,197	2,434	57.2
Spain	798,396	6,000	65,637	276,571	657,284	4,753	8,139	42.4
France	464,760	1,112	15,985	191,350	828,409	1,799	6,734	34.2
Italy	137,972	3,800	131,667	122,778	449,690	839	6,619	29.8
Malta	2,103		2,103	19,829	246,147	158	140	32.5
Slovenia	157	155	157	1,673	6,532	45	134	12.0
Croatia	71,210	415	71,210	21,718	151,338	236	203	19.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5	300	5	3,776	13,857	13	47	5.8
Serbia		1,932		6,010	16,492	18	110	6.2
Montenegro	671	145	671	885	3,674	0	24	14.1
North Macedonia		473		1,634	8,359	6	30	6.2
Albania	4,783	2,844	4,783	9,284	38,897	111	87	8.6
Greece	70,536	940	70,536	131,737	632,896	773	783	19.6
Cyprus	1,246	20	1,246	7,343	42,300	40	111	24.6
Turkey	331,292	33,119	331,292	421,411	1,549,464	1,047	510	4.8
Syria	1,545	2,300	1,545	2,300	7,529	1	54	1.6
Lebanon	2,885	15	2,885	828	2,619	2	152	8.7
Jordan	184	400	-	2,055	9,538	1	111	5.2
Israel	1,110	906	1,070	14,700	77,520	24	674	25.1
Palestine	3,390		3,390	600	6,258	1	31	..
Egypt	101,392	317,291	49,896	1,591,896	3,264,648	39	1,090	22.8
Libya	31,627		31,627	10	20	19	237	14.5
Tunisia	102,743	510	102,743	23,486	119,374	190	116	12.6
Algeria	81,465		81,465	5,436	29,140	17	132	3.7
Morocco	1,382,033	15,500	29,642	1,618	9,005	2,288	237	19.0

Own production. Source: FAO

(..) Data unavailable.

CHART F14

Fish Processed Products Production (2019)



Own production. Source: FAO.

TABLE F15

Employment and Unemployment

	Employed population thousands	Employment rate %	Employment by economic sector			Unemployment rate			
			agriculture	industry	services	total	women	men	youth
			% of labour force	% of labour force	% of labour force	% of labour force	% female labour force	% male labour force	% labour force aged 15-24
			2019	2019	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020
Portugal	4,782	54.0	5.5	24.7	69.8	6.8	7.0	6.5	22.6
Spain	19,630	49.0	4.0	20.4	75.5	15.5	17.4	13.9	38.5
France	28,396	51.1	2.5	20.4	77.0	8.0	8.0	8.1	20.2
Italy	22,997	43.7	3.9	25.9	70.2	9.2	10.2	8.4	29.5
Malta	228	60.1	1.0	18.9	80.1	4.3	4.4	4.2	10.7
Slovenia	977	55.4	4.3	34.1	61.6	5.0	5.6	4.4	14.3
Croatia	1,659	47.5	6.2	27.7	66.1	7.5	7.6	7.5	21.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	997	35.6	18.0	31.7	50.3	15.3	17.4	13.9	36.2
Serbia	3,524	47.8	15.6	27.4	57.0	9.0	9.4	8.7	26.0
Montenegro	230	44.6	7.1	19.4	73.4	17.9	18.4	17.5	36.4
North Macedonia	773	44.3	13.9	31.1	55.0	17.2	16.9	17.4	36.9
Albania	1,230	51.6	36.4	20.2	43.4	13.3	13.2	13.4	30.3
Greece	3,864	43.0	11.6	15.3	73.1	16.3	19.8	13.6	34.9
Cyprus	597	58.8	2.4	18.4	79.2	7.6	7.6	7.6	17.4
Turkey	28,253	43.5	18.1	25.3	56.6	13.1	14.8	12.3	24.5
Syria	4,872	38.5	10.1	23.2	66.7	10.3	22.3	7.6	25.2
Lebanon	1,857	36.3	11.3	23.6	65.1	13.3	17.0	12.1	27.4
Jordan	2,147	30.8	2.5	24.4	73.1	19.0	26.5	17.4	40.7
Israel	3,755	59.1	0.9	17.2	81.9	4.3	4.1	4.5	8.0
Palestine	1,015	31.3	6.0	30.4	63.6	25.9	40.0	22.5	42.0
Egypt	25,807	37.4	20.6	26.9	52.4	9.2	23.6	5.8	23.4
Libya	1,933	38.3	16.4	24.4	59.2	20.1	26.1	16.7	51.5
Tunisia	3,453	38.2	13.8	33.5	52.7	16.6	24.0	13.6	38.1
Algeria	10,823	35.1	9.6	30.4	60.0	12.6	21.5	10.4	31.0
Morocco	10,588	38.6	33.3	23.1	43.7	11.5	13.2	10.9	26.6

Own production. Source:

ILO

ILO

ILO

ILO

ILO

ILO

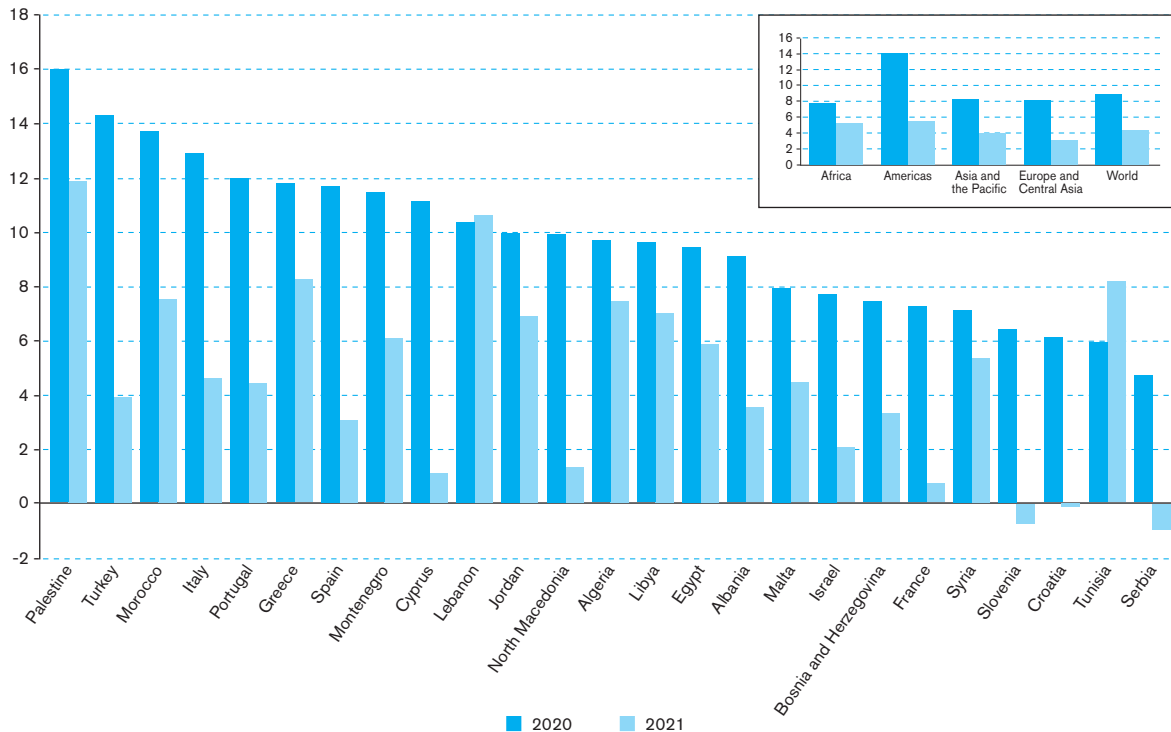
ILO

ILO

ILO

CHART F15

Working Hours Lost Due to the Covid-19 Crisis (%)



Own production. Source: ILO.

TABLE F16

Income Distribution

	Years	Share of income or consumption					Richest 10% to poorest 10%	Gini index
		lowest 20%	second 20%	third 20%	fourth 20%	highest 20%		
		%	%	%	%	%		
Portugal	2019	7.6	12.8	16.7	22.0	40.9	9.3	32.8
Spain	2019	6.2	12.3	17.3	23.6	40.6	12.5	34.3
France	2018	8.0	12.9	16.7	21.6	40.8	8.3	32.4
Italy	2018	6.1	12.2	17.0	23.2	41.5	13.6	35.2
Malta	2019	8.1	13.1	16.9	22.5	39.4	8.0	31.0
Slovenia	2019	10.1	14.7	18.3	22.4	34.6	4.9	24.4
Croatia	2019	8.0	13.7	18.1	23.3	37.0	7.4	28.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2011	7.5	12.3	16.7	22.9	40.7	8.7	33.0
Serbia	2019	6.4	12.5	17.1	22.9	41.2	12.4	34.5
Montenegro	2018	5.3	11.5	17.1	23.8	42.3	14.4	36.8
North Macedonia	2018	6.1	12.4	18.1	24.6	38.8	11.5	33.0
Albania	2019	8.3	12.7	16.9	23.0	39.2	7.0	30.8
Greece	2019	7.0	12.6	17.2	23.1	40.1	10.0	33.1
Cyprus	2019	8.5	12.8	16.7	21.8	40.1	7.3	31.0
Turkey	2019	5.4	10.1	14.6	21.8	48.0	15.8	41.9
Syria	2003	7.2	11.1	15.0	21.3	45.3	10.0	37.5
Lebanon	2011	7.9	12.7	17.0	22.5	40.0	8.0	31.8
Jordan	2010	8.2	12.1	15.8	21.5	42.4	7.9	33.7
Israel	2018	5.2	10.6	16.5	23.6	43.8	14.5	38.6
Palestine	2016	7.3	11.9	16.6	23.2	41.1	8.7	33.7
Egypt	2017	9.0	12.8	16.2	21.0	41.0	7.1	31.5
Libya	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tunisia	2015	7.8	12.3	16.5	22.5	40.9	8.0	32.8
Algeria	2011	9.4	13.7	17.5	22.3	37.2	5.7	27.6
Morocco	2013	6.7	14.7	14.7	20.9	47.0	11.8	39.5
		WB	WB	WB	WB	WB	WB	WB

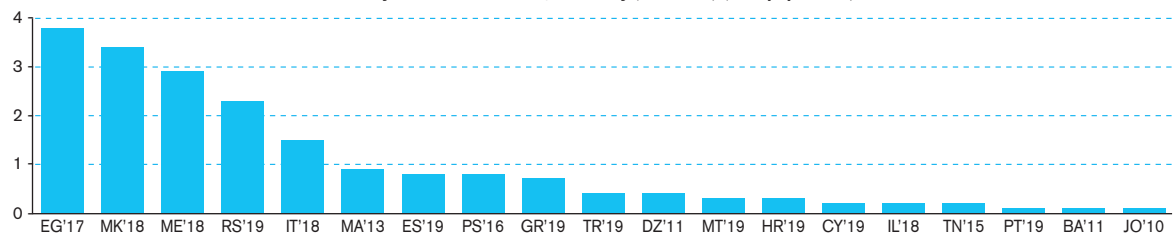
Own production. Source:

(..) Data unavailable.

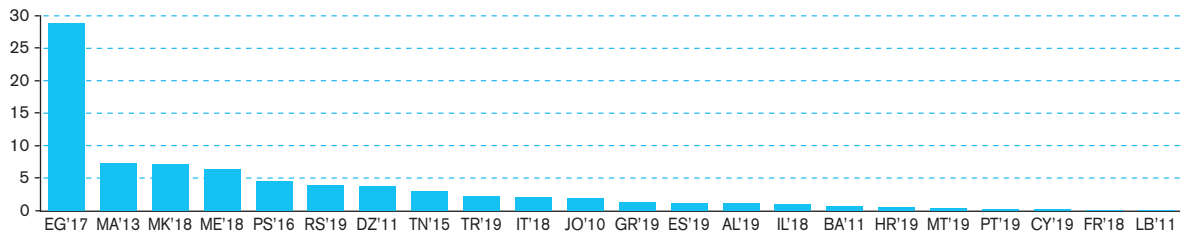
CHART F16

Poverty

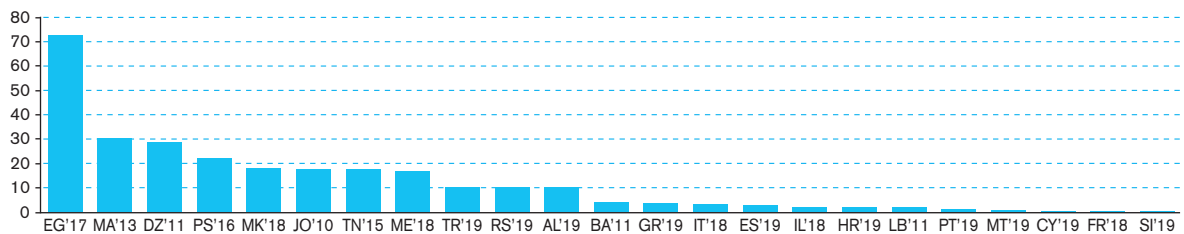
Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population)



Poverty headcount ratio at \$3.20 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population)



Poverty headcount ratio at \$5.50 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population)



Own production. Source: WB.

TABLE F17

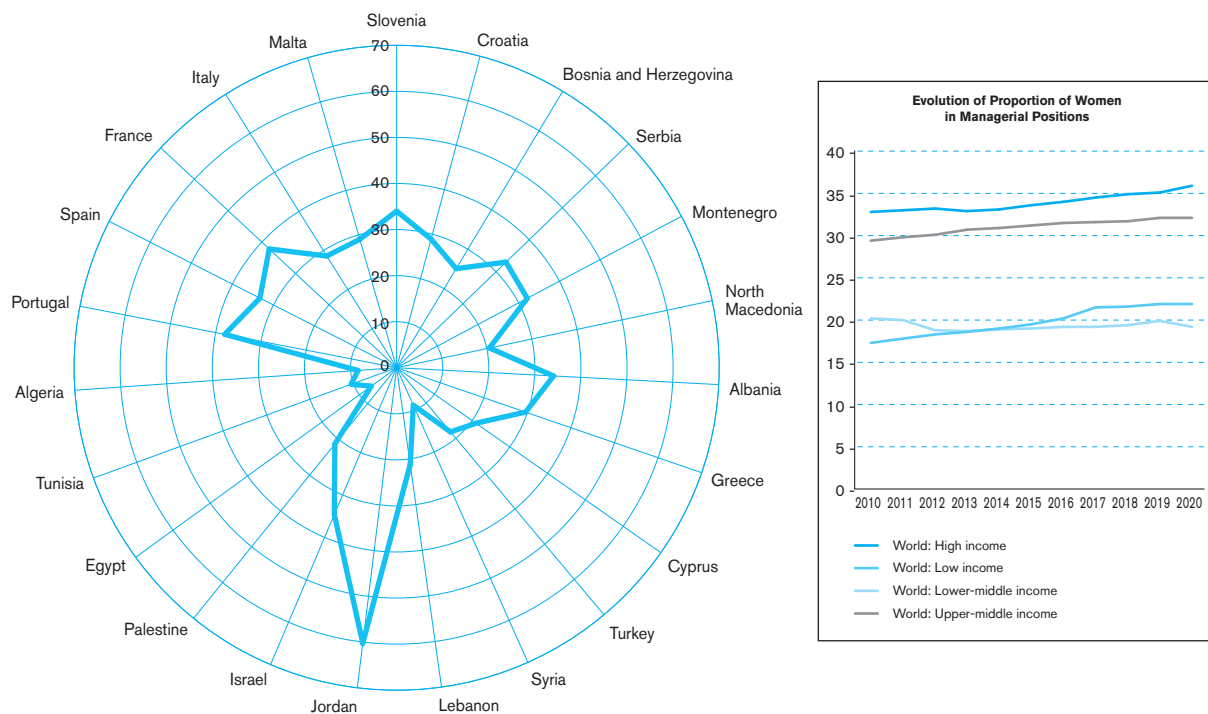
Gender: Economic Activity

	Labour force participation rate ≥15		Employment by economic activity						Gender Inequality Index	
	women	men	agriculture		industry		services		Rank	Value
			% of female employment	% of male employment	% of female employment	% of male employment	% of female employment	% of male employment		
	%	%	2019/20	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
	2020	2020	2019/20	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Portugal	53.6	63.1	3.5	7.2	15.5	33.8	81.0	59.0	17	0.075
Spain	51.6	62.1	2.0	5.7	9.6	29.7	88.4	64.3	16	0.070
France	50.6	58.8	1.4	3.2	9.2	29.6	88.1	65.7	8	0.049
Italy	39.8	57.8	2.4	5.1	13.4	35.8	84.7	59.1	15	0.069
Malta	53.2	71.5	-	1.7	8.4	25.2	91.3	73.2	40	0.175
Slovenia	53.2	62.4	3.8	4.3	19.1	46.4	76.8	48.8	10	0.063
Croatia	44.7	58.0	4.5	8.1	15.7	38.6	79.5	53.0	30	0.116
Bosnia and Herzegovina	32.7	53.1	20.5	16.4	16.8	40.7	62.7	42.8	38	0.149
Serbia	46.5	61.9	12.1	16.5	19.0	35.1	68.9	48.4	35	0.132
Montenegro	46.4	60.6	6.1	8.6	7.4	27.2	86.5	64.2	27	0.109
North Macedonia	41.8	63.1	10.3	12.4	26.0	34.0	63.6	53.2	37	0.143
Albania	49.8	65.6	41.6	32.7	16.3	22.9	42.1	44.4	42	0.181
Greece	43.4	59.0	9.7	11.3	7.7	20.3	82.5	68.4	29	0.116
Cyprus	56.4	69.1	1.6	3.7	7.0	30.5	91.4	65.7	22	0.086
Turkey	31.0	68.5	22.7	15.2	16.8	30.5	60.5	54.3	68	0.306
Syria	15.4	70.3	6.8	10.7	8.3	25.7	84.9	63.6	122	0.482
Lebanon	20.6	64.1	9.5	11.9	12.9	26.9	77.6	61.2	96	0.411
Jordan	13.3	61.8	1.0	3.7	6.7	19.6	92.2	76.6	109	0.450
Israel	58.2	65.5	0.5	1.3	8.0	25.6	91.6	73.1	26	0.109
Palestine	16.2	65.3	6.8	6.3	8.0	34.4	85.2	58.9	..	..
Egypt	15.4	67.0	19.4	20.5	8.4	31.9	72.0	47.3	108	0.449
Libya	33.8	60.3	15.9	16.7	17.0	27.9	67.1	55.4	58	0.252
Tunisia	25.5	67.3	9.0	15.3	32.6	33.7	58.5	50.9	65	0.296
Algeria	15.4	64.0	3.4	10.8	23.5	31.7	73.1	57.5	103	0.429
Morocco	21.7	65.4	52.1	27.4	13.3	26.2	34.6	46.5	111	0.454

Own production. Source: ILO
(..) Data unavailable.

CHART F17

Proportion of Women in Managerial Positions (%)



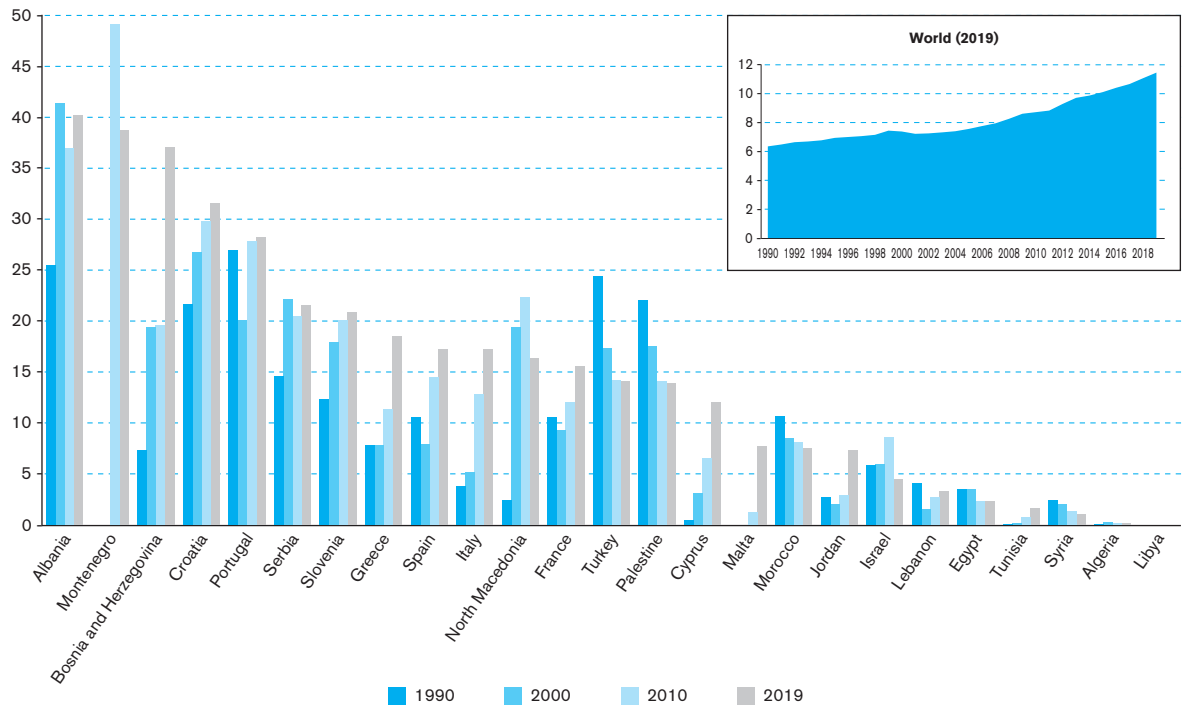
Own production. Source: ILO.

TABLE F18 Production and Energy Consumption

	Energy production	Energy use	Energy use per capita	Energy use by GDP (PPP)	Net energy import	Share of total primary energy supply									
						TJ	TJ	GJ	GJ/ thousand \$ 2015	% of energy use ^b	coal/peat	oil	natural gas	nuclear	other ^c
											%	%	%	%	%
											2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Portugal	246,181	911,454	88.8	2.7	84.3	5.7	43.1	24.3	0.0	26.9					
Spain	1,424,885	5,082,973	108.0	2.8	82.8	4.0	42.4	25.4	12.5	15.6					
France	5,492,630	10,152,299	150.3	3.5	49.6	3.0	29.3	15.5	42.9	9.3					
Italy	1,440,733	5,236,902	103.4	2.7	82.2	4.4	33.6	40.9	0.0	21.1					
Malta	1,043	30,445	60.7	1.5	96.6	0.0	45.2	42.1	0.0	12.7					
Slovenia	145,282	284,525	136.1	3.7	53.1	15.6	34.6	10.8	22.3	16.7					
Croatia	162,695	359,346	88.3	3.3	57.8	4.9	35.9	28.0	0.0	31.2					
Bosnia and Herzegovina	226,292	301,974	91.3	6.5	27.3	54.2	22.8	2.6	0.0	20.4					
Serbia	427,928	640,289	92.1	5.3	25.9	49.2	24.4	13.0	0.0	13.4					
Montenegro	30,789	45,590	73.3	3.8	33.7	34.2	34.8	0.0	0.0	31.1					
North Macedonia	47,857	117,327	56.5	3.7	59.3	33.8	35.5	0.0	0.0	30.7					
Albania	72,469	97,473	34.2	2.5	32.3	5.1	51.7	2.5	0.0	40.7					
Greece	252,180	924,036	86.2	3.1	87.5	14.5	48.3	20.3	0.0	16.8					
Cyprus	6,661	94,803	108.0	2.9	93.1	0.8	89.2	0.0	0.0	10.1					
Turkey	1,913,332	6,133,507	74.1	2.6	72.2	28.6	29.3	25.3	0.0	16.8					
Syria	185,792	388,094	22.7	9.8	56.2	0.0	68.7	30.9	0.0	0.5					
Lebanon	11,274	361,508	52.8	3.9	96.9	1.8	94.5	0.0	0.0	3.6					
Jordan	26,343	386,424	38.3	4.1	98.0	2.3	54.2	37.2	0.0	6.3					
Israel	336,418	907,921	100.5	2.7	71.8	21.9	41.2	36.2	0.0	0.7					
Palestine	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Egypt	3,922,245	4,027,340	40.1	3.1	3.6	2.8	37.4	54.8	0.0	5.1					
Libya	3,225,045	915,735	135.2	8.0	-250.7	0.0	65.4	31.7	0.0	2.9					
Tunisia	212,208	471,647	40.3	3.9	57.9	0.0	39.6	48.7	0.0	11.7					
Algeria	6,213,473	2,637,231	61.1	5.2	-134.8	0.5	35.7	63.7	0.0	0.1					
Morocco	94,109	931,713	25.5	3.4	92.4	30.0	56.7	3.9	0.0	9.4					

Own production. Source: IEA. ^a Value calculated using IEA data. ^b Negative values indicate that the country is a net exporter. ^c Includes hydroelectric, biofuels, and waste and geothermal, solar and wind. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F18 Evolution of Share of Modern Renewables in Total Final Energy Consumption (%)



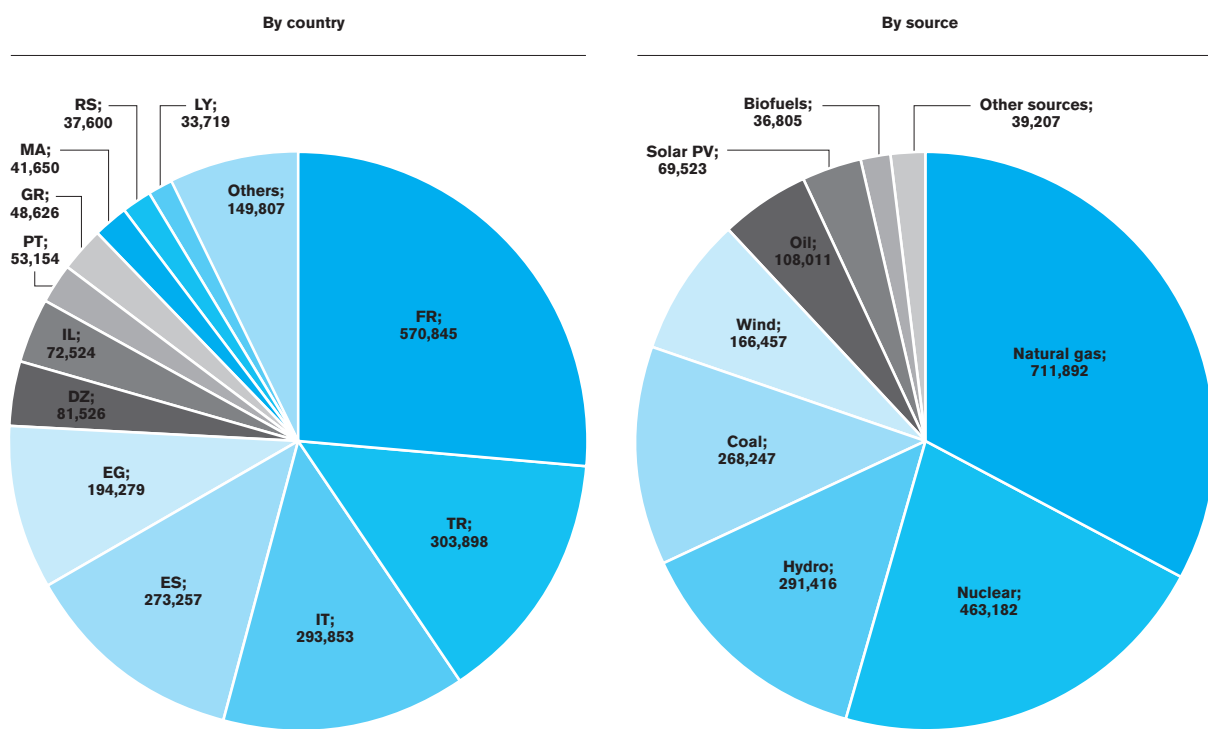
Own production. Source: IEA.

TABLE F19 Production, Consumption and Access to Electricity

	Population with access to electricity	Electricity generation thousands GWh	Electricity consumption per capita MWh	Sources of electricity											
				%	%	%	%	%	%						
										coal	gas	oil	hydroelectric	renewables ^a	nuclear
										2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Portugal	100	53.2	5.0	10	32	2	19	35	0						
Spain	100	273.3	5.4	5	31	5	10	28	21						
France	100	570.8	7.0	1	7	1	11	10	70						
Italy	100	293.9	5.2	7	48	3	16	25	0						
Malta	100	2.1	5.1	0	88	1	0	11	0						
Slovenia	100	16.1	7.1	28	3	0	29	4	36						
Croatia	100	12.8	4.2	13	21	0	47	20	0						
Bosnia and Herzegovina	100	17.5	3.8	63	0	0	35	2	0						
Serbia	100	37.6	4.8	68	2	0	27	3	0						
Montenegro	100	3.4	5.1	44	0	0	48	9	0						
North Macedonia	100	5.9	3.2	60	16	1	20	3	0						
Albania	100	5.2	2.3	0	0	0	100	0	0						
Greece	100	48.6	5.1	25	30	11	8	25	0						
Cyprus	100	5.1	5.7	0	0	90	0	10	0						
Turkey	100	303.9	3.3	37	19	0	29	15	0						
Syria	89	17.6	0.8	0	57	38	4	0	0						
Lebanon	100	21.6	2.8	0	0	95	4	1	0						
Jordan	100	20.5	1.8	0	81	4	0	14	0						
Israel	100	72.5	7.0	30	64	1	0	5	0						
Palestine	100	..	..						..
Egypt	100	194.3	1.6	0	77	13	7	3	0						
Libya	70	33.7	4.0	0	67	33	0	0	0						
Tunisia	100	22.1	1.6	0	95	0	0	5	0						
Algeria	100	81.5	1.7	0	99	0	0	1	0						
Morocco	100	41.7	0.9	65	11	2	4	18	0						

Own production. Source: WB, IEA, IEA, IEA, IEA, IEA, IEA, IEA, IEA, IEA.
^a Excluding hydroelectric. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F19 Electricity Production in Mediterranean Countries (2019) in GWh



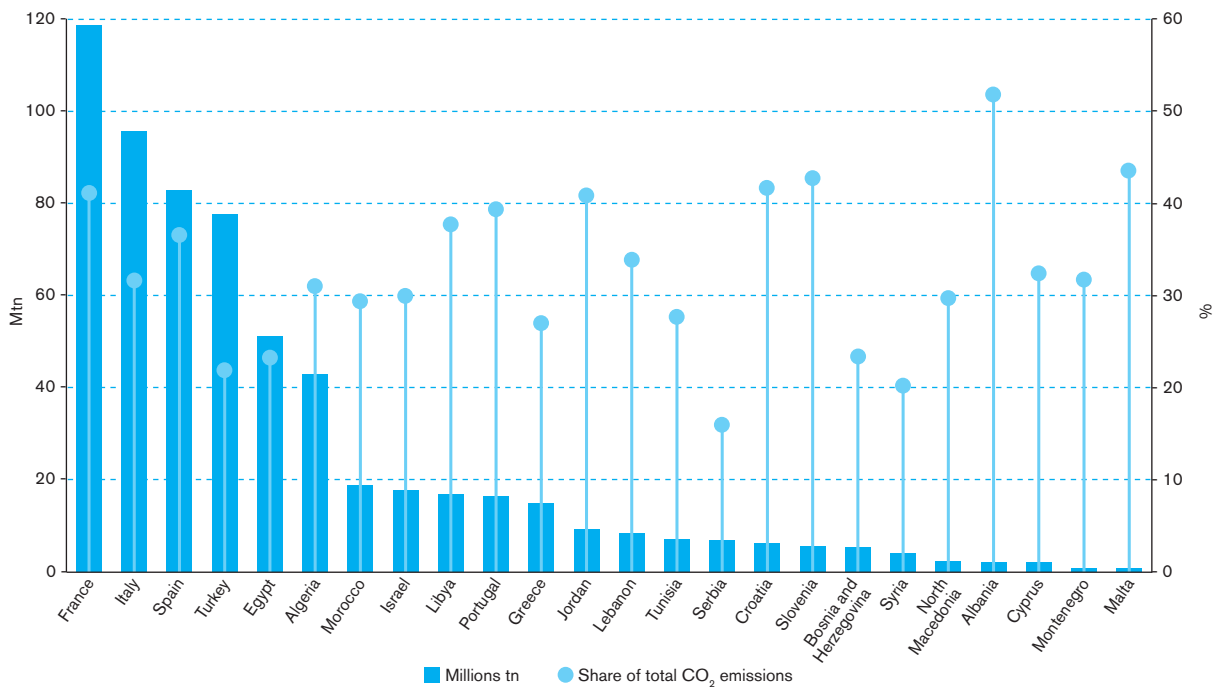
Own production. Source: IEA.

TABLE F20 CO₂ Emissions

	CO ₂ emissions				CO ₂ emissions by sector				PM2.5 air pollution (mean annual exposure)
	total	per capita	world participation	Emission intensities by GDP	industry and construction	transport	electricity and heat production	others	
	millions mt	mt	%	kg CO ₂ /PPP \$ (2015)	%	%	%	%	micrograms per m ³
	2019	2019	2019	2018	2019	2019	2019	2019	2017
Portugal	42.4	4.1	0.13	0.13	18.0	40.5	31.9	6.6	8.2
Spain	230.9	4.9	0.69	0.13	22.7	40.6	23.3	10.2	9.7
France	293.9	4.4	0.87	0.10	20.0	42.8	12.4	20.9	11.8
Italy	309.3	5.1	0.92	0.13	14.0	32.6	31.1	19.9	16.8
Malta	1.7	3.3	0.00	0.09	2.3	44.4	45.1	7.0	13.9
Slovenia	13.1	6.3	0.04	0.17	14.2	42.2	34.6	6.7	16.0
Croatia	15.3	3.8	0.05	0.15	21.6	42.4	18.6	13.0	17.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	20.7	6.3	0.06	0.50	12.8	19.4	64.1	3.2	27.7
Serbia	45.1	6.5	0.13	0.38	11.6	15.3	67.5	5.0	24.7
Montenegro	2.6	4.2	0.01	0.22	8.0	30.9	58.7	2.1	20.8
North Macedonia	8.0	3.8	0.02	0.24	13.4	28.9	54.3	2.8	29.7
Albania	4.0	1.4	0.01	0.10	26.8	54.0	-	11.8	18.2
Greece	56.6	5.3	0.17	0.18	15.5	31.0	42.9	9.1	16.2
Cyprus	6.4	7.3	0.02	0.20	8.8	31.8	50.8	6.9	17.3
Turkey	366.4	4.4	1.09	0.15	22.6	22.8	36.5	15.5	44.3
Syria	23.6	1.4	0.07	0.57	13.3	23.4	49.3	10.4	43.8
Lebanon	25.5	3.7	0.08	0.27	3.4	33.0	60.8	2.6	30.6
Jordan	22.8	2.3	0.07	0.25	9.5	40.2	37.7	9.0	33.0
Israel	60.9	6.7	0.18	0.18	10.4	29.8	57.0	1.1	21.4
Palestine	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	33.2
Egypt	225.5	2.2	0.67	0.19	24.0	23.9	43.3	7.5	87.0
Libya	45.9	6.8	0.14	0.44	13.4	37.0	47.1	2.5	54.3
Tunisia	26.2	2.2	0.08	0.22	20.2	27.9	35.8	11.2	37.7
Algeria	142.4	3.3	0.42	0.28	17.2	32.0	27.7	19.0	38.9
Morocco	65.9	1.8	0.20	0.24	11.6	28.8	43.5	11.5	32.6

Own production. Source: IEA IEA IEA^a IEA IEA^a IEA^a IEA^a IEA^a IEA^a WB
 a. Own production according to IEA data. (.) Data unavailable.

CHART F20 CO₂ Emissions by Road Transport



Own Production. Source: IEA.

TABLE F21

Water

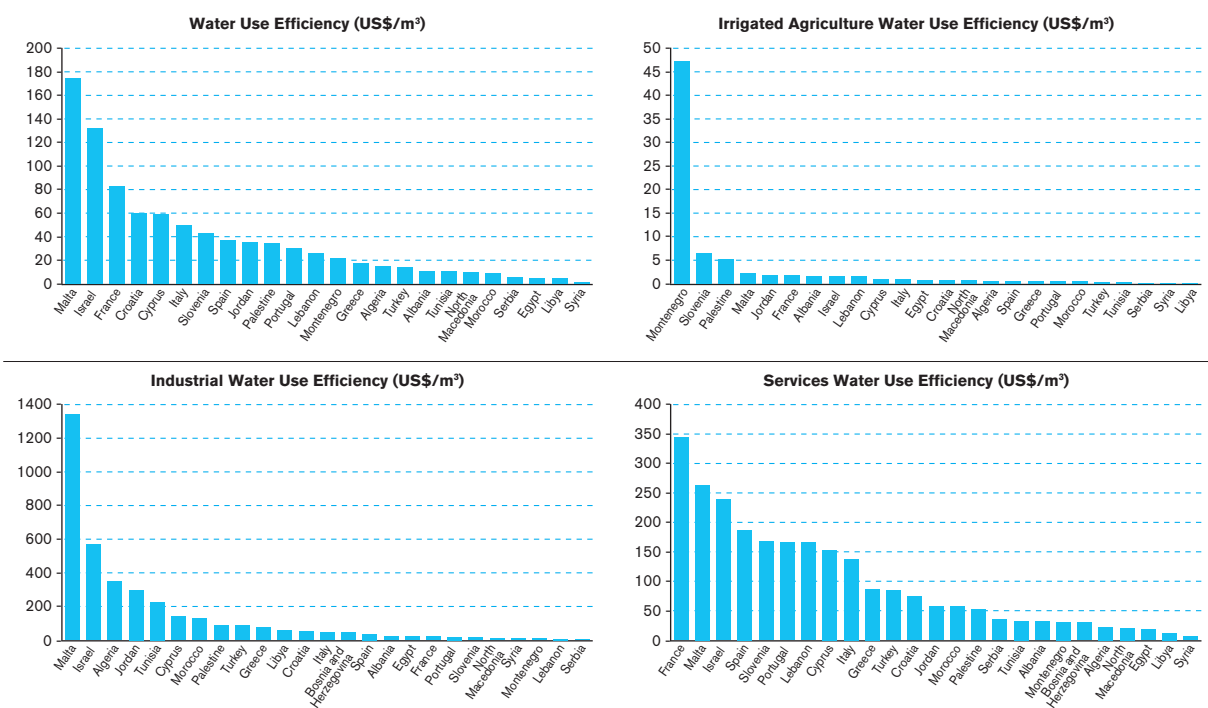
	Water resources					Water consumption						Desalinated water production millions m ³
	nationals	coming from other countries	water dependency	per capita	total	per capita	as % of total resources	by sector				
								agriculture	domestic	industrial		
								km ³	km ³	%	m ³		km^{3}	km^{3}	%
2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2017	2018	2018		
Portugal	38.0	39.4	50.9	7,547	6.1	585	7.9	57	15	30	1	
Spain	111.2	0.3	0.3	2,388	31.2	669	28.0	65	16	19	364	
France	200.0	11.0	5.2	3,247	27.0	416	12.8	11	20	69	12	
Italy	182.5	8.8	4.6	3,155	34.0	564	17.8	50	28	23	97	
Malta	0.1	0.0	0.0	115	0.0	146	85.1	39	58	2	20	
Slovenia	18.7	13.2	41.4	15,338	1.0	463	3.0	0	18	82	..	
Croatia	37.7	67.8	64.3	25,383	0.7	173	0.6	11	63	26	..	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	35.5	2.0	5.3	11,282	0.4	..	1.1	..	..	..	..
Serbia	8.4	..	..	18,426	5.6	631	3.4	13	12	75	..
Montenegro	..	..	..	..	0.2	256	..	1	60	39	..
North Macedonia	5.4	1.0	15.6	3,073	1.0	413	16.3	38	35	26	..	
Albania	26.9	3.3	10.9	10,476	1.0	332	3.2	68	22	10	-	
Greece	58.0	10.4	15.2	6,501	10.1	962	14.8	80	17	3	10	
Cyprus	0.8	0.0	0.0	656	0.2	240	26.5	0	39	6	70	
Turkey	227.0	-15.4	1.5	2,570	61.1	721	28.9	87	11	5	9	
Syria	7.1	9.7	72.4	992	14.0	989	83.1	88	9	4	..	
Lebanon	4.8	-0.3	0.8	656	1.8	268	40.2	38	13	49	47	
Jordan	0.7	0.3	27.2	94	0.9	105	96.4	53	44	3	136	
Israel	0.8	1.0	57.9	212	1.1	271	62.5	52	44	5	645	
Palestine	0.8	0.0	3.0	172	0.3	80	35.8	45	47	8	4	
Egypt	1.0	56.5	98.3	584	77.5	787	134.8	79	14	7	200	
Libya	0.7	0.0	0.0	105	5.7	873	817.1	83	12	5	70	
Tunisia	4.2	0.4	9.1	399	3.8	332	81.9	76	23	1	43	
Algeria	11.2	0.4	3.6	276	9.8	248	84.0	64	34	2	631	
Morocco	29.0	0.0	0.0	805	10.6	290	36.5	88	10	2	7	

Own production. Source:

(..) Data unavailable.

CHART F21

Water Use Efficiency (2018)



Own production. Source: FAO.

TABLE F22

Environment

	Total area			Wood fuel production	National protected areas		Threatened species			Ecological footprint
	thousands ha	Forest area			land surface	marine	mammals and birds	other animals ^a	plants ^a	
		thousands ha	%	thousands m ³						% of total land area
	2019	2019	2018	2020	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2018
Portugal	9,223	3,312	35.9	1,618	22.9	16.8	32	351	144	4.5
Spain	50,595	18,568	36.7	2,951	28.1	12.8	42	476	287	4.3
France	54,909	17,170	31.3	23,444	28.0	49.8	32	304	65	4.5
Italy	30,207	9,512	31.5	10,839	21.5	9.7	28	360	122	4.3
Malta	32	0.5	1.4	0	30.6	7.4	9	53	4	5.5
Slovenia	2,048	1,240	60.5	1,077	40.4	2.3	19	155	13	5.3
Croatia	8,807	1,937	22.0	2,207	38.4	9.0	26	177	11	3.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5,121	2,188	42.7	1,484	4.0	0.0	14	110	5	3.9
Serbia	8,836	2,722	30.8	6,454	7.6	..	22	83	9	3.1
Montenegro	1,381	827	59.9	166	13.8	0.1	20	133	6	4.2
North Macedonia	2,571	1,001	39.0	610	12.5	..	21	114	6	3.1
Albania	2,875	789	27.4	762	18.6	2.8	12	139	5	1.9
Greece	13,196	3,902	29.6	947	35.2	4.5	31	474	78	4.1
Cyprus	925	173	18.7	6	38.6	8.6	16	65	23	3.9
Turkey	78,535	22,064	28.1	5,397	7.0	1.8	40	270	135	3.4
Syria	18,518	522	2.8	36	0.7	0.2	33	95	44	1.4
Lebanon	1,045	143	13.7	19	1.9	0.2	22	70	100	3.0
Jordan	8,932	98	1.1	380	4.5	1.0	29	94	8	1.8
Israel	2,207	140	6.3	2	24.5	0.0	35	171	39	4.7
Palestine	602	10	1.7	..	8.4	..	21	23	11	..
Egypt	100,145	45	0.0	17,893	13.1	5.0	35	159	13	1.8
Libya	175,954	217	0.1	1,062	0.1	0.6	22	63	9	3.3
Tunisia	16,361	701	4.3	3,610	7.9	1.0	29	85	12	2.0
Algeria	238,174	1,939	0.8	8,791	4.6	0.1	35	112	31	2.3
Morocco	44,655	5,732	12.8	6,575	2.2	0.7	41	166	57	1.7

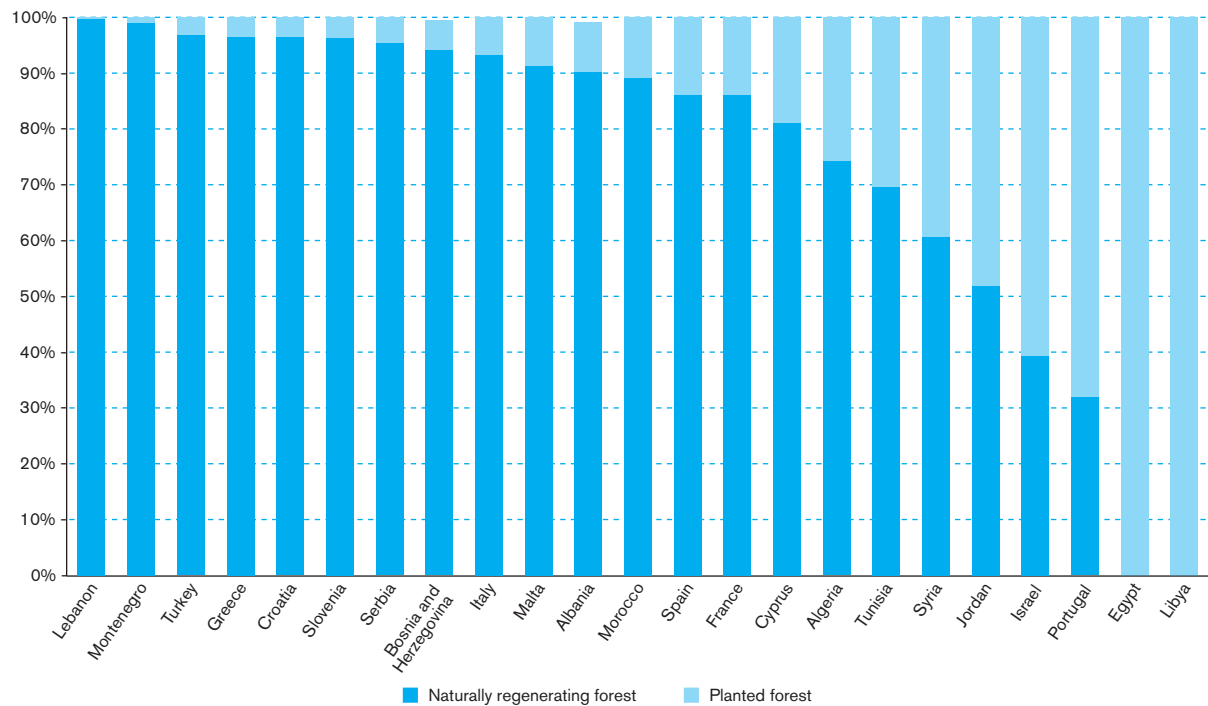
Own production. Source:

FAO FAO FAO FAO WB WB IUCN IUCN IUCN GFN

^a For these groups there are still many species that have not been assessed. The figures presented should be interpreted as the number of species known to be threatened within those species that have been assessed to date. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F22

Share in Forest Land (2019)



Own production. Source: : FAO.

TABLE F23

International Trade

	Exports ^d	Imports ^d	Coverage ratio	Trade balance	Current account balance	Workers' remittances ^b	Foreign direct investment			
	millions \$	millions \$	%	millions \$	millions \$	millions \$	% of total trade ^a		inflows	outflows
	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2019	2019
Portugal	59,574	73,589	81	-14,016	-2,607	4,327	5.1	6,324	2,288	
Spain	302,169	312,556	97	-10,387	9,044	8,509	2.2	8,928	21,422	
France	503,777	572,231	88	-68,454	-49,842	24,482	3.3	17,932	44,203	
Italy	469,595	391,522	120	78,073	69,735	9,711	1.7	-388	10,357	
Malta	3,340	4,975	67	-1,635	-515	281	1.5	3,917	7,288	
Slovenia	33,873	31,170	109	2,703	3,957	558	1.3	529	555	
Croatia	13,737	23,568	58	-9,831	-532	3,976	17.0	1,304	235	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5,486	9,166	60	-3,680	-635	1,811	26.7	371	-5	
Serbia	18,362	24,320	76	-5,958	-2,236	5,305	20.0	3,830	192	
Montenegro	428	2,338	18	-1,910	-1,237	601	50.2	529	-5	
North Macedonia	5,502	7,594	72	-2,092	-424	413	5.8	274	39	
Albania	904	4,328	21	-3,424	-1,318	1,466	42.3	1,107	89	
Greece	33,015	54,177	61	-21,161	-12,699	611	1.0	3,572	703	
Cyprus	3,388	8,131	42	-4,744	-2,850	577	3.6	-3,647	-5,954	
Turkey	168,402	206,282	82	-37,879	-37,304	795	0.4	7,880	3,240	
Syria	2,260	6,640	34	-4,380	-2,606	1,053	43.0	..	..
Lebanon	2,728	9,816	28	-7,088	-8,300	6,298	78.8	3,067	28	
Jordan	7,505	15,196	49	-7,691	-3,080	3,901	37.5	726	26	
Israel	58,935	70,539	84	-11,604	20,642	6,106	5.4	24,758	5,860	
Palestine	1,765	6,375	28	-4,611	-1,557	2,650	91.9	52	61	
Egypt	25,049	54,283	46	-29,234	-14,236	29,603	73.8	5,852	327	
Libya	26,407	18,012	147	8,395	7,291	..	..	..	205
Tunisia	13,763	17,293	80	-3,530	-2,512	2,100	13.1	652	43	
Algeria	21,915	34,907	63	-12,992	-18,221	1,682	6.9	1,125	16	
Morocco	23,567	39,171	60	-15,603	-1,633	7,419	19.8	1,763	492	

Own production. Source:

UNCTAD

UNCTAD

UNCTAD^c

UNCTAD

UNCTAD

UNCTAD

UNCTAD

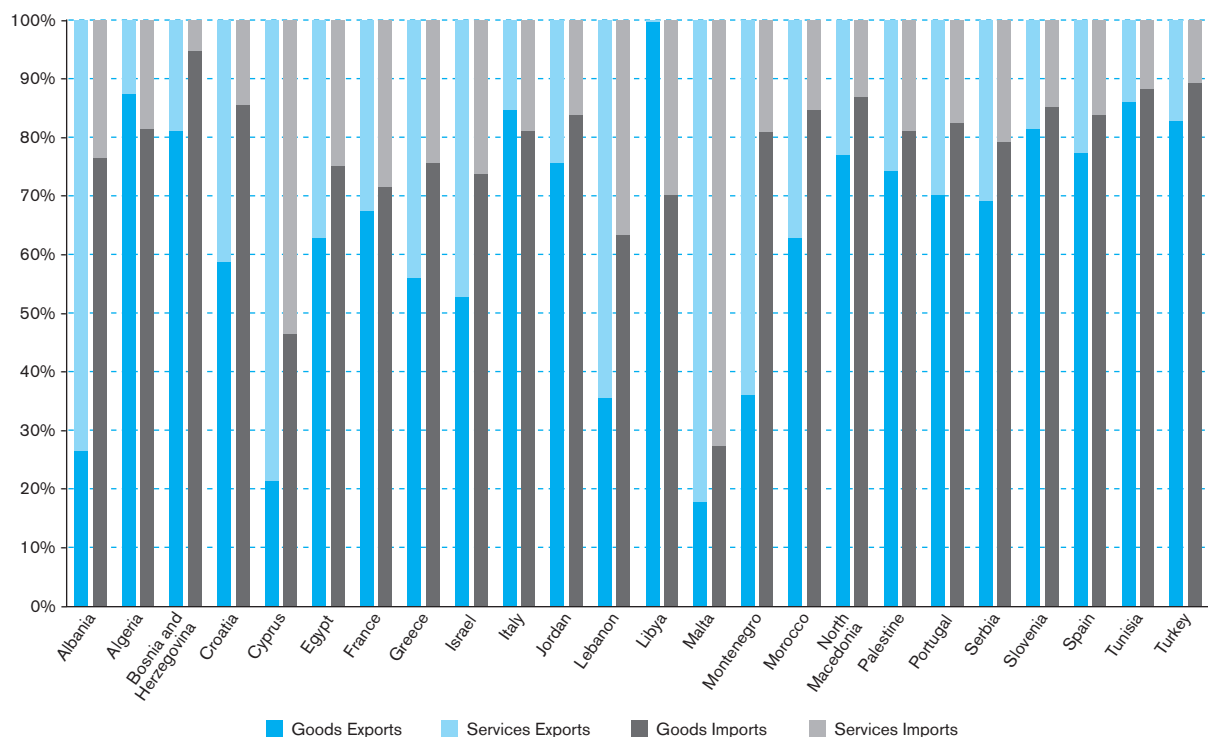
UNCTAD

UNCTAD

a. Percentage of exports and imports of goods and services. b. Personal transfers and compensation of employees. c. Own production using UNCTAD data. d. Only refers to goods. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F23

Trade of Services (2019)



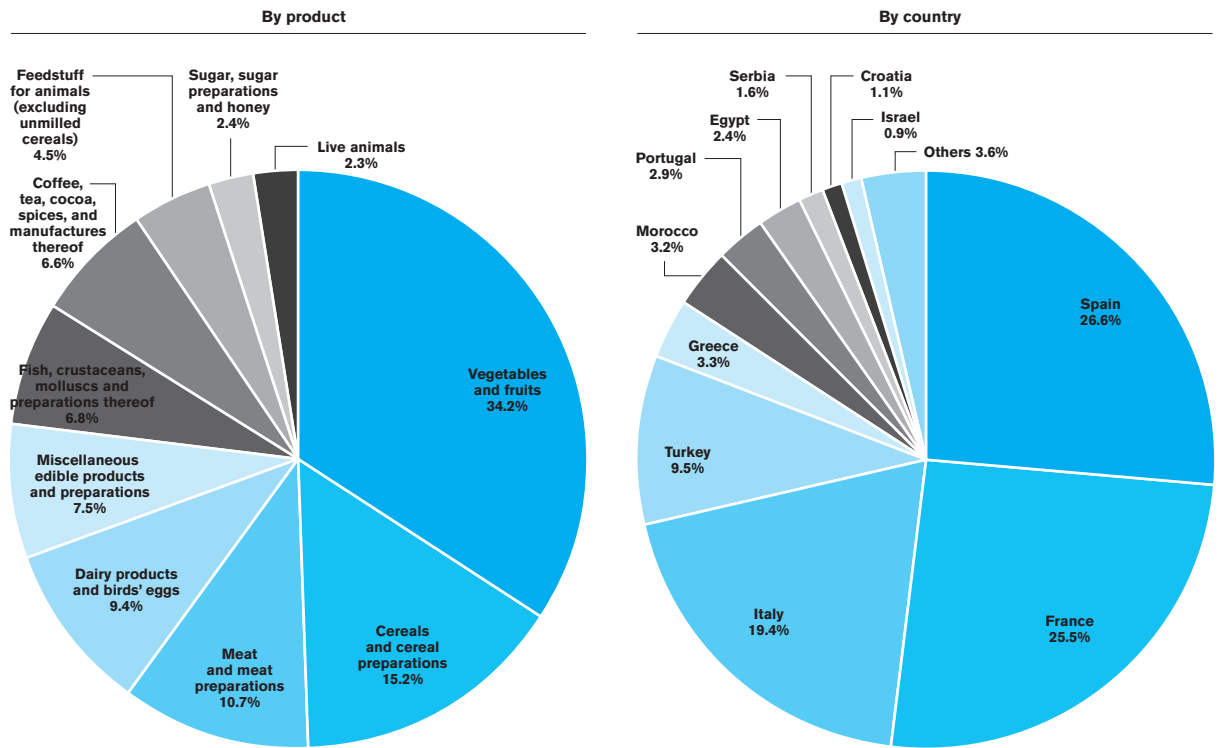
Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

TABLE F24 Exports

	Exports						Export concentration index
	All food items	Agricultural raw materials	Fuels	Manufactured goods	Minerals and metals	Others	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	
Portugal	13.5	2.2	4.6	77.0	2.5	0.1	0.072
Spain	18.9	1.0	4.0	66.3	3.6	6.3	0.099
France	13.7	1.0	1.9	76.0	2.4	5.0	0.080
Italy	10.2	0.7	2.0	80.3	4.1	2.7	0.058
Malta	7.4	0.3	26.7	63.4	1.0	1.2	0.287
Slovenia	3.9	1.2	2.6	72.7	3.1	16.5	0.205
Croatia	15.8	4.0	9.0	65.9	4.8	0.4	0.058
Bosnia and Herzegovina	7.8	4.7	5.5	75.7	5.5	0.8	0.101
Serbia	21.0	1.1	2.3	68.7	5.4	1.5	0.078
Montenegro	13.7	8.6	16.6	31.9	29.1	0.0	0.199
North Macedonia	9.1	0.4	1.4	84.2	4.5	0.4	0.223
Albania	11.4	0.6	7.1	60.9	5.8	14.1	0.210
Greece	21.7	1.8	21.9	43.2	8.8	2.7	0.188
Cyprus	17.7	0.4	14.9	60.8	2.7	3.4	0.342
Turkey	12.0	0.5	2.7	77.9	5.7	1.2	0.064
Syria	55.5	2.0	6.8	32.8	2.0	0.9	0.179
Lebanon	19.1	0.7	0.1	37.7	42.0	0.5	0.256
Jordan	14.2	0.4	1.2	72.2	11.5	0.5	0.215
Israel	3.6	0.7	0.0	81.2	12.4	2.2	0.131
Palestine	25.8	0.7	0.1	62.1	11.3	0.0	0.166
Egypt	18.1	1.5	19.5	46.3	14.2	0.5	0.138
Libya	0.6	0.2	72.1	2.9	23.5	0.8	0.618
Tunisia	13.0	0.5	4.0	80.8	1.7	0.0	0.136
Algeria	1.2	0.1	91.3	7.3	0.2	0.0	0.442
Morocco	22.2	0.8	0.4	72.0	4.7	0.0	0.183

Own production. Source: UNCTAD UNCTAD UNCTAD UNCTAD UNCTAD UNCTAD UNCTAD UNCTAD

CHART F24 Exports of Food and Live Animals from the Mediterranean Countries (2020)



Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

TABLE F25

Imports

	Imports						Import concentration index
	All food items	Agricultural raw materials	Fuels	Manufactured goods	Minerals and metals	Others	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	
Portugal	15.4	1.7	8.6	71.7	2.6	0.0	0.059
Spain	11.9	1.1	9.4	68.9	3.7	5.0	0.071
France	10.4	1.1	6.9	76.7	2.5	2.3	0.060
Italy	11.0	1.7	8.4	70.1	7.6	1.2	0.060
Malta	7.5	0.2	25.2	57.7	0.5	8.8	0.247
Slovenia	6.6	1.8	4.9	68.9	4.4	13.4	0.152
Croatia	13.6	1.1	8.6	73.5	3.2	0.0	0.050
Bosnia and Herzegovina	17.5	1.3	8.8	67.9	3.6	0.9	0.051
Serbia	8.6	1.3	7.3	65.8	4.9	11.9	0.097
Montenegro	22.3	0.7	7.9	67.1	2.0	0.0	0.062
North Macedonia	10.5	0.8	7.9	64.7	16.1	0.1	0.114
Albania	13.5	0.9	6.7	60.2	1.1	17.6	0.122
Greece	13.1	0.8	19.9	59.1	4.0	3.1	0.115
Cyprus	15.1	0.5	14.2	68.3	0.8	1.0	0.170
Turkey	6.7	2.3	5.0	58.8	18.8	8.4	0.115
Syria	23.6	2.7	8.9	61.5	3.4	0.0	0.085
Lebanon	19.3	0.9	22.3	48.0	8.8	0.7	0.188
Jordan	23.9	1.2	10.4	56.7	2.6	5.2	0.069
Israel	9.4	0.9	9.3	70.1	8.2	2.1	0.082
Palestine	33.8	0.4	18.3	45.7	1.7	0.1	0.109
Egypt	20.7	2.3	10.3	61.1	4.4	1.2	0.068
Libya	27.1	0.4	12.4	58.8	0.9	0.4	0.108
Tunisia	10.2	1.6	15.5	69.3	3.5	0.0	0.079
Algeria	20.1	1.5	2.1	75.0	1.3	0.0	0.066
Morocco	11.4	1.5	14.5	68.4	4.2	0.0	0.086

Own production. Source:

UNCTAD

UNCTAD

UNCTAD

UNCTAD

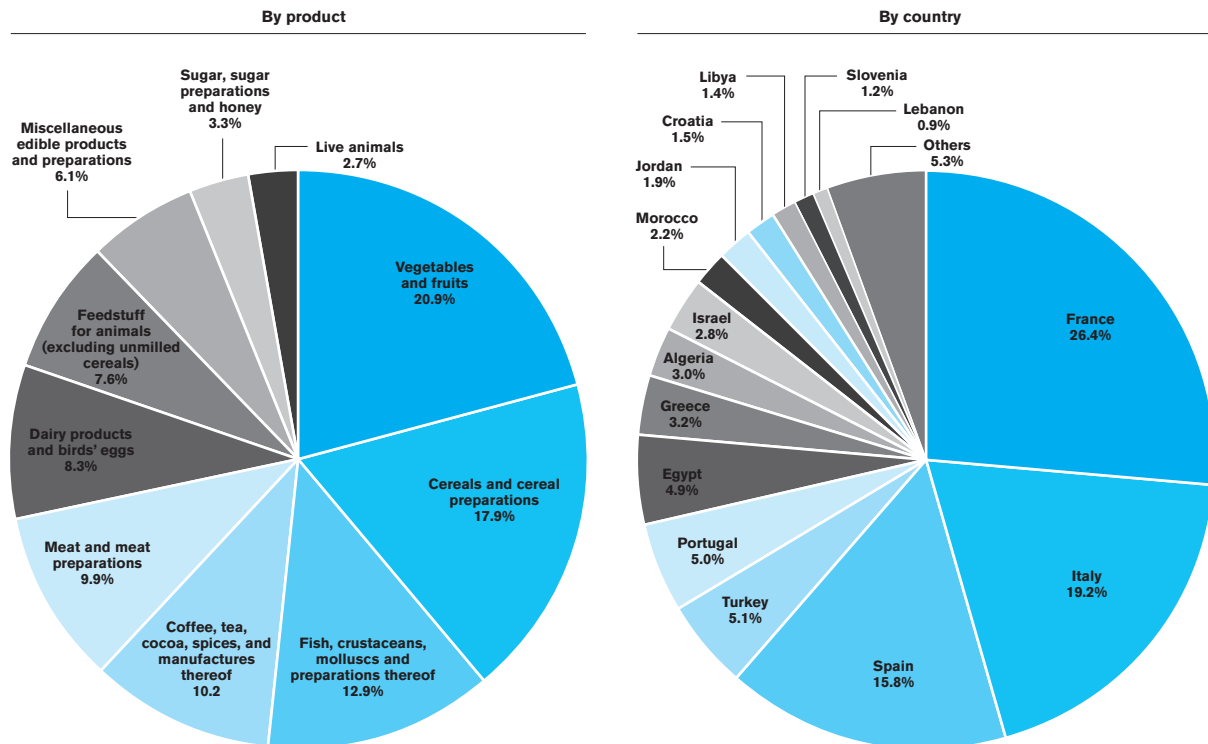
UNCTAD

UNCTAD

UNCTAD

CHART F25

Imports of Food and Live Animals to the Mediterranean Countries (2020)



Own production. Source: UNCTAD.

TABLE F26

Tourism in the Mediterranean

	Inbound tourists			Outbound tourists	International tourism receipts		Tourism expenditure in other countries	
	exchange rate	thousands	% in the Mediterranean ^a	millions	millions \$	% of exports	millions \$	% of imports
	%							
	2020/19	2020	2020	2019	2020	2020	2019	2019
Portugal	-73.7	6.5	4.8	3.1	8,800	12.1	5,700	6.6
Spain	-62.7	18.9	13.9	19.1	18,500	4.7	27,800	4.4
France	-55.6	40.0	29.3	30.4	32,600	4.9	50,500	6.5
Italy	-61.0	25.2	18.5	34.7	19,800	3.5	30,300	6.7
Malta	-76.1	0.7	0.5	0.7	400	2.1	500	2.8
Slovenia	-74.1	1.2	0.9	3.2	1,400	2.6	1,700	4.3
Croatia	-68.0	5.5	4.0	2.3	5,600	20.7	1,800	5.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-83.6	0.2	0.1	..	400	5.9	300	3.5
Serbia	-72.6	0.4	0.3	..	1,200	5.4	1,100	6.4
Montenegro	-86.0	0.4	0.3	..	200	15.1	70	2.0
North Macedonia	-84.4	0.1	0.1	..	300	3.1	100	3.1
Albania	-57.4	2.5	1.8	5.9	1,100	24.4	1,800	26.7
Greece	-76.5	7.4	5.4	7.8	4,900	10.0	3,100	5.1
Cyprus	-84.1	0.6	0.4	1.6	700	4.4	1,600	8.2
Turkey	-69.0	15.9	11.7	9.7	10,200	6.6	4,100	2.4
Syria	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Lebanon	-78.6	0.4	0.3	..	2,400	26.1	6,300	20.9
Jordan	-76.2	1.1	0.8	1.5	1,400	16.8	1,500	7.1
Israel	-81.7	0.8	0.6	9.2	2,500	2.6	8,200	9.6
Palestine	-86.5	0.1	0.1	..	..	..	800	10.0
Egypt	-71.8	3.7	2.7	..	4,400	11.7	3,500	4.7
Libya	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tunisia	-78.7	2.0	1.5	2.8	900	6.3	800	3.8
Algeria	..	..	..	5.7	60	0.2	600	1.2
Morocco	-78.5	2.8	2.1	2.0	3,800	11.0	2,200	5.7

Own production. Source:

UNWTO

UNWTO

UNWTO

UNWTO

UNWTO

UNWTO

UNWTO

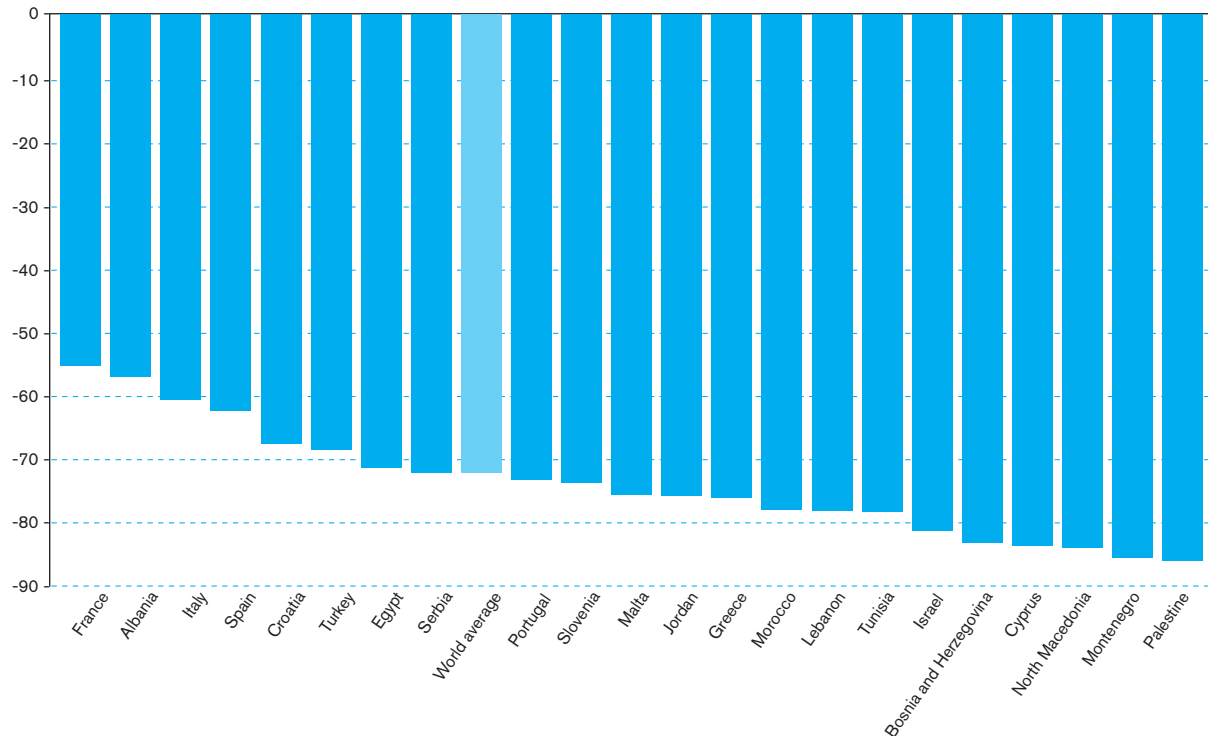
UNWTO

WB

a. Value calculated using UNWTO data. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F26

International Tourist Arrivals (Change 2019-2020, in %)



Own production. Source: UNWTO.

TABLE F27

Official Development Assistance (ODA)

	Official development assistance by donor countries			Official development assistance by recipient countries		
	millions \$	% of GNI	\$ per capita	millions \$	% of GNI	\$ per capita
	2020	2020	2020	2019	2018	2018
Portugal	421	0.19	41			
Spain	2,738	0.21	58			
France	16,013	0.60	238			
Italy	4,396	0.23	74			
Malta	53	0.40	107			
Slovenia	91	0.17	43			
Croatia	77	0.13	19			
Bosnia and Herzegovina				437	2.20	133
Serbia				480	0.94	70
Montenegro				204	4.21	328
North Macedonia				282	2.39	136
Albania				310	2.13	109
Greece	325	0.17	30			
Cyprus	15	0.06	12			
Turkey	8,124	1.14	97	538	0.08	6
Syria				10,006	..	572
Lebanon				1,418	4.37	208
Jordan				3,114	7.15	305
Israel	291	0.07	31			
Palestine				2,030	11.21	423
Egypt				1,564	0.45	15
Libya				296	1.12	43
Tunisia				975	2.55	82
Algeria				210	0.15	5
Morocco				1,828	1.65	50

Own production. Source:

OECD

OECD^aOECD^a

OECD

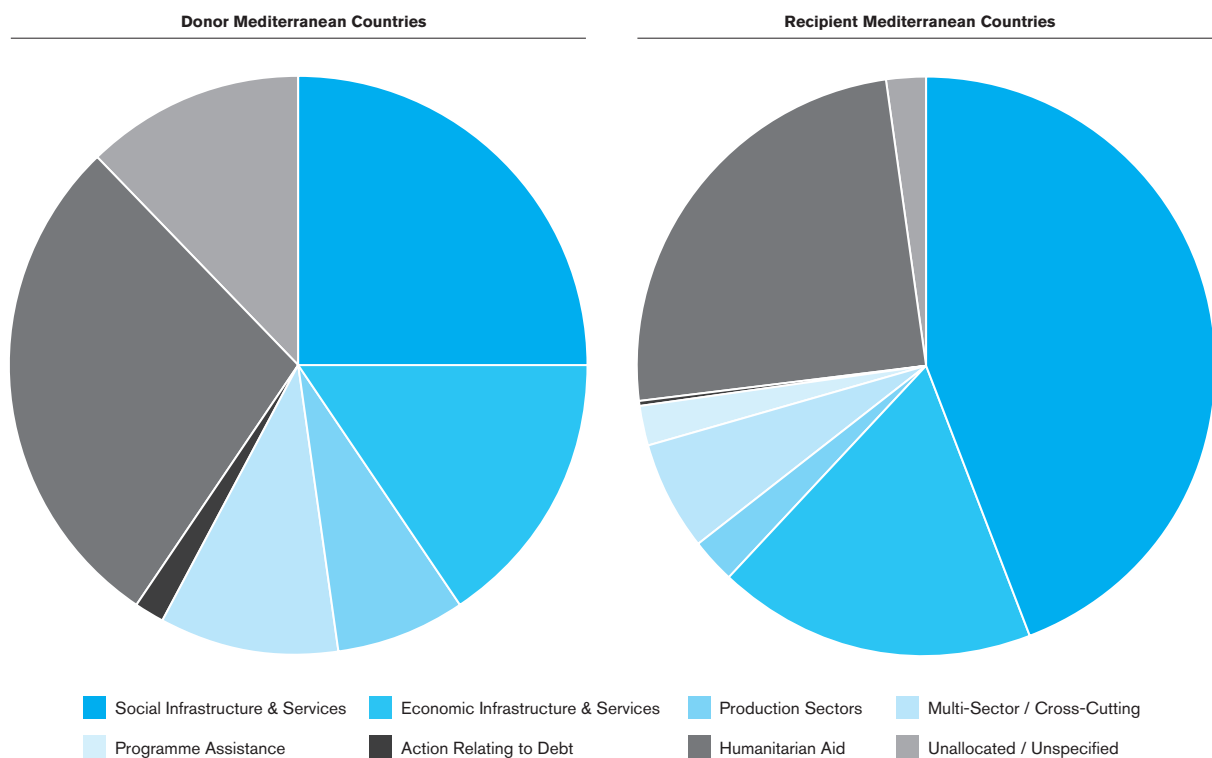
OECD

OECD

a. Value calculated using OECD data. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F27

Official Development Assistance by Sector (2020)



Own production. Source: OECD.

TABLE F28

External Debt

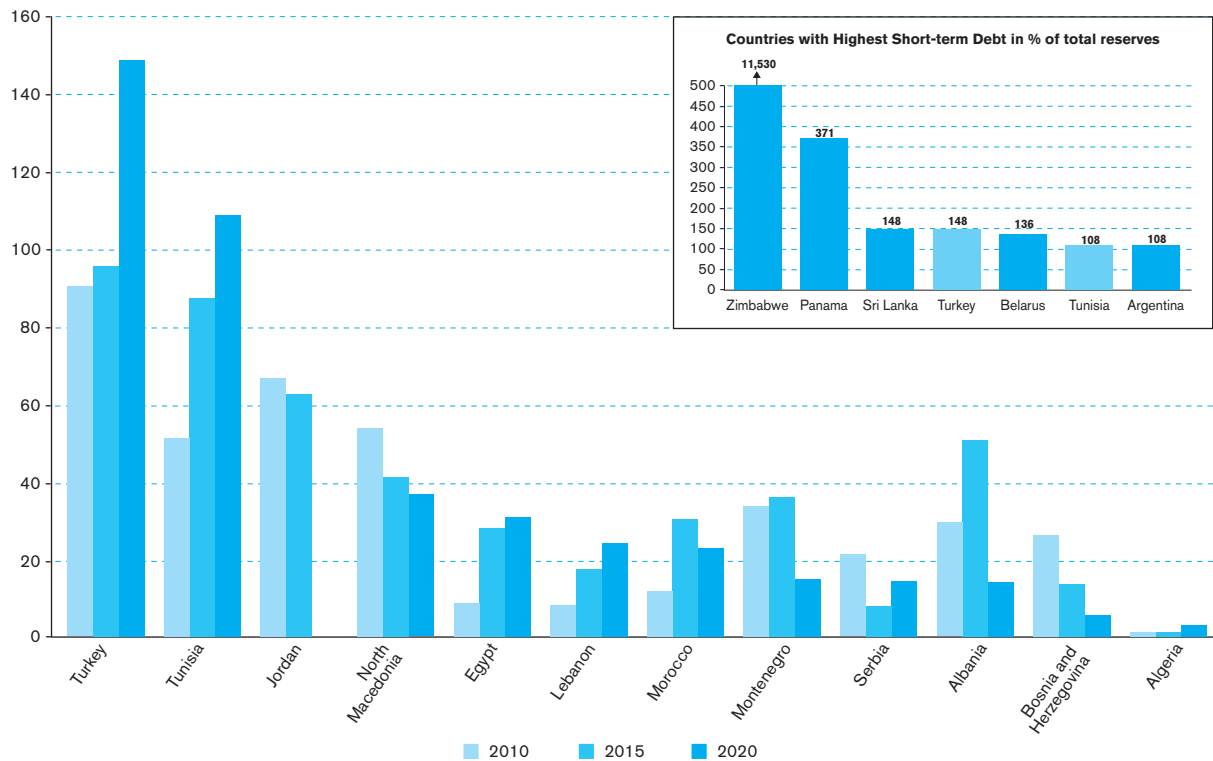
	External debt					
	millions \$	% of GNI	\$ per capita	long-term debt	short-term debt	Debt service
				millions \$	millions \$	% of exports
2020	2020	2019	2020	2020	2020	
Portugal	..	..	..	..	..	..
Spain	..	..	..	..	..	..
France	..	..	..	..	..	..
Italy	..	..	..	..	..	..
Malta	..	..	..	..	..	..
Slovenia	..	..	..	..	..	..
Croatia	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bosnia and Herzegovina	14,263	72.1	4,322	12,993	474	22.6
Serbia	38,467	74.4	5,575	35,473	2,353	19.2
Montenegro	9,723	200.6	16,205	9,282	316	102.3
North Macedonia	10,607	89.9	5,051	8,806	1,504	15.8
Albania	10,859	74.2	3,878	9,562	670	29.9
Greece	..	..	..	..	..	..
Cyprus	..	..	..	..	..	..
Turkey	435,889	61.3	5,171	295,908	138,438	41.3
Syria	4,763	20.9	272	3,751	610	..
Lebanon	68,865	222.1	10,127	58,433	10,154	127.5
Jordan	38,016	87.2	3,727	22,662	14,084	27.6
Israel	..	..	..	..	..	..
Palestine	..	..	..	..	..	..
Egypt	131,580	37.2	1,286	99,259	11,959	29.5
Libya	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tunisia	41,038	101.1	3,478	27,582	10,632	19.6
Algeria	5,178	3.6	118	1,669	1,784	0.7
Morocco	65,683	58.1	1,780	53,630	8,146	13.5

Own production. Source:

a. Value calculated using WB data. (..) Data unavailable.

CHART F28

Evolution of Short-term Debt (% of total reserves) (2010-2015-2020)



Own production. Source: WB.

Definitions

Adolescent fertility rate

Number of births per thousand women aged between 15 and 19.

Agricultural land area

Land surface area made up of arable and permanently cultivated lands and by permanent meadows and pastures.

Annual population growth rate

Exponential change in the growth of the population during the period indicated.

Aquaculture production

Includes marine, freshwater and diadromous fish, molluscs and crustaceans cultivated in marine, inland or brackish environments.

Arable lands and permanent crops

Agricultural surface area that groups the data on arable or farm land and land used for permanent crops. Arable and farm land is land given over to temporary crops (those giving two yields are only counted once) temporal meadows for cutting or grazing, land dedicated to commercial vegetable gardens or orchards and land temporarily fallow for a period of less than five years. The term does not include land that has been abandoned as a result of migratory cultivation. Land destined for permanent crops refers to land dedicated to crops that occupy the terrain during long periods and that do not need to be replanted after each harvest, such as cacao, coffee and rubber. It includes land occupied by bushes destined to flower production, fruit trees, walnut trees and vineyards, but excludes land planted with trees destined for the production of firewood or wood.

Armed forces

Strategic, land, naval, aerial, command and support forces. It also includes paramilitary forces, such as the gendarmerie, the customs services and the border guard if they are trained in military strategy.

Births attended by skilled health personnel

Percentage of births attended by health personnel (physicians, nurses and midwives) that are trained in the care, supervision and counselling of women during pregnancy, birthgiving and puerperium, and who can also deliver babies and assist them on their own.

Broadband subscriptions (fixed and mobile)

Number of active (fixed or mobile) subscriptions to high speed access to the public Internet

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions

The emissions of carbon dioxide produced in the burning of all fossil fuels used by a country.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by sector

Shows the proportion of carbon dioxide emissions produced by the burning of fossil fuels in the sectors of transport, industry and electricity production. The transport sector includes emissions produced by all forms of transport by road, rail and air, including agricultural vehicles travelling by road. International journeys by boat or aeroplane are excluded. The industrial and construction sector includes emissions produced by all types of industry and construction. The electricity sector includes emissions produced by the generation

of electricity for public use, including thermal power stations.

Cereal production

The figures for cereal production only refer to harvests of dry grain. Crops harvested for hay, unripe foodstuffs, forage and silage, or used for grazing, are therefore excluded.

Cereal production yield

The outputs per hectare have been calculated using the data on surface area and production.

Cereal trade

The figures obtained by the FAO, have been supplied by the respective governments in the questionnaires sent out by the FAO.

Children overweight

Percentage of overweight (weight-for-height above + two standard deviations of the WHO Child Growth Standards median) among children aged 0-5 years.

Children underweight

Percentage of underweight (weight-for-age less than two standard deviations of the WHO Child Growth Standards median) among children aged 0-5 years.

CO₂ emissions intensity by GDP

Average quantity of CO₂ emitted per unit of income generated by a particular economy.

Consumer price index

Reflects changes in the cost, for an average consumer, in the acquisition of a basket of goods and services that can be fixed or can change at specific

intervals; for example annually. The Laspeyres formula is normally used.

Contraceptive prevalence rate

Percentage of women who are married or in a relationship who report using at least one method of contraception.

Crude birth rate

Number of births per year per thousand inhabitants. An estimate is made in the middle of the current year.

Crude death rate

Number of deaths per year per thousand inhabitants. An estimate is made in the middle of the current year.

Current account balance

The sum of the net exports – exports minus imports – of goods and services, incomes and net transfers.

Debt service

The sum of the main payments and interest payments made for long-term debts, interest paid on short-term debts and repayments (redemption and charges) to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Desalinated water production

Amount of water produced by elimination of salt from salt water using a variety of techniques, including inverse osmosis. Most of this water is used for domestic purposes.

Duration of compulsory education

Number of years, within a determined age group, that children and young people are legally obliged to attend school.

Ecological footprint

Measurement of the use of renewable natural resources by humanity. For a given population it is defined as the total area of biologically productive land and water required to produce the resources consumed, to maintain energy consumption, to make way for infrastructures and to absorb the waste generated by the population. The unit used to measure the ecological footprint is the global hectare and is defined as a hectare of biologi-

cally productive space, equal to the world average.

Economically active population in agriculture

Part of the economically active population engaged in or seeking work in agriculture, hunting, fishing or forestry.

Electricity consumption per capita

Refers to the gross production per inhabitant and includes the consumption of auxiliary stations and the losses in the transformers considered an integral part of the central station. It also includes the total electricity produced by pumping stations, without deducting the electricity absorbed by the pumps.

Electricity production

Measured in the alternating equipment terminals of electric power stations. Also includes hydroelectric, coal, oil, gas and nuclear energy sources and generation by geothermal, solar, wind, tidal and marine energy, as well as renewable residues and fuels.

Electricity sources

Refers to the energy sources used to generate electricity: hydroelectric, coal, oil, gas and nuclear.

Employed population

Proportion of the economically active population that is employed. When adding the employed population to the unemployed the result is the whole economically active population or labour force.

Employment by sector

According to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), the Agriculture category also includes hunting, fishing and forest exploitation; the Industry category includes mining, extraction activities (including oil production), manufacturing, construction and public services (electricity, water and gas); the Services category includes the wholesale and retail trades, restaurants and hotels, transport, storage services, communications, financial services, insurance, real estate, business services, as well as community, social and personal services.

Employment rate

Percentage of population in work relative to the total population of working age.

Energy use

Energy use refers to use of primary energy before transformation to other end-use fuels, which is equal to indigenous production plus imports and stock changes, minus exports and fuels supplied to ships and aircraft engaged in international transport.

Energy production

Primary energy forms – oil, natural gas, coal and its derivatives and renewable fuels and residues – and primary electricity. The renewable fuels and residues refer to solid and liquid biomass, biogas and industrial and municipal residues.

Expected years of schooling

Number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates were to stay the same throughout the child's life

Export/Import concentration index

The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index is used, in a normalized version, to obtain values between zero and one (maximum concentration). It measures the degree of market concentration and the calculation takes into account the different product groups exported, according to the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC).

Exports

The value of all goods supplied by an economy to the rest of the world. It excludes labour and income in concept of property, as well as transfer payments.

External debt

The sum of the national debt, with public guarantee, private unsecured long-term debt, credit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and short-term debt.

Fertility rate

Number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the

end of her childbearing years and bear children in accordance with current age-specific fertility rates.

Fertilizer consumption

Amount of vegetable nutrients used per unit of cultivatable land. The fertilizers considered are nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. Consumption is calculated as production plus imports minus exports, and traditional nutrients (animal and vegetable fertilizers) are not included. The data obtained is the result of dividing the consumption of fertilizer of each country by the surface area of arable and permanently cultivated land.

Fish and seafood supply quantity

Calculated from the availability of fish and seafood for human consumption, divided by the total population within the geographical borders of any given country. Nationals living in other countries are excluded, although foreigners living in the country are included.

Fixed telephone subscriptions

Fixed telephone line connecting the subscriber's terminal equipment to the public switched network

Food supply

Amount of food, in kilocalories per day, available for each person in the population.

Foreign direct investment

Net direct investment that is made in order to achieve a lasting participation in the management of a business company operating in a country other than that of the investor. It is equal to the sum of the equity capital, the reinvestment of earnings and other long-term and short-term capital.

Forest area

Understood as all land with natural or artificial plots of trees, whether productive or not.

GDP (see *Gross Domestic Product*)

GDP per capita (see *Gross Domestic Product per capita*)

GDP growth rate

Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency.

GDP per unit of energy use

Indicator of energy efficiency. The temporary differences and entire countries partly reflect, structural economic changes, changes in the efficiency of particular sectors and differences in the use of fuels. The GDP has been converted into 2005 international dollars.

Gender Inequality Index

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) reflects women's disadvantage in three dimensions—reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market—for as many countries as data of reasonable quality allow. The index shows the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in these dimensions. It ranges from 0, which indicates that women and men fare equally, to 1, which indicates that women fare as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions.

Gini index

Measure of greater or lesser inequality in the distribution of income and consumption, considering a state of perfectly equal distribution. A value of zero represents perfect equality and a value of one hundred total inequality.

GNI (see *Gross National Income*)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The sum of the added value by all the resident producers in an economy, plus any tax on the product (without taking into account the subsidies). The added value is the net profit of an industry after adding together all the profits and subtracting the intermediate contributions.

Gross Domestic Product by sector

The contribution of the distinct economic sectors in the GDP is determined according to the added value determined by the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC).

Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDP per capita)

Using the official exchange rates to convert the figures in national currency into US dollars does not measure the relative internal acquisition powers of each currency in each country. The International Comparison Project (ICP) of the United Nations and the World Bank develop measures of the GDP on an internationally comparable scale using as conversion factors, the Purchasing Power Parities (PPP) with respect to each country.

Gross National Income (GNI)

The sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output plus net receipts of primary income (compensation of employees and property income) from abroad. The added value of the net profit of an industry after having summed up all profits and deducted international contributions.

HDI (see *Human Development Index*)

Human Development Index (HDI)

Index elaborated by the United Nations Development Project (UNPD) relating three indicators: income level (per capita GNI), health (life expectancy at birth) and level of education (mean years of education and expected years of schooling).

Immigrants

Refers to the people born outside of a given country at the mid point of the year. The data is given in absolute figures and as a percentage in respect to the population of the receiving country.

Imports

Value of all goods received by an economy from the rest of the world. It excludes labour and income in concept of property, as well as transfer payments.

Inbound tourists by destination country

Number of tourists who travel to a country other than that in which they

have their usual residence, for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose main purpose in visiting is other than an activity remunerated from within the country visited.

Infant mortality rate

Shows the number of deaths of infants under one year of age per thousand live births.

Internally displaced people

As a result of armed conflicts or human rights abuses, some 25 million people live as internally displaced population. These people were forced to flee from their homes for fear of losing their lives, but unlike refugees, they were displaced within their country's borders. Even though there are twice as many internally displaced people as there are refugees, their situation receives less international attention.

International tourism receipts

Income received in a given country from visitors, including payments made to national freight companies for international freight. It also includes the prepayment of goods and services received in the destination country. It can include the income from single day visitors. The percentage it represents with respect to exports is calculated as a ratio of the exports of goods and services.

Internet users

The estimated number of internet users out of total population. This includes those using the Internet from any device (including mobile phones) in the last 12 months.

Labour force participation rate

The labour force participation rate is defined as the ratio of the labour force to the working-age population, expressed as a percentage. The labour force is the sum of the number of persons employed and the number of persons unemployed.

Land area

Refers to the total surface area minus the surface covered by inland waters. Inland waters are defined in general as rivers and principal lakes.

Land under cereal production

The figures related to cultivated crop surface areas generally refer to the area harvested, although those corresponding to permanent crops can refer to the total planted area. The figures for the cultivated cereal area only refer to harvests of dry grain. Crops harvested for hay, unripe foodstuffs, forage and silage, or used for grazing, are therefore excluded.

Life expectancy at birth

The number of years that a new-born infant would live if prevailing patterns of mortality at the time of its birth were to stay the same throughout its life.

Literacy rate

The percentage of the population aged 15 and above who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life. Generally, "literacy" also encompasses "numeracy," the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.

Live animal stock

The data on stock covers all domestic animals regardless of age, location or final purpose. Estimates have been made for countries that have not supplied data, as well as for countries supplying partial statistics.

Live animal trade

Enormous quantities of unregistered animals cross the borders of some countries. In order to obtain more representative international trade figures of live animals, the FAO has incorporated estimates of the unregistered trade.

Long term external debt

Debt that has an original or extended maturity of more than one year. It has three components: public, publicly guaranteed and private non-guaranteed debt.

Maternal mortality ratio

Annual number of deaths of women owing to causes related to pregnancy, for every 100,000 live births.

Mean years of schooling

Average number of years of education received by people aged 25 and older

in their lifetime based on education attainment levels of the population converted into years of schooling based on theoretical durations of each level of education attended.

Medical doctors

Number of medical doctors (physicians), including generalist and specialist medical practitioners, per 10,000 members of the population

Mediterranean and Black Sea catches

Fishing catches for commerce, industry or subsistence (including recreational catches where the data is available). The data refers to the catch by the fleet of a country in the Mediterranean and/or in the Black Sea.

Military expenditure

Total expenses effected by the Ministry of Defence and other ministries on the recruitment and training of military personnel, as well as the manufacture and acquisition of military supplies and equipment. Military assistance is included in the expenses of the donor country.

Mobile cellular telephone subscriptions

Refers to the subscriptions to a public mobile telephone service and provides access to a Public Switched Telephone Network using cellular technology

Net energy import

Shows the amount of energy use by an economy and to what extent it exceeds its domestic production.

Net enrolment ratio

Number of students enrolled in a level of education who are of the official school age for that level, as a percentage of the total of the population of official school age for that level. The figures are shown for primary and secondary education.

Net migration rate

Net number of migrants divided by the average population of the receiving country within the period considered.

Net number of migrants

The entry of immigrants into a given country minus the outgoing emigrants of the same country.

Official Development Assistance (ODA)

The net payment of donations and loans granted under advantageous financial terms by official boards of partner countries of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as international organizations, with a view to promoting economic development and well-being, including co-operation and technical assistance.

Outbound tourists by country of origin

Number of trips that travellers make to a given country from their normal country of residence, for a period of less than one year, for any other reason than to undertake a paid activity in the country visited.

Permanent pasture

Refers to land used permanently (five years or more) for herbaceous fodder, whether cultivated or uncultivated (meadows or uncultivated land for grazing).

PM2.5 air pollution

Population-weighted exposure to ambient PM2.5 pollution is defined as the average level of exposure of a nation's population to concentrations of suspended particles measuring less than 2.5 microns in aerodynamic diameter, which are capable of penetrating deep into the respiratory tract and causing severe health damage. Exposure is calculated by weighting mean annual concentrations of PM2.5 by population in both urban and rural areas.

Population density

The result of dividing the average annual population of a country by its land surface area expressed in square kilometres.

Population in urban agglomerations of more than 750,000 inhabitants

Percentage of the population of a country living in metropolitan areas that, in 2005 had a population of more than 750,000 people.

Population located on the Mediterranean coastal regions

Population living in the Mediterranean coastal regions of the Mediterranean countries.

Population living with HIV/AIDS

Estimated number of people of any age infected with HIV or AIDS. Includes the whole living infected population at the end of 2003, regardless of whether or not they have developed the disease. It shows the actual figure and the percentage with respect to the population of the country.

Population using safely managed drinking-water services

The percentage of population using safely managed drinking water services, which is defined as the population using an improved drinking water source which is located on premises, and available when needed, and free of faecal and priority chemical contamination.

Population using safely managed sanitation services

Percentage of population using safely managed sanitation services. To have a safely managed sanitation service, people should use improved sanitation facilities which are not shared with other households, and the excreta produced should either be treated and disposed in situ, stored temporarily and then emptied and transported to treatment off-site, or transported through a sewer with wastewater and then treated off-site.

Population with access to electricity

Refers to the number of people with access to electricity as a percentage of the total population.

Prevalence of smoking

The percentage of men and women who smoke cigarettes. The age range varies between countries, but in general it is 15 years of age or above.

Primary pupil-teacher ratio

Number of pupils registered in primary schools divided by the number of teachers in primary schools.

Proportion of households with a computer

Number of households which declare to have access to a computer at home. A computer includes: a desktop, portable or handheld computer (e.g. a personal digital assistant). It does not include equipment with some embedded computing abilities such as mobile phones or TV sets.

Proportion of households with internet access

Number of households which declare to have access to the Internet at home. Access is not assumed to be only via a computer – it may also be by mobile phone, digital TV etc.

Protected areas

Areas of land or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biodiversity, natural and associated cultural resources and managed through legal and other instruments. According to The World Conservation Union (IUCN) it includes the total area of all natural reserves, virgin areas, national parks, natural monuments, management areas of habitats and species, as well as protected land and sea areas in each country.

Public expenditure on education

Composed of capital expenses (construction, renovation, major repairs and purchase of heavy equipment or vehicles) and running costs (goods and services consumed during the current year and that need to be renewed the following year). It covers expenses such as salaries and rendering of services, contracted or acquired services, books and didactic material, social welfare services, furniture and equipment, minor repairs, fuel, insurance, rent, telecommunications and travel.

Public health expenditure

Refers to the recurring and capital expenses in government budgets (central and local), loans and external concessions (including donations from international agencies and non-governmental organizations) and social or compulsory medical insurance funds.

R & D expenditures

The current and capital expenses of creative and systematic activities that increase the stock of knowledge. It includes basic and applied research and experimental development work that leads to new devices, products or processes.

R & D personnel

All persons employed directly in R&D, as well as those providing direct services such as managers, administrators, etc, expressed as a proportion of a population of one million.

Refugees

People who have been forced to flee their country for fear of persecution owing to reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinions or membership of determined social groups and who are unable or unwilling to return. The asylum country is the country in which the refugee has requested asylum, but has not yet received a response, or where he or she has been registered as an asylum seeker. The country of origin refers to the nationality of the seeker or to the country in which he or she is a citizen.

Rural population

The estimated population at the mid-point of the year in areas defined as rural, as a percentage of the total population of the country.

Sectorial distribution of the active population

Shown by the percentages of the workforce employed in the different economic sectors: agriculture, industry and services.

Share of income or consumption

In the questionnaires carried out in homes in diverse countries to determine the distribution of income, they make five divisions (or quintiles) from the lowest to the greatest incomes. The two lower quintiles (40%) are considered the poorest. A relation is also established between the richest 10% and the poorest 10%, in order to establish the degree of inequality in incomes.

Share of ICT goods as percentage of total trade

Share of ICT goods imports and exports as a percentage of total imports and exports for every economy for which this information is available. The list of ICT goods is defined by the OECD, and was revised in 2010. This new list consists of 95 goods defined at the six-digit level of the 2007 version of the Harmonized System.

Short-term external debt

Debt owed to non-residents having an original maturity of one year or less and interest arrears on long-term debt.

Surface area

Refers to the extension of the country in its totality, including the surface area occupied by inland waters.

Threatened species

Includes all the species classified by The World Conservation Union (IUCN), as "vulnerable, in danger, or in critical danger," but excludes all introduced species, species whose status is not sufficiently known, extinguished species and those still without an assigned status.

Total area equipped for irrigation

Area equipped to provide water (via irrigation) to crops. It includes areas equipped for full and partial control irrigation, equipped lowland areas, pastures and areas equipped for spate irrigation.

Total catches

Fishing catches for commerce, industry or subsistence (including recreational catches where the data is available). The data refers to the catch by the fleet of a country in any part of the world. Marine fishing is practiced in seas or oceans, while freshwater fishing takes place in rivers, wetlands and inland lakes.

Total health expenditure

Funds mobilized by the system. Sum of general government and private expenditure on health.

Total population

Includes all of the residents of a country or territory with the legal status of citizen, except refugees settled in a country of asylum, who are generally considered as part of the population of their country of origin. Values for 2005 and projections for 2050 are shown.

Tourism expenditure in other countries

The expenditure in other countries of travellers from a given country, including the payments to national freight companies for international freight. It can include the expenses of single-day travellers. The percentage it represents with respect to the exports is calculated as a ratio of the exports of goods and services.

Trade balance

Account that holds the imports and exports of an economy during a certain period of time with the purpose of reflecting the corresponding balance. The negative values indicate a deficit in the trade balance.

Trade in fish and derivative products

Expresses the value associated to the exports and imports of live, fresh, frozen, chilled, dried, salted, smoked and tinned fish and derivative products. Includes fresh and salt water and aquaculture fish, molluscs and crustaceans.

Under-five mortality rate

Probability of death between birth and reaching five years of age, expressed per thousand live births.

Unemployment rate

Percentage of the active population without work, but available for and seeking employment.

Urban population using at least basic sanitation services

The percentage of urban population using at least basic sanitation services, that is, improved sanitation facilities that

are not shared with other households. This indicator encompasses both people using basic sanitation services as well as those using safely managed sanitation services.

Water consumption

Total water used by humans in a year, without taking into account the losses due to evaporation in reservoirs. Includes water from non-renewable underground sources, from rivers coming from other countries and from desalination plants.

Water dependency

Percentage of water available in one country, coming from another.

Water resources

Refers to the total renewable resources, covering the watercourses of the country (rivers and underground rainwater reserves) and the watercourses originating in other countries.

Women in parliamentary seats

Refers to the percentage of seats occupied by women in a lower or single chamber, or in a higher chamber or senate, according to each case. In the case where there are two chambers, the data refers to the weighted average of the participation of women in both chambers.

Wood fuel production

Includes wood from trunks and branches, used as fuel for cooking, heating or producing energy.

Workers' remittances

According to the definition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Balance of Payments Manual, workers' remittances are goods and financial assets transferred by immigrants living and working in an economy (where they are considered residents) in favour of the residents of their former country of residence. An immigrant must live and work in the new economy for more than

one year to be considered a resident there. The transfers made to the immigrant's own accounts abroad are not considered transfers. Moreover, all those derived from the possession of a business by an immigrant are only considered to be normal transfers to the country of origin.

Year when women obtained the right to stand for election

The dates refer to the year when the universal and equal right to stand for election was recognized. In the cases when two years appear, the first refers to the first partial recognition of the right to stand for election.

Year when women obtained the right to vote

The dates refer to the year when the universal and equal right to vote was recognized. In the cases when two years appear, the first refers to the first partial recognition of the right to vote.

List of the Organisms Consulted for Drawing up Tables, Graphics and Maps

CITES, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

www.cites.org

EIB, European Investment Bank

www.eib.org

Europeaid, Development and Cooperation

ec.europa.eu/europeaid

EUROSTAT, Statistical Office of the European Commission

ec.europa.eu/eurostat

FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

www.fao.org

GFN, Global Footprint Network

www.footprintnetwork.org/

IDMC, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

www.internal-displacement.org

IEA, International Energy Agency

www.iea.org

IGME, UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, Child Mortality Estimates

www.childmortality.org

ILO, International Labour Organization

www.ilo.org

IOM, International Organization for Migration

www.iom.int

IMF, International Monetary Fund

www.imf.org

IPU, Inter-Parliamentary Union

www.ipu.org

ITU, International Telecommunication Union

www.itu.int

IUCN, World Conservation Union

www.iucn.org

OECD, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

www.oecd.org

Psephos Adam Carr's Election Archive

psephos.adam-carr.net

SIPRI, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

www.sipri.org

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

<https://sdgs.un.org/>

UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

www.unaids.org

UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

www.unctad.org

UNDP, United Nations Development Programme

www.undp.org

UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

www.unesco.org

UNHCR, United Nations Refugee Agency

www.unhcr.ch

UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund

www.unicef.org

United Nations Treaty Collection

untreaty.un.org

UNPOP, United Nations Population Division

www.unpopulation.org

UNSTAT, United Nations Statistics Division

unstats.un.org

UNWTO, World Tourism Organization

www.unwto.org

WB, World Bank

www.worldbank.org

WHO, World Health Organization

www.who.int

Country Abbreviations in Graphics and Maps

AL	Albania	LY	Libya
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	MA	Morocco
CY	Cyprus	ME	Montenegro
DZ	Algeria	MK	North Macedonia
EG	Egypt	MT	Malta
ES	Spain	PS	Palestinian Territory, Occupied
FR	France	PT	Portugal
GR	Greece	RS	Serbia
HR	Croatia	SI	Slovenia
IL	Israel	SY	Syrian Arab Republic
IQ	Iraq	TN	Tunisia
IT	Italy	TR	Turkey
JO	Jordan	UK	United Kingdom
LB	Lebanon	US	United States

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAAQ	Available, Affordable, Accessible, Quality
AANES	Autonomous Administration of Northeast and East Syria
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
All	Adriatic-Ionic Initiative
AIMF	International Association of Francophone Mayors
AKP	Justice and Development Party (TR)
ALMP	Active labour market policies
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
ARLEM	Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly
ARP	Assembly of the Representatives of the People (TN)
BMD	Bachelor's – Master's – Doctorate
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CC	Constitutional Court
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CHP	Republican People's Party (TR)
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CRM	Common Regional Market (BK)
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument (EU)
EADRCC	Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
ECHO	EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EDF	European Defence Fund
EDF	European Development Fund
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development
EFSD+	European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EMP	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

EU	European Union
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the EU
EUSAIR	European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GAP	Southeastern Anatolia Project
GCC	Cooperation Council for Arab States of the Gulf/Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GMO	Genetically Modified Organisms
GMP	Global Mediterranean Policy
GNA	Government of National Accord (LY)
GNC	General National Congress (LY)
GNS	Government of National Stability (LY)
GNU	Government of National Unity (LY)
GSM	Mediterranean and Middle East special Group
GTMO	Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean
GVC	Global Value Chain
GW	Gigawatt
HDP	Peoples' Democratic Party (TR)
HTS	Hay'a Tahrir al-Sham former Jabhat al-Nusra (SY)
HUMA	Humanitarian Aid (EU)
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICI	Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
ICP	Individual Cooperation Programmes
ICSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (EU)
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSC	Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (EU)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ISESCO	Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
ISIL/ISIS/IS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant / Daesh
ITA	International Tourists Arrivals
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (IR)
LAS	League of Arab States
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LNA	Libyan National Army
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LPDF	Libyan Political Dialogue Forum
MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan

MASEN	Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Development
MBS	Mohammed bin Salman (SA)
MC2CM	Mediterranean City-to-City Migration
MCG	Mediterranean Contact Group
MCG	Mediterranean cooperation group
MD	Mediterranean Dialogue
MENA	Middle East & North Africa
MMC	Mixed Migration Centre
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPCs	Mediterranean Partner Countries
MPs	Members of Parliament
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NDF	National Defense Forces (SY)
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NOC	National Oil Corporation (LY)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
OOP	Out-of-Pocket Payments
OPCW	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSCE PA	OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
OUP	Operation Unified Protector (LY)
P/CVE	Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism
PA	Palestinian Authority
PAM	Party for Authenticity and Modernity (MA)
PDL	Free Destourian Party (TN)
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PJD	Justice and Development Party (MA)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (TR)
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PPAs	Power Purchasing Agreements
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PV	Photovoltaic
RE	Renewable Energy
REMI	Regional Electricity Market Integration
RNI	National Rally of Independents (MA)
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEM	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean
SEMCs	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries
SEMED	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Region
SG	Secretary General
SMAC	Southern Mediterranean Arab Countries

SMEs	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SNA	Syrian National Army
SOHR	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
SPS	NATO Science for Peace and Security
SRI	Socially Responsible Investment
SROI	Social Return on Investment
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
TOC	Transnational Organized Crime
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UGTT	Tunisian General Labour Union
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
US/USA	United States of America
UTICA	Tunisian Union for Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts
UTO	United Towns Organisation
VnA	Index of Voice and Accountability
WHO	World Health Organization

Index of Tables

Table 1	Issuing Process of ERFA	72
Table 2	ERFA Issuing Process	72
Table 3	Settlement of the Transaction	72
Table 4	Resale of Impact Units	73
Table 5	Impact Unit Convertibility	73
Table 6	Convertibility of Impact Units with 5% Devaluation	73
Table 7	Calculation of Social Return on Investment	77
Table 8	Formal Contribution-Based Social Security Schemes for Selected Countries (public and private sector employees only)	128
Table 9	Share of Unemployed out of Total Unemployed, by Sex and Age	166
Table 10	Global Innovation Index 2021 Rankings	169
Table 11	2060: Population (in thousands) and Relative Share of Different Age Groups in the Total Population (%): Comparison of MENA Countries with Other Mediterranean Countries	176
Table 12	Evolution of Brain Drain Rates in North Africa	348
Table 13	Evolution of the Share of Foreign-Trained Doctors in France (2011-2019) ..	349

Appendices

Table A1	Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries Financed under the European Commission Development Aid in 2020	448
Table A2	European External Assistance in the Mediterranean Countries by Country and Instrument – Commitments	449
Table A3	European External Assistance in the Mediterranean Countries by Country and Instrument – Disbursements	449
Table A4	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) – 2021-2027	450
Table A5	European Investment Bank Loans toward Mediterranean Countries in 2021	451
Table A6	Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO)	451
Table B1	Breakdown of Net Spanish Development Assistance in the Mediterranean Region	452
Table B2	Breakdown of Spanish Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region by Sustainable Development Goal (2019)	453
Table C1	Number of Foreigners from MPCs in the European Union mid year 2020, by Nationality	454
Table C2	Number of Foreigners from Southern Mediterranean Countries in MENA Countries, mid year 2020	455

Table D1	Merchandise Trade between Mediterranean Countries - thousands US(\$) 2020	457
Table D2	Export Disaggregation (%), 2020	459
Table E1	Multilateral Treaties on Human Rights and Penal Matters	461
Table E2	Multilateral Treaties on Labour Rights (year of ratification)	461
Table E3	Multilateral Environmental Treaties	462
Table E4	Multilateral Disarmament Treaties	462
Table F1	Human Development Index (HDI)	463
Table F2	Population: Demography	464
Table F3	Population: Structure and Distribution	465
Table F4	Education and Training of Human Capital	466
Table F5	Health and Survival	467
Table F6	Nutrition and Food Security	468
Table F7	Access to Health Resources	469
Table F8	Gender: Social Development	470
Table F9	Technology and Communications	471
Table F10	Security and Military Expenditure	472
Table F11	Economic Structure and Production	473
Table F12	Agriculture	474
Table F13	Livestock	475
Table F14	Fisheries	476
Table F15	Employment and Unemployment	477
Table F16	Income Distribution	478
Table F17	Gender: Economic Activity	479
Table F18	Production and Energy Consumption	480
Table F19	Production, Consumption and Access to Electricity	481
Table F20	CO ₂ Emissions	482
Table F21	Water	483
Table F22	Environment	484
Table F23	International Trade	485
Table F24	Exports	486
Table F25	Imports	487
Table F26	Tourism in the Mediterranean	488
Table F27	Official Development Assistance (ODA)	489
Table F28	External Debt	490

Index of Charts

Chart 1	Descriptive Diagram of the Funding Scheme.....	71
Chart 2	ERFAs and the Economy	74
Chart 3	ERFAs and the Ecosystem.....	75
Chart 4	Poverty Headcount Ratio at \$1.90 a Day (% of population) 2000-2017	125
Chart 5	Inequality (various years 2011-2014).....	125
Chart 6	Sub-Regional Unemployment Averages Compared with Global Average (%) 2010-2020.....	126
Chart 7	Social Spending as a % of GDP – All Regions.....	126
Chart 8	Total Public Expenditure on Social Protection, Excluding Health, as a Percentage of GDP in Arab Countries Compared to Other World Regions.....	127
Chart 9	Health Systems and Covid Fault Lines in MENA.....	135
Chart 10	Ratio of Youth-to-Adult Unemployment Rates, SMAC, 2021	165
Chart 11	Ratio of Female-to-Male Unemployment Rates, SMAC, 2021	165
Chart 12	Ratio of Female/Male Unemployed Youth.....	167
Chart 13	The Relationship between Economic Growth and Voice and Accountability	168
Chart 14	Comparative Population Trends for North Africa and the Middle East, 1950-2020 (total population, both sexes combined, as of 1 July, in thousands).....	173
Chart 15	Population of Different Age Groups (0-29, 30-69, 70+). Comparison of MENA Countries with Other Mediterranean Countries, 1950-2020 (in thousands)	174
Chart 16	Relative Share of Different Age Groups in the Total Population. Comparison of MENA Countries with Other Mediterranean Countries (in %).	175
Chart 17	International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) in Mediterranean Countries (1995-2019) ..	302
Chart 18	Carbon Footprint of Global Tourism	302
Chart 19	International Tourism Arrivals (ITA) in European Mediterranean Countries (2019-2020).....	304
Chart 20	Informal Employment as Share of Total Employment by Sector, for selected countries.....	312
Chart 21	Youth Unemployment as Share of the Labour Force, 2020	312
Chart 22	Coverage of Social Protection and Labour in Total Population (%) in the MENA Region	313
Chart 23	Projected Warming in the Mediterranean Basin	316
Chart 24	Environmental Change: Risks and Impacts on the Mediterranean Basin	317
Chart 25	Macro-level Constellation of Drivers.....	332

Appendices

Chart A1	Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries Financed under the European Commission Development Aid in 2020	448
Chart B1	Breakdown of Spanish Gross Development Aid in the Maghreb and the Middle East by Sector (2019)	452
Chart B2	Breakdown of Spanish Gross Development Aid in the Balkans and Turkey, by Sector (2019)	453
Chart C1	Arrivals to Europe (Sea and Land Mediterranean Border), 2019-2020-2021	455
Chart C2	Dead and Missing Migrants in the Mediterranean, 2017-2021	456
Chart C3	Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival, 2021	456
Chart D1	Import Ratio from EU and from the Mediterranean, 2019.	457
Chart D2	Export Ratio from EU and from the Mediterranean, 2019.	458
Chart D3	Trade Openness (Trade as a % of GDP), 2020	459
Chart D4	Percentage of Services in Total Exports and Total Imports, 2020	459
Chart D5	Herfindahl Hirschmann Index (HHI) of Geographical Concentration in the Mediterranean, 2019	459
Chart D6	Intra-regional Trade Shares (ITRS), 2006-2020	460
Chart D7	Intra-Mediterranean Total Trade and Intra-regional Trade Intensity Index (IRTII), 2006-2020	460
Chart F1	Human Development Index, Male and Female, 2019	463
Chart F2	Population Growth and Fertility (2019-2020)	464
Chart F3	Youth Aged 15-29 years in Mediterranean Countries, 1950-2020 (thousands)	465
Chart F4	Gross Enrolment Ratio for Tertiary Education by Sex (2018-2022)	466
Chart F5	Percentage of Deaths by Age (2019)	467
Chart F6	Food Imports in Total Merchandise Exports (percent) (3-year average) (2017-2019)	468
Chart F7	Evolution of Current Health Expenditure per Capita in PPP int\$.	469
Chart F8	Gross Graduation Ratio from First Degree Programmes (ISCED 6 and 7) in Tertiary Education, in % (2016-2020).	470
Chart F9	Evolution of Boardband Subscriptions in Mediterranean Countries (2000-2020)	471
Chart F10	Main Conventional Arms Transfers in Mediterranean Countries. Imports (millions SIPRI TIV) and Main Supplier	472
Chart F11	General Government Total Expenditure, Percentage of GDP (2015-2021)..	473
Chart F12	Cereal Production (2019).	474
Chart F13	Livestock Trade (2020).	475
Chart F14	Fish Processed Products Production (2019).	476
Chart F15	Working Hours Lost Due to the Covid-19 Crisis (%)	477
Chart F16	Poverty	478
Chart F17	Proportion of women in managerial positions (%)	479
Chart F18	Evolution of Share of Modern Renewables in Total Final Energy Consumption (%)	480
Chart F19	Electricity Production in Mediterranean Countries (2019) in GWh.	481
Chart F20	CO ₂ Emissions by Road Transport	482
Chart F21	Water Use Efficiency (2018)	483

Chart F22	Share in Forest Land (2019)	484
Chart F23	Trade of Services (2019)	485
Chart F24	Exports of Food and Live Animals from the Mediterranean Countries (2020).....	486
Chart F25	Imports of Food and Live Animals to the Mediterranean Countries (2020) ..	487
Chart F26	International Tourist Arrivals (Change 2019-2020, in %)	488
Chart F27	Official Development Assistance by Sector (2020)	489
Chart F28	Evolution of Short-term Debt (% of total reserves) (2010-2015-2020)	490

Index of Maps

Map 1	Water Resources	139
-------	-----------------------	-----

Appendices

Map A.1	2022 Lebanese General Election (15 May 2022)	359
Map A.2	Population. Age Structure and Projections	360
Map A.3	Youth (15-24) and Employment, 2020	361
Map A.4a	Health. SDGs: Goal 3. Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages. (3.3.1/3.4.1/3.8.1/3.c.1)	362
Map A.4b	Health. SDGs: Goal 3. Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages. (3.4.2/3.6.1/3.a.1)	363
Map A.5	US Trade with Mediterranean Countries	364
Map A.6	Personal Remittances. Receipts and Payments	365
Map A.7	Wheat Production and Trade in Mediterranean Countries	366
Map A.8	Whole Fresh Milk Production and Trade in Mediterranean Countries	367
Map A.9a	International Tertiary Student Mobility (Inbound)	368
Map A.9b	International Tertiary Student Mobility (Outbound)	369
Map A.10a	CO ₂ Emissions in Mediterranean Countries	370
Map A.10b	CO ₂ Emissions by Sector and Use of Renewables	371
Map A.11a	Bilateral Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries	372
Map A.11b	Bilateral Official Aid to Mediterranean Countries	373
Map A.12	Container Port Throughput	374
Map D1	Intra-regional Trade Intensity Index (IRTII, 2020) and Intra-regional Trade Shares (IRTS, 2020)	460

Authors

Inès Abdel Razek

Advocacy Director
Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy
Policy member
Al-Shabaka, the Palestinian Policy Network

Samir Aita

President
Cercle des Economistes Arabes

Dr. Amer Al Sabaileh

Non-Resident Fellow for Middle East and North Africa
Stimson Center

Randa Alami

Economics Department
School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)
University of London

Roger Albinyana

Managing Director
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona

Patricia Augier

Institut de Recherche pour le Développement
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Aix-Marseille University
and Aix-Marseille School of Economics

Moustapha Chérif Bassiouni

Research Associate
Aix Marseille University, CNRS, IREMAM, Aix-en-Provence

Pierre Blanc

Professor of Geopolitics
Bordeaux Sciences Agro and Sciences Po Bordeaux

Raffaele Bertini

Data and Statistics Officer, ad-interim Coordinator of the Regional Data Hub
Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa,
International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Sven Biscop

Lecturer, Ghent University
Director of the Europe in the World programme
Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations, Brussels

Isabelle Blöss-Widmer

Senior Lecturer in Demography
Aix Marseille University
CNRS, Sciences Po Aix, MESOPOLHIS, DemoMed, Aix-en-Provence

Alfonso Casani Herranz

Department of Political Science and
Public Administration
University Complutense of Madrid

Dr Yorgos Christidis

Associate Professor
Department of Balkan, Slavonic and Oriental Studies
University of Macedonia

Ahmed Aziz Dabboussi

Information Management Officer
Mixed Migration Centre, Danish Refugee Council

Jean-François Daguzan

Vice-President
Institut Choiseul
Research Fellow
Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS)

Jorge Dezcallar

Ambassador of Spain

Angeliki Dimitriadi

Research Fellow
Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), Berlin

Flannery Dyon

4mi Project Manager – North Africa
Mixed Migration Centre, Danish Refugee Council

Atta H. El-Battahani

University of Khartoum

Tin Hinane El-Kadi

Co-founder
Institute for Social Science Research on Algeria (ISSRA)

Mireia Faro Sarrats

Communications Officer
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona

Louis Fishman

Associate Professor
Brooklyn College,
City University of New York

Mary Fitzgerald

Non-resident scholar,
Middle East Institute, Washington DC

Senén Florensa

President of the Executive Committee,
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona

Jérémie Fosse

Co-founder and President
eco-union, Barcelona

Francisco Freire

Faculty of Social and Human Sciences
Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Blanca Garcés

Senior Research Fellow
CIDOB (Barcelona)

Pilar Garrido

Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies
University of Murcia

Moisés Garduño García

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Carmen Geha, PhD

Maria Zambrano Fellow and Senior Researcher
Inter-disciplinary Research Group on Migration (GRITIM)
Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona

Liz Griesmer

Displacement Tracking Matrix Associate
International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Joël Guiot

Aix-Marseille Université
CNRS, IRD, INRAE, CEREGE, Aix-en-Provence

Hafsa Halawa

Non-Resident Scholar
Middle East Institute (MEI), Washington DC

Natasha Hall

Senior Fellow
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, DC

Moustapha Taleb Heidi

Independent researcher, Nouakchott

Mark A. Heller

Principal Research Associate
Institute for National Security Studies,
Tel Aviv University

Matías Ibáñez

Programme and Research Officer
Department of Sustainable Development and Regional Integration
European Institute of the Mediterranean (Barcelona)

Rana Jawad

Reader in Social Policy
Convener of the MENA Social Policy Network www.menasp.com
University of Bath

Marc Owen Jones

Assistant Professor of Middle East Studies,
Hamad bin Khalifa University

Joris Jourdain

Data and Research Officer (Labour Migration and Human Development)
International Organization for Migration (IOM) Libya

Michael Karner

Project Manager, Plan Bleu

Salam Kawakibi

Political Scientist. Director
Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies of Paris

Soeren Keil

Academic Head
International Research and Consultancy Centre
Institute of Federalism, University of Fribourg

Bichara Khader

Professor Emeritus
Université catholique de Louvain

Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi

City Diplomacy Lab, Paris

Thomas Lagoarde-Segot

KEDGE Business School and Sustainable Development Solutions Network France

Erwan Lannon

Professor
Ghent University

Bernabé López

Honorary Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies
Autonomous University of Madrid

Dr. Katarzyna Marini

Lead Science Officer, Plan Bleu/MedECC
Plan Bleu/ Regional Activity Centre (UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan), Marseilles

Luis Martinez

Research Director
Sciences Po, Paris

Roberta Metsola

President
European Parliament

Blanca Moreno-Dodson

Director
Center for Mediterranean Integration, Marseille

Mohamed Saib Musette

Research Director
Centre de Recherche en Économie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD), Algiers

Ferenc Németh

Research Fellow
Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest

Silvia Pariente-David

Senior Advisor on energy
The Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), Marseille

Mariona Rico Santacreu

CONNEKT Project Manager
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona

Samuel Ripoll

Doctor of Political Science
Institut d'études politiques de Lyon
Laboratoire Triangle

Edward Rodger Martinez

Research Fellow
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona

Carmen Rodríguez López

Professor of Contemporary Turkish Studies
Autonomous University of Madrid

Pedro Rojo

Arabist
President
Al Fanar Foundation for Arab Knowledge

Jean-Loup Samaan

Senior Research Fellow
Middle East Institute of the National University of Singapore

Hamza Saoudi

Economist
Policy Center for the New South

Bassem Snaije

Research Associate – Board member
Institut de Recherche et d'Études Méditerranée Moyen Orient (IREMMO)

Dorothee Schmid

Researcher, Head of the Contemporary Turkey and Middle East Programme
French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), Paris

Lise Storm

Associate Professor of Party Politics,
Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies
University of Exeter (UK)

Simone Tagliapietra

Senior fellow, Bruegel
Adjunct professor, Catholic University of Milan

Habib Tiliouine,

Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Oran

Lina Tode

Deputy Director, Plan Bleu

Constantin Tsakas

Senior Programme Officer
Center for Mediterranean Integration, Marseille

Zafiris Tzannatos

Lebanese Center for Policy Studies

Lurdes Vidal Bertran

CONNEKT Scientific Coordinator
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona

Isabelle Werenfels

Senior Fellow
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin

IEMed.
MEDITERRANEAN
YEARBOOK
2022



www.iemed.org

Inès Abdel Razek: Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy - **Samir Aita:** Cercle des Economistes Arabes - **Amer Al Sabaileh:** Stimson Center - **Randa Alami:** School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London - **Roger Albinyana:** European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona - **Patricia Augier:** Aix-Marseille University - **Moustapha Chérif Bassiouni:** Aix Marseille University - **Pierre Blanc:** Sciences Po Bordeaux - **Raffaele Bertini:** International Organization for Migration (IOM) - **Sven Biscop:** Ghent University - **Isabelle Blöss-Widmer:** Aix Marseille University - **Alfonso Casani Herranz:** University Complutense of Madrid - **Yorgos Christidis:** University of Macedonia - **Ahmed Aziz Dabboussi:** Mixed Migration Centre, Danish Refugee Council - **Jean-François Daguzan:** Institut Choiseul - **Jorge Dezcallar:** Ambassador of Spain - **Angeliki Dimitriadi:** Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), Berlin - **Flannery Dyon:** Mixed Migration Centre, Danish Refugee Council - **Atta H. El-Battahani:** University of Khartoum - **Tin Hinane El-Kadi:** Institute for Social Science Research on Algeria (ISSRA) - **Mireia Faro Sarrats:** European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona - **Louis Fishman:** City University of New York - **Mary Fitzgerald:** Middle East Institute, Washington DC - **Senén Florensa:** European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona - **Jérémie Fosse:** eco-union, Barcelona - **Francisco Freire:** Universidade Nova de Lisboa - **Blanca Garcés:** CIDOB (Barcelona) - **Pilar Garrido:** University of Murcia - **Moisés Garduño García:** Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México - **Carmen Geha:** Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona - **Liz Griesmer:** International Organization for Migration (IOM) - **Joël Guiot:** Aix-Marseille Université - **Hafsa Halawa:** Middle East Institute (MEI), Washington DC - **Natasha Hall:** Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, DC - **Moustapha Taleb Heidi:** Independent researcher, Nouakchott - **Mark A. Heller:** Tel Aviv University - **Matías Ibáñez Sales:** European Institute of the Mediterranean (Barcelona) - **Rana Jawad:** University of Bath - **Marc Owen Jones:** Hamad bin Khalifa University - **Joris Jourdain:** International Organization for Migration (IOM) Libya - **Michael Karner:** Plan Bleu - **Salam Kawakibi:** Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies of Paris - **Soeren Keil:** Institute of Federalism, University of Fribourg - **Bichara Khader:** Université catholique de Louvain - **Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi:** City Diplomacy Lab, Paris - **Thomas Lagoarde-Segot:** KEDGE Business School - **Erwan Lannon:** Ghent University - **Bernabé López:** Autonomous University of Madrid - **Katarzyna Marini:** Plan Bleu/MedECC, Marseille - **Luis Martinez:** Sciences Po, Paris - **Roberta Metsola:** President, European Parliament - **Blanca Moreno-Dodson:** Center for Mediterranean Integration, Marseille - **Mohamed Saib Musette:** Centre de Recherche en Économie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD), Algiers - **Ferenc Németh:** Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest - **Silvia Pariente-David:** Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), Marseille - **Mariona Rico Santacreu:** European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona - **Samuel Ripoll:** Institut d'études politiques de Lyon - **Edward Rodger Martinez:** European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona - **Carmen Rodríguez López:** Autonomous University of Madrid - **Pedro Rojo:** Al Fanar Foundation for Arab Knowledge - **Jean-Loup Samaan:** Middle East Institute of the National University of Singapore - **Hamza Saoudi:** Policy Center for the New South - **Bassem Snaije:** Institut de Recherche et d'Études Méditerranée Moyen Orient (IREMMO) - **Dorothee Schmid:** French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), Paris - **Lise Storm:** Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter - **Simone Tagliapietra:** Bruegel, Brussels - **Habib Tiliouine:** University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed - **Lina Tode :** Deputy Director, Plan Bleu - **Constantin Tsakas:** Center for Mediterranean Integration, Marseille - **Zafiris Tzannatos:** Lebanese Center for Policy Studies - **Lurdes Vidal Bertran:** CONNEKT Scientific Coordinator, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Barcelona - **Isabelle Werenfels:** Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin.