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Youth and the Mediterranean: Exploring New Approaches to Dialogue and Cooperation

by Andrea Dessì



ABSTRACT

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) organized a one-day conference at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on 19 January 2017 with the participation of eight outstanding young scholars from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Selected through a rigorous peer-reviewed application process, the speakers were drawn from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia and were paired with a selected number of expert discussants to present their views and research on a number of salient issues impacting Euro-Mediterranean relations. Organized in the framework of the New-Med Research Network, the event benefitted from the inputs and support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and the Compagnia di San Paolo of Turin. Held at the MAECI in Rome, the international conference was hosted under the auspices of the Italian Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group, a role Italy will hold throughout 2017 and will subsequently lead to Italy's Chairmanship of the OSCE, slated to begin in January 2018.

*Mediterranean | Youth | Women | Environment | Climate change |
Domestic policy | Islamist groups | Terrorism | Migration | Refugees*



Youth and the Mediterranean: Exploring New Approaches to Dialogue and Cooperation

by Andrea Dessì*

Introduction

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) organized a New-Med Research Network conference on youth and the Mediterranean in Rome on 19 January 2017. The event was hosted at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) and coincided with Italy's assumption of the Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group on 1 January 2017. Conceived as an opportunity to address a number of strategic and thematic issues from the standpoint of MENA youth, the event saw the participation of eight outstanding young scholars and activists from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. Each scholar was tasked with presenting his/her innovative research in the form of a policy paper addressing one out of four pre-selected analytical frames, all connected to strategic challenges that Mediterranean countries are currently facing. Themes ranged from climate change and environmental degradation, to state-society relations, youth activism and gender equality, radicalisation and the migrant and refugee crisis.

Invited speakers were selected through a rigorous peer-reviewed application process on the basis of their innovative research proposal and academic or professional experience. Selected candidates were tasked with writing a 5,000-word paper containing policy recommendations directed at relevant actors and institutional stakeholders in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Upon completing a second draft, selected participants were invited to present their work at the Italian

* Andrea Dessì is a Researcher within the Mediterranean and Middle East programme at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and PhD candidate in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The views and opinions expressed in this report are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any agency or individual. Any errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of the author.

· Report of the international conference "Youth and the Mediterranean: Exploring New Approaches to Dialogue and Cooperation" held in Rome on 19 January 2017 and jointly organised by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Compagnia di San Paolo of Turin within the framework of the New-Med Research Network.

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Foreign Ministry in the context of the present New-Med conference.¹

Entitled “Youth and the Mediterranean: Exploring New Approaches to Dialogue and Cooperation,” the conference was organized in the framework of the ongoing New-Med Research Network, a project run by IAI in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and the Compagnia di San Paolo of Turin.² Launched in June 2014, New-Med is a network of Mediterranean experts and policy analysts aimed at fostering scholarly reflection on changing developments in and around the Mediterranean, providing key inputs to the political debates taking place in policy fora, including in the context of the OSCE Mediterranean partnership. Since its inception, the New-Med Research Network has organized fifteen international conferences and published 31 policy papers, reports and edited volumes on various themes tied to Euro-Mediterranean relations.³ Most recently, New-Med organized an international conference at the offices of the Representation of the European Commission in Athens, Greece, on 16 December 2016 to examine various dimensions of the ongoing migrant and refugee crisis in the Mediterranean.⁴



Conference speakers and New-Med team

Structured around four panel sessions and a number welcoming remarks delivered by the institutional representatives of the Network, the conference saw the participation of a number of speakers from academia, civil society, research centres, youth movements and representatives from the Italian and European policymaking community, the private sector and the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna. Attendance and participation was open to all, providing opportunities for a fruitful debate with journalists, researchers, policymakers and concerned citizens

¹ The New-Med call for papers (deadline 15 September 2016) can be accessed at the following link: http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/new-med_youth.pdf. Speakers' bios are available at the following link: http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/newmed_170119_bio.pdf.

² For more information on the New-Med Research Network, please visit the IAI website: <http://www.iai.it/en/node/2004>. See also the OSCE website: <http://www.osce.org/networks/newmedtrackII>.

³ A complete list of New-Med publications, including conference reports, policy papers, edited volumes and the agendas of past international conferences can be accessed from IAI's website: <http://www.iai.it/en/node/2004>.

⁴ Entitled “Which Crisis? Understanding and Addressing Migration,” the New-Med conference in Athens saw the participation of European and MENA experts, academics, activists and policymakers to discuss various dimensions of the so-called “migrant and refugee crisis.” For a full report of the conference, see: Andrea Dessi, “Which Crisis? Understanding and Addressing Migration”, in *Documenti IAI*, No. 17|02 (January 2017), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/7229>.

from different backgrounds and professional affiliations.

Opening remarks were delivered by **Armando Barucco**, Head of the Policy Planning Unit at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who welcomed participants and introduced the general focus of the conference. In highlighting how the Mediterranean remains a priority area for Italian foreign policy, the Italian diplomat thanked the New-Med organizers for what he described as an extremely timely event, not least in light of Italy's recent assumption of the Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group. In noting how the topics addressed in the various sessions of the conference generally overlap with the focus areas of the Italian Policy Planning Unit, Barucco emphasized the importance of supporting initiatives and networks such as New-Med in order to broaden research agendas and policy debates on Euro-Mediterranean relations.



Nicolò Russo Perez (left), Alessandro Azzoni (right)

Alessandro Azzoni, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE, joined his colleague in delivering opening remarks, welcoming participants and extending his appreciation to the eight visiting speakers from the MENA region.⁵ In thanking IAI and the other institutional members supporting New-Med, Italy's OSCE Ambassador echoed the previous speaker in praising the track II dimension of the Network and its efforts to foster debate and produce innovative research on the Mediterranean. In emphasizing that the New-Med conference marked the first event to be organized under the auspices of the Italian Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group, the Ambassador highlighted a number of themes and issues that will form the core of Italy's agenda for the OSCE. As rotating Chair of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group – an institutional role that coordinates relations with the OSCE's six Mediterranean Partners: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia – Italy will play a lead role in advancing a number of proposals and focus issues to be addressed in the context of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership.

Italy assumed the Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group on 1 January 2017, taking over the role from Austria, which now holds the rotating Chairmanship of the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna.⁶ Italy's Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group will last for the whole of 2017, paving the way for Italy's subsequent Chairmanship of the OSCE slated to begin in January 2018.

⁵ The draft text of Ambassador Alessandro Azzoni's remarks are available from the IAI website: <http://www.iai.it/en/node/7215>.

⁶ OSCE, *Italy to Chair the OSCE in 2018*, 29 July 2016, <http://www.osce.org/cio/257036>.

Against this backdrop, the Italian ambassador outlined a number of priority issues that will figure on Italy's agenda for the following years. These include efforts aimed at safeguarding the Mediterranean's common cultural and archaeological heritage by fighting and dismantling criminal networks involved in the trade and smuggling of such artefacts. Other dimensions include efforts to strengthen women participation in the public sphere and in the decision-making processes as a catalyst for development and security, the migrant and refugee crisis, energy security and cooperation in cyber security and cybercrime. These and other themes will dominate Italy's agenda at the OSCE in 2017, emerging as important focus areas not only for the 57 Member States of the OSCE, but also for the organization's six partners in the Mediterranean region.

In concluding his remarks, Ambassador Azzoni stressed that the Mediterranean should not be considered solely as a source of crisis and threats. Italy will work to develop a positive agenda for the region, moving away from the top-down policies of the past to engage more directly with local actors and governments to discuss common and shared approaches to these issues. The human element will be key, noted the Ambassador, who stressed that youth in the Mediterranean remain at the forefront of many of the most pressing challenges in the region. It is also in this context that the present New-Med initiative is so important. The human element must be placed at the centre of international politics as it is through the personal experiences and viewpoints of individuals that societies and politics can overcome negative stereotypes and/or narratives. In speaking directly to the eight selected scholars from the MENA region, Ambassador Azzoni emphasized that their participation in the conference was not only the result of the schools they attended or the experiences they attained, but rather reflected the courageous visions for the future each of them have developed and proposed. The role of the OSCE, and of Italy within it, is not to predicate or patronize. Rather it is to seek common approaches to common challenges, working to transform crises and threats into opportunities for both sides of the Mediterranean. Youth, in the MENA and in Europe, should figure prominently in these efforts, and the present New-Med conference is but one initial example of efforts aimed at empowering young voices and scholars to drive the debate and present new ideas on how to build bridges as opposed to walls between the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Taking the floor after Italy's Ambassador to OSCE, IAI's Director **Ettore Greco** outlined how the Institute's work in coordinating New-Med relates to IAI's broader research and outreach activities. As the leading policy-oriented research centre in Italy, IAI has a long history of experience in conducting research on various themes tied to Euro-Mediterranean relations, including though the coordination of large multi-year research projects funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme. The most significant added value of New-Med relates to its flexible structure and ability to adapt and respond to changing developments and research agendas. Since its inception in 2014, the Network has examined a variety of salient themes tied to social, economic, security and political developments in the Mediterranean. The Network has addressed these themes from an academic as well as policy-oriented standpoint, providing a valuable mixture of research

outputs that can help inform debates on the Mediterranean as well as the development of actionable policy recommendations directed at governmental and inter-governmental actors in the region.

Against this backdrop, IAI's Director emphasized that New-Med will actively support Italy's Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group and subsequent Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2018, helping to develop the Mediterranean agenda

of the OSCE through targeted research and the organisation of workshops and conferences on a number of themes covered by Italy's agenda at the OSCE.



From left to right: Alessandro Azzoni, Ettore Greco, Armando Barucco

Final introductory remarks were delivered by **Nicolò Russo Perez**, Coordinator of the International Affairs Programme of the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation in Turin.⁷ A key-partner of the New-Med Research Network, whose activities are supported by the Foundation, Perez emphasized the many successes of the Network in the years since its official launch in 2014. In thanking the other partners of the Network, Perez described New-Med as an important example of a successful public-private partnership, emphasising how San Paolo's support for the Network, like other similar initiatives, matches the Foundation's own history and mission.

Established in 1564, the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation currently supports a number of programmes and initiatives in Europe and further afield.⁸ Its original functions can be described – using contemporary terminology – as helping to foster resilience and socio-economic development through grant making and micro-credit activities. These were traditionally targeted for the young, especially young women, and internal migrants moving from rural regions to the cities to improve their livelihood and sustenance. The Foundation's support for the New-Med Network and through it the present conference on youth and the Mediterranean therefore represents a continuation of the Foundation's mission and focus. As one of the largest private foundations in Europe and one of the few Italian foundations to have a significant international projection, the Compagnia di San Paolo has supported a number of different initiatives and projects aimed at youth empowerment. Among these is the European Fund for the Balkans, which runs a number of training courses and opportunities for young and emerging

⁷ For more information on the International Affairs Programme of the Compagnia di San Paolo, please see the Compagnia di San Paolo webpage: *International Affairs*, <http://www.compagniadisanpaolo.it/eng/Programmes/International-Affairs>.

⁸ More information about the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation, its activities and supported initiatives are available on Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation's website: <http://www.compagniadisanpaolo.it/eng/The-Foundation>.

scholars and politicians from the Balkan region.⁹ In concluding his remarks, Perez emphasized the Foundation's continued support for New-Med and in particular its focus on developing new ideas and approaches to Euro-Mediterranean relations based on inclusivity, dialogue and shared approaches to the many social, economic, political and security challenges facing the Mediterranean region as a whole.

Session I: Environmental challenges and climate change

The first session addressed the medium-to-long term threats of climate change and environmental degradation in the Mediterranean region, with two invited speakers from Jordan and Lebanon addressing the topics of water scarcity and food security in the region. The panel was chaired and moderated by **Nathalie Hilmi** from the Centre Scientifique de Monaco, who welcomed the two speakers and briefly introduced the topic of their research papers and policy recommendations.

Sibelle El Labban, a nutritionist expert and Associated Researcher at the Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences of the American University of Beirut (AUB), opened the session, presenting the results of her research on sustainable food security in the Mediterranean. Entitled *Sustainable Food Consumption for Food and Nutrition Security in the MENA Region*, El Labban's presentation focussed on a number of policies and initiatives aimed at developing a more sustainable and nutritious diet that is better tailored to limited resources of the area but stays true to the strong culinary traditions of the Mediterranean. In this respect, El Labban introduced her argument by emphasising that the MENA region remains one of the most food insecure regions in the world, where most countries are ranked as "alarming" or "serious" in international reports on food security and where a majority of countries, especially in the Gulf, are heavily reliant on food imports. Food security in the MENA is therefore particularly exposed to external shocks and fluctuations, such as the food price volatility of 2008-2010, in itself a contributing factor to the outbreak of mass protests in many Arab states in 2010-2012.

Citing a study by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), El Labban stressed that the world needs to close a 70 percent "food gap" between crop calories available in 2006 and the projected consumption needs of 2050.¹⁰ This entails increasing production and diminishing or improving consumption trends and demand. While much research and governmental effort has been directed at securing sufficient and reliable quantities of food resources, the speaker focussed her presentation

⁹ The European Fund for the Balkans was launched in 2007 with the support of the Compagnia di San Paolo, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the King Baudouin Foundation and the Erste Foundation. For more information on the Fund, including its present activities, see the European Fund for the Balkans' website: <http://balkanfund.org>.

¹⁰ See, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), *How to Feed the World in 2050*, Background document presented at the High-Level Expert Forum on "How to Feed the World in 2050", Rome, 12-13 October 2009, <http://www.fao.org/wsfs/forum2050/wsfs-background-documents/hlef-issues-briefs/en>.

the consumer-side of the issue. Arguing that a more sustainable and efficient means to tackle the challenge of food insecurity is through education and training, the speaker called for the promotion of a “Mediterranean Diet” that is both sustainable and nutritious and rests on the rich culinary traditions of the region. More sustainable forms of food consumption are vital to help bring down the cost of importing



Nathalie Hilmi (left), Sibelle El Labban (right)

foodstuffs and the environmental damage caused by mass agriculture and grazing. In this respect, training programs and consumer education can help to highlight the benefits of a more sustainable diet as well as the costs incurred by the national economy, the environment and an individuals’ own health through less nutritious food intakes that are heavily reliant on imports, red meats, fast-food or industry intensive products. The Mediterranean Diet is rich in vegetables and plant-based nutrients, is environmentally friendly and extremely nutritious. As such, the Mediterranean Diet was also inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010 and is recognized by the wider academic community as one of the most nutritious and sustainable diets in the world.¹¹

The promotion of a Mediterranean Diet, which takes many forms and variations depending on the local context but maintains a certain degree of commonality throughout the Mediterranean, will also help to tackle environmental issues tied to land and energy usage. Citing the “double pyramid”¹² diagram developed by the Barilla Centre for Food and Nutrition that shows the close correlation between nutritious and sustainable plant-based products and low levels of environmental impact, El Labban noted how meat consumption in the MENA region is well above recommended guidelines. Promoting the Mediterranean Diet therefore goes hand in hand with reducing meat, particularly beef, consumption in the region, a goal that would in turn help to save vital water resources in the region. Other important means to favour a more nutritious and sustainable diet in the Mediterranean include targeted awareness campaigns, training courses and education, particularly among the youth and women. Community based interventions promoting the consumption of healthy and sustainable foods can occur through public-private partnerships involving both government entities and private institutions as well as by targeting NGOs and promoting awareness campaigns in schools. Market

¹¹ See, UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, *Decision 8.COM 8.10* (ITH/13/8.COM/Decisions), Baku, 7 December 2013, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/decisions/8.COM/8.10>.

¹² Barilla Centre for Food and Nutrition, *Double Pyramid: Healthy Food for People, Sustainable Food for the Planet*, June 2010, <https://www.barillacfn.com/en/publications/double-pyramid-healthy-food-for-people-sustainable-food-for-the-planet>.

incentives, in the form of subsidies targeting healthy foods or increased VAT taxes on high-sugar products and soda drinks should also be encouraged, as similar initiatives have had positive results in a number of other contexts.

As a final recommendation, El Labban emphasized the benefits of creating a “food sustainability index” for the Mediterranean where individual researchers, international organizations, national health ministries and governmental stakeholders can easily access information and exchange insight on the best means to support sustainable food production and consumption in the Mediterranean. Citing two examples of food sustainability indexes – one developed by the Barilla Foundation¹³ and the second by the Texas A&M University, which created the WEF Nexus Tool 2.0¹⁴ that helps to identify sustainable resource management strategies along the water-energy-food nexus – El Labban noted an unfortunate lack of academic and policy-oriented research on environmental sustainability in the MENA region.¹⁵ While somewhat understandable, given the number of overlapping socio-economic, political and security crises impacting the MENA, El Labban reminded the audience that food security and nutritious diets are integral components not only of an individual’s health but also that of society as a whole, including its political, security and economic dimensions. Healthy diets and sustainable food production will be integral to the promotion of more stable and prosperous Mediterranean, noted the speaker, who stressed that population growth, rapid urbanization and environmental change are dynamics that will further increase the urgency of developing sustainable dietary guidelines for many states in the region and beyond.

The second speaker, **Hussam Hussein**, an Associated Researcher at the School of International Development and a member of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom (UK), presented his study of water scarcity in Jordan. Examining the roots of the problem and proposing a number of policy recommendations tailored to the different local and international stakeholders involved in the sector, the speaker emphasized that water scarcity is a challenge confronting all states in the region. Most of the water resources in the MENA are of a transboundary nature, originating from outside of the region and/or a given state. Water management is therefore not only a technical problem, but a political one, emphasized the speaker, who noted that water issues need to be contextualized into the broader geopolitical context of the region, having important effects on national security, inter-sectorial interests and the broader international relations of the MENA region. Transboundary water resources account for over two-thirds of the MENA’s available water resources

¹³ See the official website of the Food Sustainability Index: <http://foodsustainability.eiu.com>.

¹⁴ See the official website of the Nexus Research Group: *WEF Nexus Analytics Platform*, <http://wefnexus.tamu.edu/?p=369>.

¹⁵ On this point the speaker noted how the Arab Spatial website (<http://www.arabspatial.org>) provides important information, maps and data on food security and sustainability indexes in the MENA region.

emphasized Hussein, who went on to focus his presentation on the case study of Jordan, a country that is among the five most water scarce countries in the world.



Hussam Hussein

In outlining his presentation, the speaker gave an introductory overview of the main water resources in the country, its sectorial usages and the primary causes and potential solutions to the issue of water scarcity in Jordan. Noting how the agricultural sector (including livestock) accounts for 58 percent of water usage in Jordan, followed by municipal sector at 37 percent, Hussein emphasized how Jordanian authorities have traditionally pursued economic policies that favoured the agricultural sector as a means to limit urbanization and cultivate support among farmer communities. These policies, which include targeted subsidies that support industry-intensive agricultural produce, have placed much strain on Jordan's limited water reserves. Moreover, the agricultural sector in Jordan only accounts for 3 percent of GDP and 3 percent of the labour force, making these expenditures of water resources particularly unsustainable in the long run, not least due to the fact that this produce is ultimately exported and does not contribute to food security in the country.

The total safe yield of Jordan's groundwater basins is estimated to be around 300 million cubic metre (MCM) per year, while surface water resources reach 563 MCM per year. Surface water resources are however shared with other neighbouring countries – Israel, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territories – and while international treaties or agreements are in place to regulate equitable shares of these resources, the effective quantities of surface water that are available to the Jordanian authorities are well below the established mark. This has meant that Jordan – similarly to other states in the region – has for many years overexploited its groundwater reserves, using as much as 500 MCM per year, out of the recommended 300 MCM, with significant environmental consequences for the country. While most stakeholders in the country recognize that this situation is unsustainable, working to change the status quo in the realm of water management is no easy task, given the complex patronage systems and politico-security dimensions of the issue.

Basing his analysis on the extensive field research and interviews he conducted in the course of his PhD, Hussein emphasized that the viewpoints and policy solutions proposed by different groups and stakeholders tend to reflect the sectorial interests of these individuals. Potential solutions to improve the management of water resources in Jordan, as well as an assessment of the major causes for water scarcity, will therefore change on the basis of which stakeholder is interviewed and whose interests are impacted first. In this respect, government ministries and

policymakers will tend to point to exogenous drivers as the primary causes for water scarcity in the country. Thus, government ministries will emphasize aspects such as population growth and immigration, climate change, low precipitation and the unfair sharing of water resources with neighbouring countries, drives that would seem to protect the current status quo and largely exonerate policymakers from responsibility. Meanwhile, major local and international donors and NGOs working on issues of water scarcity will emphasize planning errors and the unsustainability of Jordan's current agricultural policy, illegal wells and the loss of important supply via leakages and ailing infrastructure. While all of these aspects are undoubtedly important when considering the causes of water scarcity in Jordan, the speaker emphasized the need to embrace a mixture of both viewpoints when seeking to provide proposals on how best to improve water management in the country. In this respect, Hussein, moved to outline a number of policy recommendations centred on both the supply and demand sides of the issue.

On the supply side, Hussein, pointed to new advances in desalination technologies as a potential source of new resources for the country, while however also acknowledging the high-costs and environmental footprint left by such tools. In this respect, the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal, a project that is slated to transport water resources from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea and also includes a number of desalination plants was highlighted. The project, for which Jordanian authorities are currently accepting bids from international consortiums, entails building a canal to bring as much as 300 MCM per year north to the Dead Sea and is estimated to cost around 900 million dollars in its initial phase.¹⁶ Other supply side solutions include improving Jordan's wastewater treatment resources, building dams and improving harvesting technologies or renegotiating international agreements with neighbouring countries – particularly Syria – which has repeatedly contravened its responsibilities in terms of water shares. A final recommendation focused on the Disi Water Conveyance Project and the building of a pipeline to pump around 100 MCM of water per year from the southern Disi aquifer to the northern regions of the country.¹⁷ While marred in some controversy due the environmental and health costs of the project, Jordanian authorities have maintained that the water is safe and other similar projects could be explored by the government in cooperation with international donors and consortiums.

Moving to focus on the demand-side, Hussein emphasized that policy recommendations impacting the distribution of water resources to various sectors of the economy, including through potential changes to the subsidy system, are highly disruptive. These will impact the delicate social, political and economic status quo in the country and therefore be harder to implement. Citing

¹⁶ See for instance, AFP, "17 bids for Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal project: Jordan", in *I24News*, 21 June 2016, <http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/117490-160621-17-bids-for-red-sea-dead-sea-canal-project-jordan>.

¹⁷ See for instance, Hana Namrouqa, "Construction of Water Pipeline from Disi to North Begins in Mid-2015", in *The Jordan Times*, 17 July 2014, <https://shar.es/1950ub>.

recommendations that are generally advanced by international donors and NGOs, Hussein mentioned such efforts as increasing the privatization of water utility companies in the country to add competition and thereby drive down costs while helping to renew infrastructure and improve services. Major efforts should also be directed at improving the current irrigation system, as a means to limit water losses and leakages, close illegal wells and better regulate the type of agricultural produce cultivated in the country. Finally, emphasized Hussein, a review of Jordan's agricultural policy, including its subsidy and export-oriented focus, should be undertaken by national authorities in order to drive down domestic demand for water and help to better distribute this vital resource to other, more sustainable and economically viable sectors of the economy.

Session II: Citizenship and the weakening of the state system

Invited speakers for the second session included a Palestinian medical doctor and Board Member of the Horizons International - Youth for Justice¹⁸ group based in the Netherlands and a young Egyptian scholar from Cairo University. The speakers examined different dimensions of state-society relations in the southern Mediterranean, with a particular focus on youth and gender policies in the region. The session was chaired and moderated by **Jean Joseph Lévy**, a former French diplomat and GMF Marshall Memorial Fellow. In opening the proceedings, Lévy noted how youth in the Mediterranean share many similar challenges, from unemployment to socio-economic insecurity. Citing the results of a yearly survey *Inside the Hearts and Minds of Arab Youth*, the speaker noted how a majority of youth in the MENA reject radical ideology of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), believe religion plays too big a role in the Middle East, are concerned with human rights and, in particular, with women rights in the region. These and other results should serve as a reminder of the many commonalities that unite youth in the Mediterranean and, in turn, help to dispel erroneous stereotypes about different cultures and religions.¹⁹

Abdelrahman Aldaqqah, a youth activist and doctor at the Palestinian Ministry of Health, took the floor to present his research on youth in the MENA region. As the main agents for change in society, the speaker emphasized that there is an urgent need to close a big and increasing gap between the national youth strategies of governments and the actual needs and aspirations of youth in the region. There are currently over 111 million youth aged between 15 and 29 in the region, noted Aldaqqah, roughly equivalent to 27 percent of the population in the MENA. As the biggest single group, youth are at the forefront of many of the most pressing structural, security and socio-economic challenges in the region. Unemployment

¹⁸ For more information, see the official website of Horizons International: <http://www.horizons-international.org>.

¹⁹ Asda'a Burson-Marsteller, *Arab Youth Survey 2016. Inside the Heats and Minds of Arab Youth*, April 2016, <http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com>.

rates among youth are the highest of the world, with a MENA average that reaches 29.4 percent compared to 14 percent at the global level. Other worrying indicators include the low levels of women participation in the work force, with data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) showing an average score of 32 percent for women participation in in the MENA compared to a 56.6 percent rate at the world level.²⁰ Lack of essential training, education and the opportunity to improve an individual's skills through volunteer work and other programmes are also adversely affecting youth empowerment in the region. Corruption, another endemic problem of the MENA, also limits the youth's potential to assume increased responsibilities in society, perfect their leadership skills and emerge as the leaders of the future. Citing the 2016 report by Transparency International, Aldaqqah noted how Libya, Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Sudan are all found in the last eleven countries ranked on the Corruption Perception Index.²¹



From left to right: Abdelrahman Aldaqqah, Jean Joseph Lévy, Marwa Wasfy

Looking at this data it is clear that government policies in the MENA have thus far failed to provide adequate opportunities for younger citizens. Indeed, the greatest area of government activity has been the security sector, where billions are spent annually on the security services, army and other technologies. Notwithstanding these efforts, such expenditures have not contributed to increased security, as many countries in the region are still suffering from severe security challenges, both internal and external. Citing official data compiled by the US State Department, the speaker emphasized how incidents of terrorism have increased by 6,500 percent since the 2001 launching of the US "war on terror," again highlighting the failure of a security-first approach to these issues.²² Against this backdrop, Aldaqqah wished to focus his presentation on the need to divert government funding from the security sector and army to the civilian sectors of the economy and in particular to fund civil society, education and vocational training opportunities, with a special focus on youth and gender. Investing in youth and their future, argued Aldaqqah,

²⁰ International Labour Office, *Women at Work. Trends 2016*, Geneva, ILO, March 2016, http://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/Publications/WCMS_457317.

²¹ Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2016*, 25 January 2017, http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016.

²² See, Paul Gottinger, "Despite 14 Years of the US War on Terror, Terror Attacks Have Skyrocketed Since 9/11", in *Reader Supported News*, 11 September 2015, <http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/32339>. See also Liam S. Whittaker, "The US War on Terror has Cost \$5 Trillion and Increased Terrorism by 6,500%", in *CSGlobe*, 19 September 2016, <http://csglobe.com/?p=25979>; Neta C. Crawford, "US Budgetary Costs of Wars through 2016: \$4.79 Trillion and Counting", in *Costs of War Papers*, September 2016, <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2016/us-budgetary-costs-wars-through-2016-479-trillion-and-counting>.

represents the best investment for stability. While development and security go hand in hand, the speaker argued that far too much focus has been placed on the security dimension while development has lagged behind. It is no coincidence, noted the speaker that the Arab world scores particularly low rankings in the Global Innovation Index (GII).²³ Depression rates across the MENA are another indicator of the lack of opportunities and the endemic challenges confronting both youth and general citizens in the region, with many MENA countries showing the highest depression rates in the world.²⁴



Abdelrahman Aldaqqah

In this respect, Aldaqqah introduced the results of an online survey he conducted with 673 youth from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Morocco as a means to present fresh data pertaining to the hopes, challenges and expectations facing youth in the region. 72 percent of respondents surveyed lamented that they were not given opportunities to present themselves as leaders or politicians in their country and felt excluded from the decision making process. A striking 93 percent had never participated in an international event or in a volunteering programme in their own country, while 91 percent were never offered an opportunity to participate in a youth empowerment programme. A majority, 67 percent, agreed with the statement that "change starts from youth," and 63 percent noted that they had a business idea in the last two years but were lacking the capabilities or opportunity to put this into practice.

The above data suggests that youth in the MENA long for increased government attention and investment. Targeting the younger generations can be described as a type of prevention, which, as noted by many physicians and doctors, is always less costly than curing disease once it has manifested. Investment in education and training, youth programmes and volunteering is essential in order to broaden the horizons of the younger generations and prepare them for the job market. Citing yet another striking figure, Aldaqqah emphasized that the average Arab child reads only six minutes a year, compared to an average of 12,000 minutes by

²³ Soumitra Dutta, Bruno Lanvin and Sacha Wunsch-Vincent (eds.), *The Global Innovation Index 2016. Winning with Global Innovation*, Ithaca, Fontainebleau and Geneva, Cornell University, INSEAD and the World Intellectual Property Organization, 2016, <https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/gii-2016-report>.

²⁴ Caitlin Dewey, "A Stunning Map of Depression Rates around the World", in *The Washington Post*, 7 November 2013, <https://wpo.st/rqsa2>.

their western counterparts.²⁵ Targeted government interventions and funding for youth programmes can have a real impact, noted the speaker. An example is given by the MENA Youth Empowerment Strategy (YES) programme run by the Global Communities organization, where 60 percent of youth who participated in the programme were later able to find employment.²⁶

To foster stability and prosperity it is not enough to choose between security and development or human rights, concluded Aldaqqah. What is needed is a multidimensional approach to empower youth and remodel state-society relations on the basis of a more inclusive model of governance and development. Large international organizations and NGOs can help states better direct their resources to address issues of youth exclusion. Moving away from the security dimension of the challenges confronting youth, governments and the international community should work to include youth in decision making at the local and national level, fund training programmes and encourage volunteer work among younger generations. Youth will be the future leaders and reformers in these communities, emphasized the speaker, there is an urgent need to invest in them now in order to foster a better future for tomorrow.

The second speaker, **Marwa Wasfy**, from Cairo University focussed her presentation on the issue of women rights and empowerment in Egypt and the relationship between women and the public space in the country. Centred on the experiences of Egyptian women who participated in the 2011 Egyptian revolution, Wasfy's research was based on her participation in the first eighteen days of protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square, a time when women and men from different ages and social groups joined forces to demand political reform and representation. The protests also represented an attempt by citizens to occupy the public sphere in Egypt, a space that has traditionally been considered the domain of the state and where citizen rights are constantly restricted by the authorities. In examining how women participation in the 2011 Egyptian revolution represented an important challenge to the traditional societal norms in the country, the speaker emphasized that notwithstanding women's active participation in the protests, the individual and communal rights of women did not change significantly after the toppling of Hosni Mubarak. Indeed, Wasfy noted how the traditional division of societal roles and responsibilities between men and women in Egypt were actually reproduced in the context of the Tahrir protests. Women were generally called upon to perform first aid and cooking duties while the men assumed security-related roles, including that of "protecting" and/or "shielding" women from excessive visibility on the square vis-à-vis the security services and other male protesters.

²⁵ Ikram Al-Yacoub, "Sum of All Fears: Arabs Read an Average of 6 Minutes a Year, Study Reveals", in *Al Arabiya*, 14 July 2012, <https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/07/14/226290.html>.

²⁶ For more on the MENA-YES programme see, Global Communities, *Adapting and Sustaining Demand-Driven Training Programs. A Case Study from the Middle East*, September 2016, <http://www.globalcommunities.org/mena-yes>.

Entitled *The Crisis of Citizenship in post-Revolutionary Egypt. Case study of the Square's Spatiality and Women Access to the Public Space*, Wasfy began her presentation by emphasising that "what happened on 25 January did not only challenge the meaning of the urban public space as consolidated over the past 10 years in Cairo. Women participation also partially challenged the gender relation to the public space and the social construction of power based on gender aspects in Egypt. Yet, despite the critical roles played by women during the 18 days of Tahrir and afterwards, women continue to be excluded from the structure of power in Egypt." In emphasising the many commonalities between the status of women in Egypt and other countries in the MENA region, Wasfy noted that discrimination against women in Egypt begins in the household and family sphere, where boys and males are generally preferred over women, but also extends to the public sphere and society more generally. In the context of the Tahrir protests, certain aspects of these gender relations changed, as women emerged from the private to the public sphere to take an active role in the protests. While some women sought to demand a focus on gender rights, the general tendency was that of sidestepping questions pertaining to women rights in order to give precedence to the demands for political change and reform. This overshadowing of women issues was further enhanced once the participation of more religiously inspired groups increased on Tahrir square. More religiously inclined groups of protesters called for distinct segregation zones for men and women on the square, a means, they maintain, to protect women's rights and dignity in the midst of protests.



Marwa Wasfy

While women did play a leading role in the protests, this tendency to not insist for gender demands limited the visibility of women protesters, eventually reproducing the traditional norms of women exclusion. This meant that the traditional rules and regulations applied to women's participation in the public life became superimposed on the protest movement. "There was a hidden condition for women visibility in the square," noted Wasfy, "that was to abide by the major goals and slogans of the revolution and thus avoid any gender demands." As a result, gender issues were hidden from sight, diminishing their potential impact on the state and society as a whole. While there is little doubt that the revolution has affected how gender roles are perceived in society, even giving rise to some bottom-up movements and initiatives aimed at providing security and rights to women in the public sphere – movements like "I Saw Harassment" which traces the incidents of sexual harassment and assault on women in Egypt²⁷ – the patriarchal society and

²⁷ See for instance, Ahmed Fouad, "Egyptian Students Launch Anti-Harassment Campaigns", in

masculine based rules and regulations survived the protest movement.

"The square was not that utopian" emphasized Wasfy, "women visibility and the space they occupied was conditional on them not promoting gender demands and respecting the rules set by men." In concluding her argument, Wasfy called on the international community to pressure Egyptian authorities to enact a comprehensive national strategy to fight violence against women. Moreover, the EU should ensure the implementation of the Egyptian Action Plan, argued Wasfy, which includes a number of provisions for women rights in the country.²⁸ Further recommendations included amending the penal code in Egypt to increase sentences and criminalize violence against women in both the public and private sphere and to re-organize and re-institutionalize the network of women rights organizations existent in Egypt but whose reputation have been tainted due to their close association with the Mubarak regime, including his wife Suzanne Mubarak.²⁹

Session III: Radicalization and the terrorist threat

Chaired and moderated by **Djallil Lounnas** from the Al-Akhawayn University in Morocco, the third session of the conference saw the participation of two scholars from Jordan and Morocco who presented their research on radical ideologies and the threat of salafi-jihadist terrorism in the MENA. Speakers examined the ideological roots of the phenomenon, with a particular focus on the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), its relations with other extremist groups and sources of economic sustenance. They advanced a number of policy recommendation aimed at improving the de-radicalization and anti-terrorism strategies of local and international actors, with both scholars emphasising that more needs to be done to address the structural and socio-economic causes of terrorism rather than focussing solely on military solutions.

Khader Abualhayjaa, a Jordanian citizen and graduate from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, delivered a presentation on the ISIS threat and group's ability to attract increasing numbers of youth into its ranks. In examining the ISIS phenomenon, and tracing its main roots back to the devastation of post-Saddam Iraq, the speaker focussed on the relationship between the radical group and Sunni clan and tribal leaders in the country, arguing that the best means to defeat ISIS is through an increased focus and outreach directed at the Sunni communities of Iraq, many of which have come under the control of ISIS. Beginning his presentation with an overview of the relationship between ISIS and Al Qaeda, including its Iraqi offshoot Al Qaeda in Iraq – later rebranded as the

Al-Monitor, 20 February 2015, <http://almon.co/2dcj>.

²⁸ See, European External Action Service (EEAS), *EU-Egypt Action Plan*, March 2007, <http://europa.eu/yT78Qu>.

²⁹ See for instance, "Profile: Suzanne Mubarak", in *Al Jazeera*, 14 May 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/05/201151452710305808.html>.

Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) and finally as ISIS – and the Syrian-based Al Nusra Front (later renamed *Jabhat Fateh Al Sham*), Abualhayjaa noted how there is much in common between ISIS and Al Qaeda. Rivalry emerged as a result of the different tactics embraced by the leaders of the two groups, with Bin Laden's Al Qaeda arguing for attacks against the West as the first priority, while the younger leaders of Al Qaeda in Iraq, and in particular Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, prioritized attacks against Arab regimes and their supporters. These differences in tactics would lead to a schism between the two groups and, eventually, to the founding of ISI in the context of the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq. As ISI increased its attacks against fellow Muslims, in particular the Shia, divisions between the two groups hardened. The killing of Al-Zarqawi by US forces in 2006 led to a new generation of leaders of salafi-jihadi groups Iraq and finally to the emergence of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who assumed command of ISI in 2010.



Djallil Lounnas (left), Khader Abualhayjaa (right)

It was Al-Baghdadi who sent a large contingent of fighters from Iraq into Syria in 2012, and it was these militants who eventually formed the Al Nusra Front. Relations between the Syrian and Iraqi offshoots of ISI soon soared however, as the leaders of Al Nusra refused to pledge allegiance to Al-Baghdadi's self-proclaimed Islamic State in 2013. This led to a further division within the group, as the Al Nusra Front broke with ISI and proclaimed its allegiance to Al Qaeda's new leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri, who succeeded Bin Laden following his death in June 2011. As open fighting broke out between ISI and Al Nusra in Syria, Al-Baghdadi's forces returned to Iraq and quickly occupied large areas of the country, uniting them with their Syrian conquests to announce the formal creation of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in June 2014. The speaker emphasized how the rapid conquest of large areas of Iraq by ISIS was facilitated by the disillusionment felt by the Sunni communities of the country, which lamented their discrimination at the hands of the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad. These grievances were further increased when Iraqi politicians refused to arm and assist the Sunni communities in Iraq in their resistance against ISIS and other militant groups. This essentially forced the leaders of these communities to either resist ISIS with little or no support or to align with them and hope for some improvement in their daily lives and public services. Abandoned and fearing for their lives, many chose the second option.

In highlighting the sectarian dimension of Iraq and the broader region as an important facilitating driver for the success of ISIS, Abualhayjaa moved to outline a number of diplomatic and bottom-up approaches to weaken the extremist group. While most actors in Iraq and at the international level have focussed on military and economic tools to defeat and defund ISIS, the speaker stressed that military solutions alone will not succeed. Instead, more diplomatic approaches should be

considered, particularly as a means to weaken ISIS's legitimacy from within. ISIS is a symptom of a much broader and deeper problem. Decades of governance failures and geopolitical rivalry in the region have facilitated the spread of radicalization in the MENA, of which ISIS is only the latest manifestation. A primary goal should be that of improving Arab governance in both Syria and Iraq as a means to begin rebuilding trust between the state and its citizens.

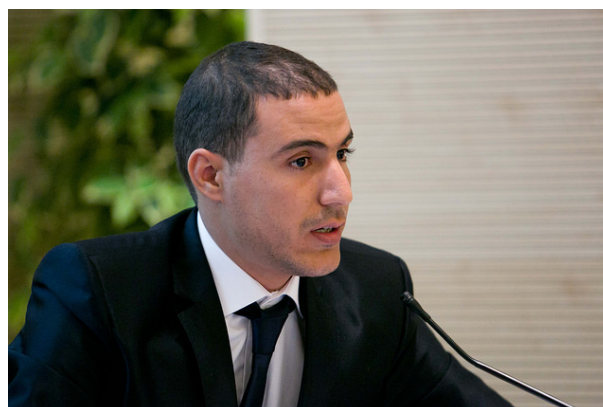
Establishing direct contacts with important tribal and clan leaders of the Sunni areas of Iraq that have come under ISIS control and actively including them in this process of reconciliation should be the number one priority. These leaders command much legitimacy and a greater role should be given to them, in coordination with local politicians and groups, to decide their future. In this context, another recommendation to help rebuild a more stable and inclusive Iraq was that of supporting devolution and self-rule in certain limited domains in the context of a federalized Iraq. This could provide an increased sense of security and belonging to the various ethnic and sectarian groups in the country, noted the speaker. Ultimately, only by providing these communities with greater socio-economic opportunities and an equitable share of decision-making power, will the spread and appeal of radical ideologies truly be defeated in the country.

Hamid Ait El Caid, a Moroccan citizen and recent graduate from the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, presented his research on radical ideologies and the processes of radicalization and de-radicalization in the MENA region. Focused on an analysis of the root causes for the emergence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS), El Caid presented a critique of current anti-terrorism policies that focus excessively on short-term reactive solutions rather than seeking to address the root and multi-sectorial causes of radicalization. In this respect, the speaker advanced a detailed proposal for a new anti-terrorism approach that is inter-dimensional and comprehensive and addresses six key dimensions of the challenge: education, security, migration policy, socio-economic opportunities, global governance and good management of former militants. An excessive focus on coercive power, argued El Caid, will only address part of the problem; an idea and ideology cannot be defeated militarily but will need a long, inclusive and bottom-up effort to win back the "hearts and minds" of radicalized individuals while providing them with avenues to slowly re-enter "and contribute to society.

Borrowing from Asta Maskaliūnaitė's definition of radicalization, which is defined as a "gradual slide into extremism, fundamentalism or [...] a movement towards justifying violence and finally personally engaging in it,"³⁰ El Caid introduced his talk by focussing on a number of root drivers for radicalization. These drivers include "background factors" – such as identity crisis, racism and Islamophobia, feelings of social exclusion and lack of integration in society; "trigger factors" –

³⁰ Asta Maskaliūnaitė, "Exploring the Theories of Radicalization", in *International Studies. Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2015), p. 12, <http://hdl.handle.net/11089/17463>.

that include radical preachers or spiritual leaders who justify violence on the basis of faulty religious interpretations and the legacy of repeated foreign interventions and wars in the Middle East; and finally “opportunity factors” which include meeting points such as mosques, prisons and schools or madrasas. A further driver includes the global dimension, what the speaker called “global mis-governance,” a tendency of the major powers to mismanage inter-state conflicts and civil wars, particularly in the post-intervention phase, as was the case with Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Syria for instance.



Hamid Ait El Caid

Moving to present his thoughts on a multi-dimensional approach to combating radical ideologies, El Caid introduced six dimensions that are of particular importance to improve global counter-terrorism strategies. Beginning for the fundamental necessity of improving socio-economic conditions in the area as a means to prevent radicalization, other dimensions included the need to reform global governance mechanisms such as the United Nations Security Council to improve international legitimacy and provide a more balanced debate on conflict resolution strategies. A third dimension revolved around a strengthening of security, cyber security and intelligence sharing capabilities for prevention and the monitoring of radical groups and individuals, while a fourth focussed on the need to improve the management and de-radicalization programmes available for former militants, including the need for strict surveillance by the security services. The fifth examined the need to reform migration and asylum policies at the EU and global level so as to provide opportunities for MENA youth to travel and find employment in these countries. This can help to prevent individual radicalization but also dispel stereotypes and racism, themselves a manifestation of a kind of “group radicalization,” which in turn feed back into the process of exclusion and finally potential radicalization. The final dimension touched on the need to embrace a moderate religious discourse through the use of education and media, in coordination with national authorities and respected religious figures.

In concluding his argument, El Caid focussed on the case of Morocco to provide some examples of a successful counter-terrorism and anti-radicalization policies that could be applied to other Muslim-majority contexts. Morocco’s Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs has placed much emphasis on reforming religious discourse through education and training courses and targeted campaigns in the local media. These efforts have been generally successful in preventing the spread of more radical ideologies. Morocco has also adopted a new anti-terrorism law that imposes between five and fifteen years jail sentences for terrorism offences and a fine of up to 45,000 euro. Anti-terror and anti-radicalization policies in Morocco also include the socio-economic domain, with the government promoting the Initiative

Nationale pour le Développement Humain as an integral part of its security and national development strategy.³¹ Elements of a similar approach, argued El Caid, could be adapted for different contexts and states. Only a proactive approach that includes state ministries, civil society and NGOs can hope to address the root causes of radicalization in the region. Such approaches must go well beyond coercive strategies or criminalized deterrence and include tools meant to provide opportunities for these individuals as a means to counter the appeal of radical ideologies and narratives while providing them with concrete alternatives to contribute to society.



Ummuhan Bardak

Session IV: Migration and the refugee crisis

The final session examined the pressing challenge of migration, with two invited speakers from Tunisia proposing a series of policy recommendations targeting MENA countries and the European Union to better tackle the present crisis. Moderated by **Ummuhan Bardak**, from the European Training Foundation in Turin, the panel sought to develop new approaches to the present migrant and refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, seeking means to transform the challenge into an opportunity for both MENA and EU countries.

Haifa Ben Cheikha, a youth activist and PhD candidate at the University of Carthage in Tunis, examined the case study of Tunisia arguing for a concerted effort to help the country become an important attraction point for migration, rather than simply a departure or transit country. Arguing that migration into Tunisia can represent an opportunity to fill low-skilled jobs and help fuel the economy, as well as develop and re-populate certain regions' of the country, the speaker focussed on a number of policies Tunisia and Europe could explore to help transform the present crisis into a win-win situation for both. Entitled *Activating the Potential of Maghreb Countries in Reducing Current Refugee Flows to Europe: Redirecting the Waves*, Ben Cheikha's presentation focussed on Tunisia as a case study but wished to emphasize that the recommendations developed for the country can also be applied to other North African states such as Morocco and Algeria.

The speaker began by noting that the current refugee crisis in the Mediterranean has given rise to increased anti-immigrant and xenophobic discourse in Europe

³¹ See the official website of the Initiative Nationale pour le Développement Humain: <http://www.indh.ma/index.php/en>.

as a number of populist parties have increased their share of the popular vote and campaigned on increasingly antagonistic rhetoric vis-à-vis refugees and migrants. While a majority of these voices tend to focus on cultural and identity differences and the supposed costs of accepting and integrating these numbers of refugees, the humanitarian plight of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean should not be overlooked. Over 3,700 people have drowned or went missing in the Mediterranean in 2015, noted the speaker, and the number has risen to over 5,000 in 2016 according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).³² These numbers are significant and attest to a situation that is both unsustainable and highly problematic from the standpoint of human rights and international asylum law.



Haifa Ben Cheikha

Noting that the EU has adopted an externalization strategy for migration, seeking to limit the number of new arrivals through ad hoc agreements with third countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean as well as further south in Sub-Saharan Africa, the speaker sought to explore potential avenues to encourage increased North-South cooperation and assistance to help North African countries settle and integrate these migrants. There are a number of structural issues that could make the settlement of refugees in North Africa a smoother process when compared to Europe, beginning from the lower cost of living to the similarities in culture, climate and religious customs. These could serve as a basis for a comprehensive strategy aimed at helping Tunisia, or other North African countries, better manage the influxes of migrants and refugees and plan for their integration into the economy and society. Tunisia would undoubtedly need outside and European help and assistance in establishing a comprehensive strategy, including in the sharing of intelligence, border management, screening technology, but given that it is in the EU's interest to limit new arrivals, such a scenario is worth exploring and could serve as a potential win-win policy for both the North and South of the Mediterranean.

In this respect, agreements could be reached for the repatriation of illegal migrants in Europe to Tunisia in exchange for humanitarian aid and technical assistance to Tunisian authorities. Visa liberalization for high-skilled Tunisian citizens should also be explored as a potential incentive for North African states to reach such agreements with the EU. In order to help this process, the EU could explore special investment strategies or even examine the possibility of setting up Special

³² UNHCR, *Dead and Missing at Sea in Mediterranean - 2016*, 31 December 2016, <https://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=2409>.

Economic Zones (SEZ) in certain regions of Tunisia to help incentivise economic growth and exports. Tunisian authorities could promote micro-credit programmes in the rural and central regions of the country, offering incentives for recent low-skilled migrants to relocate and work in these less developed and productive areas of the country. The European Union should also enhance its efforts to assist civil society and Tunisian institutions such as the judiciary and legal system with training and exchange course as well as work to liberalize trade relations and enhance Tunisia's access to the European market. Security cooperation, training and assistance with border control and institutional capacity building will also be key, not least in light of the turmoil in Tunisia's neighbourhood, both with regards to Libya and further south in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa. These measures could help Southern Mediterranean states develop their economies and domestic markets while enhancing their institutional relations with the EU. Northern European states would instead benefit from diminishing migration flows while having agreed avenues for the repatriation and relocation of illegal migrants through mechanisms that abide by international law and human rights standards.

The second speaker, **Zied Touzani**, youth activist and founder of the civil society organization Tun'Act, joined his Tunisian counterpart in presenting his research on EU migration policy and the refugee crisis.³³ In examining how the current migrant and refugee crisis, combined with the financial crisis and the resurgence of populisms, have impacted and weakened EU integration process, Touzani emphasized that current European migration policies are excessively Eurocentric and short-term, largely failing to address the challenge in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. This is largely due to the current political climate in Europe, where growing numbers of populist parties have campaigned on anti-immigrant platforms and are leading more centrist and moderate parties to be cautious on the issue out of fear of losing votes and political support among their domestic constituencies. These processes have led the EU to adopt a policy based on containment and the externalization of migration flows. While the EU-Turkey deal represents a vivid example of this EU approach, the speaker cautioned that such approaches do not represent long-term solutions to the problem of migration that is a reoccurring phenomenon of which the current crisis is only the latest manifestation.

Touzani emphasized that the EU's current migrant and asylum policies are largely ineffective and unresponsive to the needs of migrants and origin countries. This effectively means that there are no legal means for migrants to reach Europe, pushing thousands into the hands of people smugglers and causing a severe humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean. In this context, a more sustainable approach would be that of helping to widen, simplify and increase legal immigration opportunities for MENA and African citizens seeking to reach Europe, promote a homogenization of migration policies among EU member states and seek to reach communal understandings on how best to share the burden of receiving and settling migrants

³³ For more information, see the official website of Tun'Act: <https://www.tunact.org>.

in various European contexts. In 2015, more than 1 million refugees and migrants reached the European Union, leading to a political and institutional crisis in which certain member countries suspended the Schengen Agreement and erected walls and borders to keep migrants out. These developments are closely interlinked with the complex and overlapping security, governance and socio-economic challenges affecting many MENA countries, which are failing to provide services and opportunities to their populations that in turn are seeking to migrate to Europe for a better future.



Zied Touzani

At present, noted the speaker, both the European Union and MENA countries are locked in a zero-sum dynamic in which both sides are suffering and losing out on potential opportunities to increase cooperation and improve the management of migration flows. While millions in the MENA rose up in 2010-12 to demand more representation and better opportunities, six years since the outbreak of the Arab Spring protests, many countries in the region, including Tunisia, have witnessed a further reduction in socio-economic indicators and state capacity. This has given rise to increased disillusionment among MENA societies, particularly the youth, who had pushed hard for the protests and hoped these would signal the beginnings of a better future for them and their societies. In this respect, there is an urgent need to reform migration policies, creating a communal and agreed framework to provide legal opportunities for MENA citizens, particularly the young, to travel, work and study in Europe on short-stay or worker visas. Such an approach would ideally substitute the national migration policies of the 28 EU member states with a single framework that is applicable to the whole Union. Presently, noted Touzani, there exist no means to apply for worker permits in Europe. While such regimes are in place in the United States and in Canada, when it comes to Europe, prospective migrants need to first secure a contract with a local company in order to be eligible for a working visa. Such a process is both time consuming and highly inefficient, forcing both the prospective migrant and his/her employer to navigate complex bureaucratic regulations.

In parallel to a homogenization of migration policies in Europe and the opening up of new avenues for legal and controlled migration, EU member states should conclude bilateral agreements with third countries for the repatriation of illegal migrants. Such agreements will be hard to negotiated, but in practice such tools are very similar to that which the EU has concluded with Turkey and can be reproduced with other MENA countries on the condition that adequate incentives be provided. Another proposal advanced by Touzani touched on the issue of visa liberalization and the current discourse in Europe relating to a supposed invasion from the south if such agreements were also reached with MENA countries. In addressing this

point, the speaker pointed to the visa liberalization agreements the EU signed with Moldova and Ukraine to provide for the free movement of people and the granting of three-month visa permits. While there are a number of significant differences between Tunisia and Moldova, Touzani emphasized that when it comes to socio-economic indicators the differences are not that pronounced and in fact Tunisia even scores better rankings in terms of the UN Human Development Index and GDP per capita.

In proposing a positive agenda for migration, the speaker noted how in Europe there are presently over 2 million jobs that need to be filled. These include electricians, plumbers, the tourism sector but also in high-skilled jobs such as health care and IT or engineering. Another potentially positive indicator for Europe relates to demographic trends and the continent's aging population, which could be counterbalanced through migration. Moreover, addressing the supposed economic costs of accepting migrants and refugees, the speaker cited OECD data that demonstrates how immigrants actually contribute more to the national economy via taxes and other contributions than they receive in state benefits and subsidies.³⁴ Last but not least, Touzani noted that immigrants in Europe will also help to pay for pensions and drive the economy through consumption, while MENA countries would benefit from increased remittances from abroad. These remittances are an extremely important source of sustenance for the local economies of origin countries, money that is often much higher than humanitarian aid flows and technical assistance. Other benefits for the MENA include the opportunity for their citizens to acquire valuable skills while on work placements in Europe and a means to limit the demographic and socio-economic pressures of large, unemployed numbers of youth who cannot find opportunities in their home countries and tend to be attracted into criminal networks and/or radical groups as a means to find sustenance and employment.

In concluding his argument, Touzani noted how a priority should be the establishment of a working permit visa system that is valid across the EU. This must however go well beyond the current Blue Card system approved by the European Council in 2009 and is only focussed on high-skilled labour coming from non-EU countries.³⁵ Described as an inefficient system that cannot hope to resolve the pressing issue of migration, the speaker noted how in 2016 the Netherlands actually issued zero Blue Cards, while in Belgium the number was 19, in Spain 39, numbers that are well below the required amounts. Other recommendations related to the need to improve integration programmes in European countries, as the challenges confronting migrants do not end once they reach European soil. Such efforts should be directed at improving educational training, language course, job

³⁴ See for instance, OECD, "Is Migration Good for the Economy?", in *Migration Policy Debates*, No. 2 (May 2014), [http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/OECD Migration Policy Debates Numero 2.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf).

³⁵ See, Council Directive 2009/50/EC of 25 May 2009 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:32009L0050>.

advice and assistance with national volunteering activities. These efforts should assist local authorities and the broader society to better integrate new arrivals, also contributing to a weakening of stereotypes and anti-migrant rhetoric. In concluding his argument, Touzani referred to the example of Canada as a potential source of inspiration for EU approaches on migration and asylum policy, notwithstanding the very different institutional and political contexts of Canada and the European Union.



Marina Calculli

Conclusions

Concluding remarks were delivered by three speakers, who briefly summarized the major themes of the conference, while providing additional analytical inputs to the debate. **Marina Calculli**, a Research Fellow at Oxford University's St. Anthony's College and L'Orientale University of Naples, opened the panel, emphasizing the timeliness of the conference and the breadth of topics and issues addressed by the various speakers and invited guests. Highlighting a central element that emerged from the various presentations and debates, Calculli reflected on the continued importance of the state as the central organizing factor in the 21st century. While the state has been weakened and is suffering from a number of internal and external challenges, the speaker emphasized how the structure and responsibilities of the state remain today highly relevant, particularly when it comes to performing the traditional Weberian roles of providing security and extracting taxation. It is particularly this dimension of the state, what is generally termed the social contract or social pact, that emerged as a common theme throughout the conference, as the various speaker and participants debated various means and policies aimed at improving, or even renegotiating, this social contract.

Looking to the Middle East and North Africa, Calculli emphasized the need to contextualize events in the region into their broader international setting, reminding the audience how many of the developments affecting MENA states are also manifest in other regions of the world, including Europe. This trend covers various dimensions, including the spread of radicalization and populisms, socio-economic challenges, inequality and youth or gender exclusion. International debates and policy discussions should be mindful of this dimension, concluded the speaker, and avoid falling prey to the false rhetoric of "us vs. them" or "North vs. South." It is for this reason that events and initiatives such as New-Med provide valuable opportunities to widen international debates and bring in new voices that are rarely provided with an opportunity to address these issues in an institutional context and in the company of high-level policy makers and academics from

different regions and states bordering the Mediterranean.

Anna-Katharina Deininger, Austria's Special Representative on Youth and Security at the OSCE, joined the previous speaker in thanking participants and the New-Med organizers for a successful and insightful conference. As a member of Austria's delegation to the OSCE in the context of Austria's rotating chairmanship of the organization, Deininger noted how her work at



Anna-Katharina Deininger (left), Marina Calculli (right)

the OSCE includes close cooperation with Italian diplomats and representatives currently chairing the OSCE Mediterranean Group. As Special Representative on Youth and Security, Deininger emphasized how the present New-Med conference and agenda reflected the common Italian and Austrian focus on youth in the context of the OSCE and noted how the organization has recently increased its efforts to directly engage and integrate youth and female perspectives in its work. Austria's OSCE agenda will focus in particular on three broad issues: defusing armed conflict; the fight against extremism and radicalization; and building trust, not only between states but also between states and individuals. In this context, Deininger welcomed the opportunity to participate in the New-Med conference and expressed her interest cooperating with the incoming Italian Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group to develop common and shared approaches to dialogue and cooperation between the OSCE and its six Mediterranean partners.

Lorenzo Kamel, IAI Senior Fellow and Scientific Coordinator of the New-Med Research Network, delivered final concluding remarks. Highlighting how the selection process for each of the scholars was rigorously conducted by a number of different institutions supporting New-Med, Kamel emphasized that IAI received over ninety highly qualified applications for the conference. In extending his congratulations to the eight successful candidates, the speaker noted that one of the established features of the New-Med Research Network is to prompt participating members to continue to cooperate and exchange views and insight on different issues and developments under the New-Med umbrella. Speaking on behalf of New-Med, Kamel expressed his hope that each of the eight scholars will continue to collaborate with the Network on a number of future initiatives and gradually emerge as focal points for the Network in their local communities and countries. New-Med has a rich history of research and activities conducted on each of the issues addressed during the conference, and many more initiatives are planned for the coming months and years.

The inclusive and bottom-up approach that has become a hallmark of the New-Med initiative will continue to dominate its work on the Mediterranean. Humanizing the challenges faced by migrants and refugees, the voices of youth, women and the

so-called “silent majority” will help to foster new connections and bridges that can counteract the prevalent tendency to perceive the ongoing crises as distant and somehow disconnected from developments in Europe and the West. This is also the spirit of New-Med, and its embrace of track II dialogue based on inclusivity and shared approaches to common challenges and crises.



Lorenzo Kamel

In supporting the Italian agenda for the OSCE in the years ahead, New-Med will continue its multidimensional approach combining policy research with academic reflection on the root causes, implications and potential solutions of a number of pressing social, economic, security and governance issues affecting the Mediterranean region as a whole. In this respect, Kamel, introduce the next New-Med conference, scheduled for 11 April 2017 at The Johns Hopkins University SAIS in Bologna, Italy. Entitled “Regional (Dis)Order in the Middle East: Historical Legacies and Current Shifts,” the event will see the participation of a number of leading scholars who will debate current geopolitical developments in the MENA and examine the root causes and implications of the present weakening of the state-system in the region.

Updated 13 February 2017

Conference Programme

Rome, 19 January 2017

Opening Session

Introductory Remarks

Alessandro Azzoni, Permanent Mission of Italy to the OSCE

Armando Barucco, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Ettore Greco, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome

Nicolò Russo Perez, Compagnia di San Paolo, Turin

Session I

Environmental Challenges and Climate Change

Climate change and environmental challenges are having adverse effects on state capacity across the MENA region, straining limited resources and contributing to insecurity and violence through food shortages and population displacement. The medium-to-long term effects of these trends are extremely worrying and yet, both regional and international actors have largely ignored their implications. This session will focus on two key themes associated with the risks of climate change and environmental degradation: water scarcity and the politics of water management and food and nutrition security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

Chair **Nathalie Hilmi**, Centre scientifique de Monaco

Panelists **Sibelle El Labban**, American University of Beirut (AUB), Beirut

Hussam Hussein, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of East Anglia, Norwich

Session II

Citizenship and the Weakening of the State System

The Middle East state system is in crisis. Institutions have collapsed, civil and proxy wars are ravaging both the centre and the periphery of the region and the gulf between rulers and ruled remains wider than ever. This session will address some of the root drivers for state fragility in the MENA region. A particular focus will be given to the role of gender and youth in pushing for a renegotiation of the social contract based on a new vision of inclusive citizenship and equality before the law.

Chair **Jean Joseph Lévy**, GMF Marshall Memorial Fellow, Paris

Panelists **Abdelrahman Aldaqqah**, Horizons International, Youth for Justice and Equality, The Hague

Marwa Wasfy, Cairo University

Session III

Radicalization and the ISIS Threat

The Mediterranean region, broadly defined, is experiencing a number of complex and overlapping crises. Heightened threat perceptions have focussed in particular on the Syrian conflict and ongoing efforts to counter the self-proclaimed Islamic State. This session will address the ISIS phenomenon from the standpoint of the youth in the MENA, analysing the narratives accompanying the rise of ISIS and means to counter the spread and appeal of its radical ideology. The panellists will address the tribal, youth and gender dimensions of these issues, focussing in particular on Kurdish female fighters battling ISIS and the role of tribal and youth-based policies in Iraq.

Chair **Djallil Lounnas**, Al-Akawayn University, Ifrane

Panelists **Khader Abualhayjaa**, University of London

Hamid Ait El Caid, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

Session IV

Migration and the Refugees Crisis

MENA countries continue to bear the brunt of the refugee and migration crisis, placing further strain on the fragile economies and political systems. This session will address different dimensions of the refugee crisis, analysing potential policy options capable of alleviating this growing burden on host countries. Panellists will reflect on the prevailing characterization of refugees and migrants as a threat to their host countries and examine whether and to what extent innovative policy approaches may transform the issue of migration and refugees into an opportunity for MENA countries in the economic and social domain.

Chair **Ummuhan Bardak**, European Training Foundation (ETF), Turin

Panelists **Haïfa Ben Cheikha**, University of Carthage, Tunis

Zied Touzani, Tun'Act, Tunis

Concluding Remarks and Next Steps

Marina Calculli, "L'Orientale" University of Naples and University of Oxford (St Antony's College)

Anna-Katharina Deininger, Special Representative on Youth and Security, OSCE

Lorenzo Kamel, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome /
Universität Freiburg

Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Founded by Altiero Spinelli in 1965, does research in the fields of foreign policy, political economy and international security. A non-profit organisation, the IAI aims to further and disseminate knowledge through research studies, conferences and publications. To that end, it cooperates with other research institutes, universities and foundations in Italy and abroad and is a member of various international networks. More specifically, the main research sectors are: European institutions and policies; Italian foreign policy; trends in the global economy and internationalisation processes in Italy; the Mediterranean and the Middle East; defence economy and policy; and transatlantic relations. The IAI publishes an English-language quarterly (*The International Spectator*), an online webzine (*AffariInternazionali*), two series of research papers (*Quaderni IAI* and *IAI Research Papers*) and other papers' series related to IAI research projects.

Via Angelo Brunetti, 9 - I-00186 Rome, Italy

T +39 06 3224360

F + 39 06 3224363

iai@iai.it

www.iai.it

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