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After the Spring
Prospects for the Arab World in 2013

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A turning point

By **Sir Jeremy Greenstock GCMG**, **Chairman, UNA-UK**

The United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) is delighted to present this wide-ranging analysis of the effects and implications of the political uprisings that have rocked the Middle East and North Africa – and indeed the wider world – since late 2010. Often referred to as the Arab Spring, the awakening of popular emotion in effective political action is dramatic enough in itself. But it is all the more important because the phenomenon cannot be classified as a purely regional one. We are witnessing the first stages of a new global evolution, in which the voice of the people begins to gather a legitimacy and a weight that amount to more than just a moral force in politics.

As with any great turning point, the first explosion of activity generates a series of consequences which take on a different character and timing in different geographies and contexts. I am convinced that the Arab Spring will have an impact on every country in the wider region, whether Arab or not, but the process of change will carry a distinctive local shape in each place and will unfold not just in a few months or years, but over decades. This collection of articles therefore has more than a historical significance: it also offers an interpretation of what may lie ahead in a region where localised events so often resonate globally.

I am also delighted that Witan Media and UNA-UK were able to assemble such a comprehensive set of commentaries. We cover the stories of change in

Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, and bring together an array of expertise on conflict resolution, post-conflict reconstruction, development economics and national reconciliation. The human dimension, which is after all the source of the current upheaval, gets particular attention. The two-edged nature of the region's natural resources, the importance of the development of civil society, the prospects for creating a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, the essential need to raise educational standards and promote jobs for the younger generation – all these issues sit alongside the central themes of security reform, political pluralism and market economics.

What we want above all is to offer a resource and a guide for those who wish either to observe closely or to contribute positively to what happens next. Syria continues to illustrate the immense difficulty of addressing the consequences of brutal repression when the most direct instruments, equally violent opposition internally or risk-laden outside intervention, carry their own strong downsides. As events in all the turnover countries demonstrate, violence, anger and fragmented identities will discolour the image of progress for a long time to come. But UNA-UK strongly believes that progress is possible and that recent events should inspire more, not less, engagement with the region, as well as renewed commitment to addressing long-standing grievances.

We would be dreaming if we expected the path to be a smooth one. Most of the world's established democracies passed through periods of turmoil before finding their own essential elements for stability. The peoples of the region are now determined to have a say in the distribution of power in their own communities, but they are bound to go through trial and error before the right mix of authority, religion, personal freedom and economic opportunity reveals and establishes itself.

This volume seeks to bring us closer to an understanding of how that change has occurred, how it continues and, crucially, what paths such transformation could take the region along. I am immensely grateful to the editors and contributors for their hard work in putting together this publication – we hope you will find it a useful and stimulating resource. ■

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Jan Eliasson visits the Western Darfur region, accompanied by the late JEM leader, Khalil Ibrahim (centre) and African Union Special Envoy for Darfur, Salim Ahmed Salim (right)

New dynamics and challenges

By Jan Eliasson,
UN Deputy Secretary-General

In late 2010, the world was impressed and inspired by the courage displayed by the peoples of the Arab World as they stood up to fight for democracy, dignity and freedom. The transitions have made tangible progress over the past year, with a number of countries – including Egypt, Libya and Tunisia – holding elections and some embarking on constitutional processes.

The governments and peoples of the region will need to strengthen state institutions

These fundamental transformations have brought new dynamics and challenges. Creating transparent and inclusive political processes capable of reconciling ideologies, religious beliefs and social and economic interests will not be easy.

The governments and peoples of the region will need to strengthen state institutions and civil society in order to build strong and stable economies and democracies. International assistance has an important role to play, with a particular focus on supporting democratic capacity-building, reforming security sectors, strengthening civil society and rebuilding the region's economy. The United Nations will continue to support the peoples of the region in realising their legitimate aspirations for a better future.

This publication aims to provide an opportunity for key stakeholders to share their experiences and expertise on the way forward and I am very pleased to introduce it to you. ■

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British nurse Alison Criado-Perez assists in the evacuation of wounded patients from Libya during last year's conflict. Alison regularly volunteers to work with MSF on the frontline of emergencies. Photo credit © Tristan Pfund/MSF

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The agony of transformation in the Arab world

By **Ambassador Wael Al-Assad**, Representative of the Secretary General for Disarmament and Regional Security, League of Arab States

It is almost two years since the uprisings and revolutions in the Arab countries took everybody by surprise. Over that period, analysts and researchers were consumed by these developments, trying to analyse its significance and its impact on the region and the West.

These revolutions were hailed by many as the 'Arab Spring'. I have to confess that I never subscribed to the term. I believe we are far from an Arab Spring, but the seeds have been planted and the uncertain journey towards this 'Spring' has started. The coming period is about facing and resolving a huge spectrum of problems and challenges that were inherited from the ousted regimes; requiring long-term planning and international co-operation. But before we get there, and for the time being, the Arabs are now suffering the agony of self discovery and the pains of transformation. But this is the price nations often pay in their transformative moments.

Although these revolutions were triggered in the first place by domestic grievances, they have wide international and regional implications. The political and security landscape in the region, as a result, is changing and new priorities are emerging. This new environment has empowered the people with a voice in matters that were previously monopolised by the ruling few. Public opinion will play a more tangible role in shaping regional positions in security issues. One of the expected outcomes is that the region will attempt to take ownership of its problems and its solutions.

Fundamental among these challenges will be the issue of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The Middle East remains a highly volatile region and the acquisition of nuclear weapons in particular would undoubtedly contribute to instability and could lead to an arms race in the region. It is essential, therefore, that nations in the Middle East and the international community seize the opportunity of the prospective conference on a zone free of nuclear and other WMD in the Middle East to ensure that the Arab Spring's hope is supported by renewed diplomatic dialogue, the building of trust between parties in the region, and the creation of new security structures.

I believe positive change is coming down the road as the Arabs discover their new voice, choose their rulers, build their institutions, resolve their conflicts and develop their civil capacities, particularly in the states emerging from conflict. Many of these states lack the necessary expertise in many areas and the support of the international community in these times of uncertainty would be invaluable.

Two years after the first uprising in the Arab world, serious consideration of the region's needs is required; and this is why I welcome this publication's timely release. Its comprehensive approach to the issues of reconstruction and state building in the aftermath of the Arab revolutions is insightful and unique. I am certain that the many excellent contributions – including on the promotion of the Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction – will prove insightful for policy-makers in the region and elsewhere, and offer hope for a secure and prosperous future. ■

Changing landscape

The international community must be willing to step up and support the governments that want to implement essential political and economic reforms

By **Robert Hormats**, US Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment

The Arab Spring marks a seminal change for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, with popular demands for dignity and opportunity, swept entrenched governments from power and fundamentally altered the regional political landscape. Popular pressure is driving further reform efforts in Morocco and Jordan. This tremendous wave of courage and optimism must now be matched by new and inclusive economic opportunities. New governments must reform their political and economic institutions to provide the transparent, accountable and effective governance that their people demand. While the revolutions rightfully belong to those who

create responsive institutions accountable to the will of the people; develop a more transparent, open and accessible business climate; and create jobs for the millions of youth in the region's workforce.

It is here that the international community can play a key role. And it is here that the United States and other supporters have already invested considerable effort to support the region's transitioning governments. The United States will continue to make this investment despite the challenging economic conditions we face. The success of the transitions is too important to stand idly by. This is a once in a generation opportunity to effect substantial change for many.

We have targeted our assistance to meet immediate humanitarian needs, address pressing economic stresses, support democratic institutions and catalyse long-term, inclusive growth. We are working to support entrepreneurship, investment and job-creating economic activity through enterprise funds and a regional trade and investment partnership, as well as to provide technical assistance for building more transparent and responsive institutions. More importantly, we have changed how we do business in the region, rethinking how we provide assistance to emphasise transparency and accountability, support for indigenously identified reforms, and an expanding partnership with a wider array of new actors.

Productive partnership

The G8's Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition has been an important component in this effort. At the Camp David summit, G8 members committed to an enduring and productive partnership that supports the historic transformation underway in the region. The G8 commited to work throughout 2012 to support private sector engagement, identify ways to support small and medium-sized enterprises, facilitate asset recovery, help governments to improve transparency and responsiveness, encourage closer trade ties, and provide needed expertise and assistance, including through a transition fund. Together, the G8, regional partners and many international organisations and international financial institutions have worked together to marshal resources and support for transitioning countries in response to priorities there. This new vision of a partnership has already catalysed critical reforms and offers a new way to channel international support responsive to the political and economic needs of the region.

This book offers lessons learned and additional insight for policymakers, donors and regional reformers, highlighting the positive ways the international community can continue and improve on its support of the transitioning states. This effort should remain a high priority for the broader international community as it works with the transitioning states to deliver on the promise of the Arab Spring. ■

have fought so hard for change, the international community must play a key role in supporting those governments that demonstrate a desire to implement these reforms.

Just as the Arab Spring is a story of political change, it is also a story of yearning for economic opportunity and dignity long-thwarted by corruption, stagnation and political manipulation of the economy to protect an entrenched elite. It is telling that the spark that ignited the Arab Spring came from the desperate act of a fruit vendor unable to sell his wares, harassed by corrupt authorities and without a job that made use of his education. Mohamed Bouazizi epitomised the frustrations of millions of Arabs who saw no prospects for bettering their lives. The success of the region's transitions will depend a great deal on the new governments' ability to address that frustration – to deliver inclusive economic growth;

This is a once in a generation opportunity to effect substantial change for many

The challenges that lie ahead

By **Gareth Stansfield**,
**Professor of Middle East Politics,
Director of the Institute of Arab and
Islamic Studies, University of Exeter**

It goes without saying that the transformative developments that have been occurring in the Middle East and North Africa present challenges as well as opportunities to the international community as a whole and to the countries of Europe in particular. How the international community chooses to engage with the countries of the region, and in what way, are critical questions to ask in a time when the abilities of most Western states to proactively engage have been radically degraded due to the constraints imposed by their own economic downturns.

The challenges that lie ahead are manifold and many of them are identified, analysed and assessed in this publication by expert commentators from both inside and outside the region. While no challenge is unimportant, there are some which exist at the level of the international society that warrant mentioning in these opening articles.

Perhaps the most overarching challenge that the transformations present is to further emphasise the complexity of the international system and the complex interactions that take place between states, between states and the peoples they govern, and the way in which 'security' is articulated by those who experience insecurity, and those who attempt to bring security.

Few cases, for example, expound the notion of human security and its importance to the international community as did the situation in Libya as the forces of Muammar Gaddafi prepared to assault Benghazi. The seeds of the doctrines of human security and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) fell on fertile soil in the capitals of the world's leading political powers and in the UN Security Council, allowing for military action that, even though only broadly conceived at the time, led to the removal of the Gaddafi regime and the opportunity for Libyans to take their country in a different direction.

But the modalities of intervention and protection of peoples still remains questionable – the inability of the international community to come to the aid of Syrians, who are facing a constant stream of catastrophic events and atrocities, illustrates with terrible clarity how intervention is very case specific. The challenge of supporting transformations proactively in an international system where the rules of this game are still being written will remain very serious in the years ahead.

A further challenge to consider is the 'endgame' of these transformations – i.e. where will they lead? Already, it is apparent that only the most optimistic of observers would claim that Western-style democracy and political cultures will emerge in the Middle East and North Africa, with the more astute analyses noting that something far more attuned to the societies of the region will emerge, leading to complex debates about the interaction of Islam, tribalism, and the often ill-defined building blocks of democracy. Yet even this sort of debate is very linear in style and it is sadly just as possible for the post-spring situation to regress and for new mechanisms of unrepresentative government to emerge.

Indeed, if any one lesson should be remembered from the history of the authoritarian states of the region, it is that they were tremendously durable and it would require remarkable optimism to believe that, only two years into a transition, the structures, dynamics and societal memes that came together to form the regimes since removed have themselves evaporated.

Opportunities abound

Is it not just as possible, if not more so, for Egypt to become characterised by an accommodation between an Islamist-dominated government and a military establishment that maintains its pre-eminence in state and society at large; is it not happening in Libya, for example, that local forces are melding with broader associations of religion and trans-state movements?

And the jury is very much 'out' on the future of Syria, or, perhaps we should say Syria and her neighbours, as the transformation there is already having an impact beyond state boundaries. Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon are all directly impacted by events in Syria, with their own domestic security being undermined by the appalling developments taking place there.

Yet it is undeniable that, even among all of these challenges, opportunities also abound.

The demonstrators who took to the streets of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya all illustrate that there is a desperate need for the transformations to succeed, in terms of promoting representative, stable governance and for these countries to assume positions in international society worthy of their proud histories and capable peoples.

How the actors of the international community, which are capable of assisting the transition countries, position themselves as supporters of such change is almost as important a question to ask as is the nature of the opportunity itself. We hope that this publication assists, to some degree, in finding the answers to these questions. ■

There is a desperate need for the transformations to succeed

Outside influences

Both reactive and proactive policy responses have posed their problems during the Arab Spring. What lessons can be learned?

By **Claire Spencer**, Head, Middle East & North Africa Programme, Chatham House, London

The Arab Spring has thrown many things into relief since early 2011, but none more so than the increasing fragmentation of the Arab world. Where previously the shared characteristics of authoritarian systems allowed for 'Arab states' to be analysed almost as a single category, it is the differences between Arab states, societies and sub-regions that are proving critical, and are rightly now attracting more attention.

This means that external interest and prospective engagement in the developments and transitions taking place from the Mediterranean to the Gulf

(Persian or Arab) will have to take these differences on-board, and in more detail than hitherto.

Not only are more actors involved – including more international and regional actors with an interest in energy supplies, trade and investment as well as regional security – but these actors are also inter-linked within and across the Arab world in ways unforeseen as recently as two or three years ago. The speed of events has also strained the ability of the international community, variously defined, to keep abreast with developments, engendering an inevitable time-lag of reaction to events rather than the emergence of well-thought-out policies or longer-term strategies.

Only in reaction to the emergence of a credible resistance movement in the east of Libya by the

spring of 2011 did the international community devise a plan of action and support for the uprising, legitimised through the UN Security Council, Arab League and then directed and managed by NATO. Although ultimately successful in securing the removal of the Gaddafi regime, the Libyan crisis underscored the reluctance of the traditional 'coalitions of the willing' (the US and individual European states) to intervene directly in the conflict on the ground as in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Citing the lessons learned from the previous decade, intervention this time was to be limited to protecting civilian lives from indiscriminate attack through airstrikes on regime targets, then in more openly providing air-support to the eastern rebels gathered under the Transitional National Council. It was the intensification of both targeted airstrikes and the accretion of western Libyan, as well as eastern, resistance groups that allowed the collective resistance movement to claim victory once they had overrun the bastion of the Gaddafi regime in Tripoli in August 2011.

The success claimed for the Libyan operation has come to haunt international attempts to devise a

solution for Syria, where lives lost to violence escalated to an estimated 7,000 by early 2012 and nearly twice that six months on. The lack of consensus at the United Nations over the root causes of the conflict, and over the local and wider risks of a Libyan-style international mission, have also highlighted the difficulties of creating any kind of international template to react to domestic insurgencies of the variety and complexity seen across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region over the past year.

External actors, and many more of them than were active at the time of the Iraq crisis of 2003, have thus found themselves caught between short-term and longer-term priorities, and between tactics and strategies barely capable of capturing the increasing inter-relatedness of developments in the Levant and Gulf region in particular.

Where financial and technical rather than military assistance has been the response – as in the European Union's enhanced neighbourhood policies towards the 'revolutionary' states of Tunisia and Egypt, and the 'reforming' states of Morocco and Jordan – the risk of outsiders being seen as trying to influence the course of events still unfolding has also provoked local and international concerns, as witnessed by Egyptian debates over whether to accept a $3.2 billion IMF loan in budgetary support for 2012.

Even the large-scale restructuring funds agreed at the G8 Deauville summit in May 2011 and supplemented at the G20 summit in Cannes in November 2011 have been slow to be disbursed, and have raised local expectations of new lines of assistance, when in reality, the $38 billion dollars pledged largely represented existing funds to be channelled through new or existing mechanisms. Identifying the best targets for this assistance, as well as engaging in lengthy assessments of each economy's absorptive capacities, will take time in a region that remains both sceptical of US and European intentions and internally divided over how to realise its own needs and priorities.

Changing dynamics of external involvement

For the traditional assistance partners of the Arab world, the competition for influence, both local and international, has raised a new set of challenges. With most G8 and Western funding being subject to new forms of 'pro-democracy' conditionality, the evolving situation has now made it easier for external actors who are not driven by normative agendas to stake a claim to the region's future.

Russia and China's veto on the failed draft UN resolution condemning the use of violence against civilians in Syria in early February 2012 was based on an alternative set of international principles than those invoked by others under the UN's 'Responsibility to Protect' criteria.

What publicly shapes the Chinese and Russian agenda is a belief that foreign interference in the

■ **Opposite: a young boy joins a protest in Deraa against Syria's president Bashar al-Assad by anti-Syrian regime demonstrators**

domestic affairs of sovereign states is not admissible, even with the best of intentions. Less publicly, other strategic agendas apply, whether these relate to fears of opening the way to greater international scrutiny of Chinese and Russian spheres of influence elsewhere, or more directly to Russia's access to the port facilities of Tartus in Syria, and regional energy supplies in the case of China.

Those with commercial or mercantile agendas, pursuing investments and contracts without strong conditionality, such as Turkey and the Gulf states in addition to China, also stand to gain from the rapidity with which they can identify and seize new opportunities across the Arab world. The advent of new international actors articulating an interest in the region, such as Brazil, India and South Africa, also increases the ability of both new and old political systems to explore new avenues for external support.

The risk is that the influx of new investments, energy and trade agreements will bolster otherwise fragile regimes, reluctant to respond positively to popular demands for reform (as in Algeria or the broader Gulf), or strengthen the ability of vested interests to mount a revival of the status quo ante (as in Tunisia or Egypt).

Exploring and exercising options that go beyond traditional security and economic relationships with the EU and US have also allowed interim governments such as Egypt's to undermine the EU's newly articulated criteria of 'less for less and more for more' as a measure of democratic transitions. When the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has acted in less than democratic ways over the past year, the EU has not ventured to impose sanctions in the absence of US back-up or a credible alternative to urging the military authorities to move the political process on.

For the proponents of democracy and state-building, above all the US and EU, the renewed vigour of rejectionist arguments and the new international activism place them in a difficult position for two main reasons.

The first is that a decade on from the launch of the 'global war on terror', the 'West' has lost much of its local credibility as a collective champion of democracy promotion. In states such as Egypt, where cases of extraordinary rendition have been much commented on, and where President Mubarak played a critical role in support of the US's strategic defence of Israel, the change in emphasis in US policy since early 2011 has neither been universally welcomed nor believed.

The second reason is that the West's strategic priorities still remain, as was witnessed in Egypt, in the ambivalent, but still intact financial and technical support given by the US to the Egyptian military, despite growing local opposition to the SCAF. Across the EU, similar examples can be found, of France's strategic support to President Ben Ali of Tunisia until

very late in the day, or Italy and the UK in respect of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, which have been rapidly reconfigured to engage new local actors and local dynamics.

To the credit of Tunisians, Libyans and indeed Egyptians, many have demonstrated their ability to make distinctions between different types of external actor and agency and have drawn their own conclusions about who they will and will not engage with now and why. The appetite for learning from and communicating with the outside world is also strong among the younger generations who have mobilised and participated in change, but with the added distinction that they now challenge and contest attempts to impose terms for these relations from outside. At a time when Europe above all, but also the US, has less economic capacity to respond generously to demands and requests originating from within the region, this change in local attitudes is significant.

Speed of change

What this means for the outside world is that fortune will favour the flexible and light of foot over the next few years. The implications for the slow-moving machinery of international consensus-building have already been felt in the challenge of responding to the crisis in Syria, and the success of Libya – registered in hindsight, but not always felt or publicly expressed over the summer of 2011 – may be the exception that proves a larger rule. The fact that NATO, for example, has not been invoked by its members in the course of diplomatic efforts to curtail the violence in Syria demonstrates the limits to the use of external military power in situations where the full dynamics of the conflict are both contested and impossible to grasp fully from the outside.

Both international and locally driven attempts to establish legitimacy for concerted external action have met their match in Syria. This, rather than the Libyan example, is more likely to prove to be the test case for future regional conflicts, especially if, as is feared, the Syrian situation degenerates into a sectarian civil war or spills over into the neighbouring region.

For the US and Europe, new approaches to anticipating rather than following regional developments are clearly needed, if only to keep pace with the new range of external actors less hidebound by concerns over international legitimacy than the traditional 'Western alliance' continues to be.

The battle for the future of the Middle East is in many ways indicative of a wider set of readjustments to the nature of international order in a world of shifting balances of inter- and intra-regional power.

For the old global powerbrokers, led by the US, the inter-related challenges of the MENA region have also emerged at a time when public support for more robust international action is waning in both Europe, preoccupied by the Euro crisis; and the US, preoccupied with its domestic agenda. ■

Fortune will favour the flexible and light of foot over the next few years

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Lessons learned and forgotten

For every upside in the Arab Spring's attempts at state rebuilding, there is a corresponding downside. But will the West, in particular, remember the lessons learned in the coming years?

By **Professor Michael Clarke**,
Director, Royal United Services Institute

State reconstruction and state rebuilding is essentially about peoples' behaviour and the attempt to build institutions around it. Every action, therefore, is likely to provoke a corresponding reaction that makes any strategy for reconstruction or stabilisation highly unpredictable. For powers outside the Middle East, the dynamics of the Arab Spring have already provided some lessons to be learned. And every positive lesson there to be learned in the last two years has a negative aspect that may or may not have been absorbed with the same alacrity.

The first lesson of domestic turmoil in the Middle East is that where an insurgency is facing a reasonably efficient autocracy, it is very unlikely to succeed without some form of outside help. Even the most sclerotic dictatorships can hold on for a long time if they retain minimal control over their security forces and insurgents can rarely match their mobility and organisation, let alone their weaponry.

Outside help, however, can make a real difference. The NATO-led coalition's help to the Libyan rebels was critical to their success in 2011, as has been Saudi and Qatari help, leading a growing international

ancient concept of the just war. It was codified and then adopted by the General Assembly in 2005.

It is a powerful concept that is in tune with current trends of global thinking and its principles lay behind much of the motivation of the Arab League in March 2011 when it called for a UN Security Council Resolution to protect the citizens of Benghazi from attacks by Muammar Gaddafi's forces. R2P thinking was much in evidence in Security Council Resolution 1973, which provided the basis for external intervention in the Libya crisis. The wording of the resolution was surprisingly strong – adopted as enforcement under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and using the significant phrase "all necessary measures", which meant it could be backed up with force. The R2P concept that underlies it may make several more appearances in the coming years as turbulence across the Middle East affects many innocent civilians.

On the other hand, R2P is a normative, not a legal, concept and while UNSCR 1973 achieved all of its essential purposes, its political effects were far more controversial. It appeared to China, and particularly to Russia, that the Western powers immediately exceeded the authority they had been given by the UN. Certainly, many analysts accepted that the NATO-led coalition was operating on the very edge of its legal envelope and effectively made the objective of removing Gaddafi the essence of their mission to protect Libyan civilians.

Tipping the balance

Whatever Russian officials at the UN expected when they agreed to the Resolution, there is no doubt that President Putin felt personally duped at the way the Resolution was interpreted by Western powers to give them decisive military influence over events in Libya. Neither Russia nor China would put themselves in a similar position over Syria and in vetoing Arab League Resolutions on Syria in February 2012, Russia has walked itself into a political blind alley that has seen several Syrian cities suffer the fate that was resisted in the Libyan city of Benghazi.

It may give Western politicians some satisfaction that Russia is discomfited in this way, but there is no doubt that it makes the avoidance of regional chaos around Syria much harder to achieve. Any satisfactory outcome in Syria must include Russia as a major diplomatic player, and the price of Russian support and involvement will be considerably higher as a result of what the Kremlin perceives as its manipulated exclusion from the outcome in Libya. There was a price for the adoption of R2P thinking in Libya and the innocent people of Syria may now be paying it.

The third lesson of recent cases in the Middle East for Western powers is that tipping the balance in favour of incipient democratic forces in any country might seem the least worst option when

coalition in the rebellion in Syria in 2012. If an army doesn't change sides – as it did in Egypt, or stay detached as it did in Tunisia – any insurgency will likely need external help if it is to succeed. The most potent assistance has been in communications, organisation, weaponry and probably the provision of some types of safe haven in order to buy the insurgents the time to succeed politically.

But the obvious downside is that the external world cannot intervene to help an insurgency without becoming a participant in a civil disorder that may well turn into a civil war. The destabilising prospects of this are very real. It poses the dilemma that, although it might seem unacceptable to stand aside while a brutal dictatorship openly attacks its own citizens, there is still the possibility that external intervention would make it worse and cause more death and suffering. Intervention that is 'humanitarian' is not thereby neutral, and in the context of the Arab Spring, can never be less than politically committed.

A second lesson with both an upside and a downside that has emerged in the last two years is the potency of the United Nation's 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) doctrine, at least as a political construct. Elaborated as an idea in 2001, R2P owed a lot to the

Even the most sclerotic dictatorships can hold on for a long time

The Western world will not be thanked for what it does, or what it refrains from doing

policy dilemmas are at their most acute, but in itself that does not prevent chaos ensuing. No sensible analysts in the Western world would disagree that the Arab Spring has a long way to run and that the wheel of domestic change will keep turning for some time yet. We are probably only at the end of the beginning of a long process of transformation.

The countries most affected by domestic instability in the region are in desperate economic straits and even a smooth transition of power is no guarantee of subsequently stable government. All new governments must deal with daunting economic and developmental prospects. Although some Western politicians and many voices in the Middle East itself call for direct military and economic intervention to assuage problems across the region, the fact is that moral encouragement and greater integration into the world economy are probably more effective ways of helping Middle East societies in transition than the application of military force and large amounts of foreign aid. But it is extremely difficult for politicians to avoid short-term pressures and to sell to their own populations, let alone the suffering citizens of Middle East countries in a state of chaos, the benefits of long-term thinking.

One of the most difficult lessons the Western world will have to absorb is the need to 'play its diplomacy long' in dealing with the effects of the Arab Spring. It is entirely likely that Islamist parties will dominate the political landscape in the short to medium term. Although the electorate in Libya has so far rejected a radical Islamist government, a crescent of Islamist dominance across the Maghreb and the Levant, from Tunisia to Egypt, Syria and Iraq, is entirely possible in the next two years.

Islamist parties do well from the current upheavals, partly because they are better organised in a chaotic situation where political pluralism is still a novelty. They will also do well because they represent something distinctive in a world where Western capitalism is too readily identified with the old autocracies and is, in itself, in a state of structural crisis.

The Western world will not be thanked for what it does, or what it refrains from doing, or what it prevents from happening in the region in the months and years to come. That must be expected. The lesson of the present upheaval for policy-makers in the West is to not be frightened to deal with Islamist parties and interests as they arise. These parties will be grappling with some of the most intractable economic problems anywhere in the world, and most Islamist parties have a very poor grip of economic management, and will more than likely fail and provoke their own domestic backlash.

Western powers should try wherever possible to offer access to the interdependent world economy and remain patient. Such access will either be rejected as part of radical Islamism's economic failure, or accepted as part of its evolution to the responsibilities of modern political power.

The Western world can keep pointing the way and helping to facilitate it, but probably only from the sidelines. It must try to exert the soft power of magnetism during the long term as opposed to the hard power of intervention that is tempting, and occasionally justified, in the short term. ■

The Arab Partnership and its aspirations

An interview with Irfan Siddiq, Head of the Arab Partnership Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Arab Partnership is described as the UK government's strategic response to the Arab Spring. Could you explain the rationale of the Arab Partnership and how it engages and interacts with partners in Arab Spring countries?

The Arab Partnership aims to launch a new chapter in relations between the UK and the Arab world. The Arab Spring was an expression of popular discontent with authoritarian regimes. It showed that states need popular consent to thrive and succeed and that over the long term, autocratic rule cannot deliver such consent. The Arab Partnership is built on this insight: that we must work with local actors to support the development of more open, accountable and representative systems of governance. Only in this way will states build consent and so achieve real, lasting stability and prosperity. This is both good for the people of the region and good for our national interests.

Our approach is based on a number of key principles:

- We have no desire to impose a vision from outside – we must respond to demands and needs articulated from the region.
- Every country is unique. There is no 'one size fits all' approach. Universal values inspire our engagement, but each country's own path of change will be defined by local circumstances.
- This process of change will be generational and require patience.
- Change must be comprehensive, political and economic reform must go hand in hand.

We work in a number of ways. We offer political support to those working for change in the region, both inside and outside government. We work with our international partners both bilaterally and multilaterally, including through the European Union, G8 and the international financial institutions to provide expertise and practical support. We have created a £110m Arab Partnership Fund to support a wide range of actors, including parliamentarians, the media, judiciary and civil society, that are taking forward political and economic reform in the region.

So we work with governments and civil society, responding to their needs. We tap into international expertise and local knowledge. We advocate reform where change is slow and we provide practical support to change where it is happening.

A focus on democratic development is clearly important to Western governments keen to support Arab Spring countries. What are the challenges for the Arab Partnership with regard to democracy promotion in transitional settings? Can you illustrate your democracy promotion activities with particular examples?

There are many obstacles to a successful transition, but the most difficult for a foreign actor is the need to respect local ownership and control. We do not have all the answers. So we must be modest in our approach and sensitive to the need for local actors to lead the process. These were Arab revolutions. In Egypt and Tunisia there was no foreign hand. In Libya, foreign support facilitated a grass-roots revolt. So we cannot impose our ideas or our values. Where there is a willingness to take on board international expertise and assistance, we will step forward to offer our support.

Good examples of our work include a project in Tunisia to educate rural voters on the electoral process. Provincial disenfranchisement and marginalisation was one of the key factors behind revolution, so working with rural communities, particularly women, to help them understand how to vote and ensure their voices are heard was an important measure to support the move towards more representative government. In Egypt, Tunisia and Libya we funded the BBC to put on local Arabic language versions of the popular BBC *Question Time* programme. This was a revelation. Bringing ordinary people face to face with their new leaders, or aspiring leaders, and giving them the opportunity to pose questions and discuss pressing issues has helped energise and stimulate debate and political participation.

In his piece on state building and reconstruction, RUSI's Michael Clarke makes an impassioned plea for the Western world to learn the most difficult lesson of 'playing its diplomacy long in dealing with the effects of the Arab Spring'. How is the Arab Partnership responding to this difficult task, when events on the ground move so quickly?

The Arab Partnership is a long-term effort. Change will be difficult and there will be setbacks as well as progress. Our diplomacy is already approaching these developments with a long-term mentality. The measured and pragmatic response of the UK government to the election of Islamically oriented parties is a good example. We have engaged with these groups, sought to work with them and influence them towards a more open and inclusive approach to politics.

We are not rushing to judgement or seeking to impose our views, but understand that as these countries go through sensitive phases of transition, they will make their own choices about how they want to shape their societies. These choices are unlikely to be fixed. The political transitions will be evolutionary processes. Political allegiances will change in reaction to developments. We are not seeking to second-guess or pre-empt these developments. We will work with those chosen by the people, stressing our common values and interests and, where they exist, raising differences in a constructive manner.

Finally, the Arab Spring is very much a series of developments that are still in progress. How do you see the future unfolding, and what challenges lie ahead?

The situation in the region is changing so rapidly that it is impossible to be sure of how events will unfold in the short term. There are clear challenges ahead – Syria is the main concern as the country moves ever closer to all-out conflict, with worrying regional implications. The regional threats from rising sectarianism are also acute. Tensions between some secular and Islamist groups are growing. Power struggles between old regime interests and new powers could spill over.

The task that newly elected governments in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya face is immense: the process of building genuine political and economic citizen participation will take years, if not decades. However, despite all of these challenges, my view of the future remains optimistic. The popular uprisings of last year were historic events that will change the entire region forever. The demand for popular empowerment, dignity and social justice cannot be ignored. The region will become more open and accountable. Democratic experiments will leave their mark. The age of Arab Exceptionalism is over. ■

Co-ordinating the international community

The international community is struggling to co-ordinate policies, much less collective support to democratic governance as profound change sweeps the Arab world

By Steve Brooking, Head of the Analysis and Policy Unit, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

This brief paper looks at the attempts made to co-ordinate the international community in post-2001 Afghanistan, a situation for which the phrase 'like herding cats' seems to have been tailor-made. Indeed one of the problems with Afghanistan from 2001-2012 has been that, because of competing agendas, there has been no overall co-ordination attempted or allowed, and – with the exception of a brief period during the initial military campaign – no real 'leadership' by an authorised powerful body that could attempt such co-ordination.

Unlike subsequent events in Iraq, where a slow build-up to the invasion and the eventual toppling of the Saddam regime should have allowed for a proper planned approach to the next stage of rebuilding the government and developing the country through the Coalition Provisional Authority, events in Afghanistan were precipitated by the shock event of 9/11 and a brief, small-scale military campaign precipitating the collapse of the Taliban, which came quicker than

This was merely a forerunner of problems within ISAF – as the mission expanded around the country and NATO took over command, so member states established Provincial Reconstruction Teams; but there was no common template or standard, some hardly left their bases, some had no funds for reconstruction, some were even civilian-led; the only commonality was that they all had separate reporting channels to their own governments and many had 'national caveats', which meant that they were not allowed to do certain activities. Successive ISAF commanders were thus faced with a large force not completely under their control. Even now, as the ISAF mission winds down, decisions on troop withdrawals, provision of Security Force Assistance Teams to help train the Afghan forces (ANSF), etc., are made by member states, often acting on domestic political timetables, not by the ISAF Commander and NATO. It seems likely that some form of 'coalition of the willing' will again be left after 2014 to maintain support for the ANSF, and the hope must be that this will be a (probably US-led) properly co-ordinated enterprise.

Aid and development

The situation with regard to the aid and development agenda was not much better. The Bonn agreement recognised the important role of the UN's Special Representative but merely urged all actors to act 'in co-ordination with the Interim Authority'. Subsequent conferences in Brussels (December 2001) and Tokyo (January 2002) established the Afghanistan Reconstruction Steering Group and the Implementation Group, as well as acknowledging the lead role of UNDP in early recovery, and paved the way for the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (which continues successfully to this day).[2] In the eventual setting up of the UNAMA mission in March 2002 (UNSCR 1401) all such bodies were merely asked to 'co-ordinate very closely with the SRSG'.[3]

The Afghan Interim Authority, keen to emphasise Afghan sovereignty, swiftly set up the Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority (AACA) and a Donor Assistance Database to try and manage the flow of aid. However, there were instant problems with this: NGOs and humanitarian organisations resisted government control and argued that they already had a long-standing umbrella organisation, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, and many of their members did not want to be too closely associated with governments. Some 60 per cent of the $1.5bn pledged at Tokyo went to UN agencies, and 16 per cent to International NGOs. This has persisted as a contentious issue, up to the July 2012 Tokyo Conference, with the Afghan government constantly

expected and so caught the international community, and the Afghans, unprepared for 'nation-building'.

The military aspects of co-ordination started well but became more and more complex as the involvement in Afghanistan became drawn-out. The post-9/11 efforts were clearly US-led under the banner of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and were a 'coalition of the willing' in the then 'global war on terror': a small ground force of special forces and a use of targeted airpower to assist the indigenous anti-Taliban forces. The combination was highly successful, led to the collapse of the Taliban government and paved the way for the Bonn Conference in December 2001, even as the OEF mission continued its counter-terror missions. Bonn and the subsequent UN Security Council Resolution 1386 established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): problems of co-ordination immediately arose as many nations wished to contribute troops, but not necessarily of the type needed.[1]

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[1] For a fuller account of early ISAF, and indeed many of the other issues covered in this paper, see *Snapshots of an Intervention* edited by Van Biljert and Kouvo; available as an e-book on http://aan-afghanistan.com

[2] This period is well covered by Arne Strand, in a paper for the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, entitled *Aid Coordination in Afghanistan* http://edoc.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/ HALCoRe_derivate_00003427/AidCoordinationinAfghanistan.pdf. See also Anja de Beer's article in *Snapshots of an Intervention (op. cit.)*
[3] All texts of resolutions can be found at www.unhcr.org/refworld/

demanding that money is put 'on-budget' through line ministries, but donors concerned about capacity and transparency issues and often preferring NGOs, UN agencies or their own implementing partners.

A problem that also became apparent in 2002 was the reluctance of anyone to 'share' information: the UN, attempting to map aid and development projects in late 2002, only received responses from around 12 per cent of the NGOs; even now the Donor Assistance Database managed by the Ministry of Finance is incomplete, as organisations are reluctant to reveal finances and the size of their projects. Information sharing is a basic prerequisite for aid co-ordination.

In Tokyo it was also confirmed that various countries would become the 'lead' for developing various sectors: the US would develop the army, the Germans the police, the UK counter-narcotics, the Italians justice, etc. This stove-piping again had the effect of reducing the overall co-ordination as countries tended to concentrate on their own areas to the exclusion of others; a similar effect was seen where countries established Provincial Reconstruction Teams: they put much more aid into projects in 'their own backyards'.

The concept of lead-nation finally stopped when attention was put back on Afghanistan after the Iraq war had ended and countries, particularly the US, realised how lop-sided the developments had become (for example, police development lagged a long way behind the army). As the US then poured many more resources into Afghanistan, so it took more control across all sectors and basically relegated the previous 'lead nations' to secondary players.

Strengthening role

At the London Conference in January 2006, the role of the UN in development coherence became stronger with the signing of the London Compact, in which the Afghans and their international partners made various commitments to each other. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board was established under UN and Afghan government co-chairs to watch over this process. The mandate of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) has also changed to 'promoting more coherent support' for Afghan government efforts. As the latter has gained more capacity, so it has tried to take on a more central role.

In 2010, with the help of the UN and international partners, the government started to work out what it really needed and a set of National Priority Programmes (NPPs) were drawn up. The idea is that all aid and development, including by UN agencies, will broadly align themselves with these NPPs. This is clearly a positive step forward, but has taken ten years from when the AACA first drew up a National Development Framework, which advocated the same approach. However, now, as then, there remains a

multiplicity of actors with differing priorities, some political, and it remains to be seen whether both the international community and the Afghan government can live up to all the commitments they made in Tokyo in July 2012 to allow for better co-ordinated and conducted development over the next four years.[4]

One area in which the UN has been relatively successful has been in using its good offices to bring about solutions to political problems. At the Bonn Conference in 2001, the UN, under SRSG Brahimi, paved the way for a political settlement and then this was reinforced by two further Afghan gatherings (the Emergency Loya Jirga and the Constitutional Loya Jirga) in both of which the UN played a key role to mediate contentious issues. Similarly the UN, much aided by US Senator John Kerry, helped calm down a tense situation after the disputed presidential election in 2009 and then also played a key role in persuading the President to accept the inauguration of the new Parliament and defuse a building political storm after contentious elections in 2010.

In these events the UN's neutral role, and its ability to co-ordinate with the whole of the international community as well as all Afghan parties, have enabled it to have significant influence. So long as the parties to the current conflict in Afghanistan, particularly the Afghans and the Americans, realise that they cannot be the mediators as well as parties to the conflict, this political role could, and should, be of importance too, as the situation in Afghanistan moves toward a mediated political settlement with the Taliban. ■

■ At the Bonn Conference in 2001, the UN, under SRSG Lakhdar Brahimi, paved the way for a political settlement. Brahimi, now UN envoy to Syria, is pictured here at the conference with Afghan President Hamid Karzai

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[4] Important agreements related to Afghanistan can be found at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CFC_Afghanistan_Agreements_June2012.pdf

Working Together

OMV Libya Youth Center was runner-up of the ADIPEC Award 2012 in the category "Best MENA CSR Initiative".

OMV understands the importance of partnerships and relationships ⌐ we commit to the countries and the local communities we operte in. True partners prove themselves during times of crisis. In the aftermath of conflict the OMV Libya Youth Center supports young Libyans to develop self-confidence, self-belief and the power of self-expression. This is how we act in OMV's exploration and production from offshore New Zealand to the African desert, the swamps of Kazakhstan, the Romanian Mountains, and the Austrian vineyards. Our core value is not one you see in our facts and figures, it is one you see in our behaviors.

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The role of the UN in post-conflict Libya

Following the fall of the Gaddafi regime, the United Nations formed a support mission to help Libya's transition to a democratic state

By **Ian Martin**, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Libya[1]

In the last week of August 2011, the forces of the regime of Muammar Gaddafi were defeated in Libya's capital, Tripoli. Fighting would continue in a few cities until the National Transitional Council could make its Declaration of Liberation, on 23 October – the culmination of the revolution that had been sparked in Benghazi on 17 February that year. On 16 September, the UN Security Council unanimously mandated the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to assist the country's post-conflict transition.

The UN system was more than usually prepared for the task. At the London Conference on Libya held on 29 March 2011, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had agreed that the United Nations would co-ordinate the efforts of the international community to assist the country when the conflict has come to an end. In late April, he appointed a Special Adviser to co-ordinate the post-conflict planning of the United Nations system, and to engage as appropriate with multilateral and bilateral actors. All relevant parts of the UN system, including the World Bank, worked together in a pre-assessment process to conduct a common analysis of the key issues and challenges for post-conflict support to Libya. Although the nature of future transitional authorities was uncertain, the UN engaged with the National Transitional Council to learn their views regarding its future role.

When the time came for a post-conflict mission to be mandated, a number of principles had been broadly accepted. The first principle was national ownership – the future of Libya was to be determined by the people of Libya and the UN was committed to helping them realise their wishes and aspirations. The second was speed of response: proposals were ready for early start-up of appropriate United Nations engagement in-country, beyond the humanitarian efforts already under way, as soon as political developments required.

A third principle was effective co-ordination of international assistance: the new transitional authorities in Tripoli must not be over-burdened by multiple, un-coordinated assessments of need or missions to offer assistance, however well-intentioned. All UN departments, agencies, funds and programmes must act in accordance with the Secretary-General's firm policy that multi-dimensional support to early

recovery and peace-building must be provided on the ground by 'One UN' in an integrated manner.

A fourth principle was that while there are always lessons to be learned from other contexts, international assistance must be well-informed and should recognise and try to understand the uniqueness of the Libyan context. Libya's financial resources meant that it would not need donors, but the institutional challenges would be immense, after decades in which it had been a matter of policy to hold no democratic elections, allow no independent civil society and deny the development of the institutions of an accountable state. The legacy of human rights violations would be a heavy one and the conflict would leave Libya awash with weapons.

The Libyan view
The views of Libyans, both in transitional authorities and in the emerging civil society, were consistent in their expectations of the UN. They had a strong preference for support within a fully multilateral framework: the UN's acceptability stemmed not just from its role in the conflict, but from its contribution to the emergence of independent Libya. The work of the UN Commission headed by Adrian Pelt in 1950-51 has been largely forgotten within today's UN, but lives in the consciousness of Libyans.

The UN was asked to focus on three main areas, in addition to the overall co-ordination of international assistance. The first was support to the democratic transition, beginning with the election of a National

[1] Ian Martin was Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Libya and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) from September 2011 to October 2012. From April to September, he was Special Adviser of the Secretary-General to co-ordinate post-conflict planning for Libya.

■ Ian Martin awards a certificate to a member of the Libyan national police, who has graduated from a course designed to prepare officers for the national election polls. The UN is supporting both Libya's democratic transition and the establishment of its police security

Congress and continuing with the drafting of a new Constitution, a constitutional referendum and then the first elections under new constitutional provisions. The second was assisting Libya in establishing public security, through the development of the police and other security forces, and the integration within them of some of the revolutionary fighters.

Others of the former fighters would need to be assisted in their chosen future as civilians, part of a larger challenge of generating employment, especially for young people. The third was transitional justice, human rights protection and building the rule of law. Addressing the legacy of the past would require bringing to justice the worst violators of human rights; establishing the truth, including the fate of thousands of missing persons; compensating victims; and promoting reconciliation.

These priorities for UN support formed the core of the mandate of UNSMIL when it was first created in September 2011 and again when it was extended for a full 12 months in March 2012, after a period of engagement with the interim government formed in late November 2011 and a fuller planning process. In the meantime, an additional focus on countering the proliferation of arms was added, in response to regional and international concerns at the actual and potential flow of arms and munitions across Libya's borders. [2]

[2] The full mandate of UNSMIL is in Security Council Resolution 2040 (2012), and the concept of the Mission can be found in the

The challenges that have faced Libya's transitional authorities are immense and it is hard for non-Libyans to come to understand the depth of the disastrous legacy of the 42 years of the Gaddafi regime, and indeed the weakness of nation-building and state-building that preceded it. In so many respects, those who have the early responsibility to begin to build the new state today start from a very low level – a deficit of institutions of a modern, accountable state. And, in some respects, the legacy is far worse than that: a legacy of corrupt practices, of human rights abuses, and of divisions among tribes and other groups deliberately manipulated.

Difficult transition

It is hardly surprising that the first year of Libya's transition has been a difficult one. Local tensions sometimes erupted into fighting and there were clashes between brigades while state security forces only slowly developed their capacity and began to assert their authority. Detainees from the conflict have remained too long in the custody of brigades, some undergoing torture and ill-treatment, while the government struggles to develop its detention, prosecution and justice capabilities.

But national and local leaders have shown their mediation abilities in checking the escalation of conflicts, and a new civil society has begun to work for human rights protection and the empowerment of women. Libya's oil production has recovered more quickly than anyone dared to predict; the challenge now is to resist a return to the corruption and patronage of the past and to invest the country's wealth in creating real employment for its citizens.

Above all, Libyans' thirst for real democracy has been displayed in local elections and in the high nationwide registration and turnout in the July 2012 election of the General National Congress – an extraordinary achievement for a country which had seen no real election for nearly half a century. The election provides legitimacy to a new government and the drafting of a new constitution.

The highest of all priorities of UNSMIL in its first year was to help the Libyan authorities to deliver a fair election, which they did to the praise of all observers. The highest post-election priority is to respond to the public demand to address the security situation, and to build a state which has the monopoly of force and can use it to maintain internal and border security.

UNSMIL prepared itself to assist in this priority, while continuing its support to the democratic transition in the constitution-making phase, and to transitional justice, human rights protection and the rule of law. UN agencies stand ready to assist the longer-term reforms of Libya's first government for decades to possess a fully democratic mandate. ■

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, 1 March 2012, S/2012/129.

The challenge now is to resist a return to the corruption and patronage of the past

Intervention and state-building

What can the international community learn from the mistakes of Iraq and Afghanistan for future conflicts?

> It could be premature to conclude that more direct intervention is a thing of the past

By **Lt Gen (retd) Professor Sir Paul Newton KBE, Director of the Strategy and Security Institute, University of Exeter**

"Generals…", it is said, "always prepare to fight the last war." It seems not; today military leaders – along with pundits, politicians, diplomats and humanitarians – are rushing with almost indecent haste to draw lines under recent interventions, which are seen as ideologically flawed and impractical aberrations. 'Stabilisation' is falling rapidly out of fashion. Defence policy-makers are reverting instead to notions of high-tech war while seeking alternative solutions to the intractable problems of fragile states in an unstable international system. Is this a sober strategic re-assessment? Or is it a reaction to zeitgeist?

Security policy is built upon a deceptive and, when tested, often shaky foundation of assumptions, reflecting not only empirical evidence but individual and institutional preferences. The new assumption is that future decision-makers – more cautious and made smarter by seductive (yet illusive) technology conferring perfect situational understanding – will exercise greater discretion (code for 'wisdom') regarding if, when, where and how to intervene. Politicians are moderating their rhetoric; officials re-drafting planning assumptions, setting lower limits on scales of effort and higher thresholds for military intervention, at least on the ground; and promotion chances will be poor for any general claiming that state-building intervention is the future.

Adding to the mood (or reflecting it) expert commentators declare an end to the utility of Counter-Insurgency (COIN) the theory on which efforts to stabilise failed or failing states has been based. Some predict a paradigm shift away from expeditionary operations; even a new post-intervention Western way of war or at least one in which the fighting on the ground and any residual stabilisation task are 'outsourced'.

Never say never again

This mood swing requires context. General Wesley Clarke writes that at a NATO conference after the Kosovo war, a minister opined "…we will never do this again". This assumption came a year before Western forces invaded Afghanistan, not to build

a state, but only after every other tool of collective statecraft had failed to influence a regime that gave sanctuary to al Qaeda. Such 'never again' thinking is striking, although unsurprising, in Western responses to Syria, even Libya, where limiting the risks in the use of Western military force was prioritised above the outcome. Yet even as they abandon the rhetoric of 'long war', Western elites know that the world remains an unstable place.

According to prevailing logic, indirect approaches will better allow the West to play to its technological strengths, as in Libya, which is cited as a 'new model'. In a post-COIN, post-stabilisation world, drone strikes, raids by special forces, no-fly zones, counter-piracy operations and 'working with non-traditional partners' – code for proxy warfare – are all preferred to direct engagement on the ground. All are useful tactics but they are not, if they are the upper limits of engagement, strategies.

Their adoption as a template may encourage instability for they could fail the acid test of deterrence – credibility. At best they risk leaving the outcome in the hands of actors whom we support with fire-power and rhetoric, but about whom we may know little and over whom we have little influence. As a case in point, helped by NATO's proxy air force, a disparate Libyan insurgency toppled a regime: what replaces it remains an open question. Outsourcing (the term used in a recent Pentagon report) a major element of any intervention, as was done in Libya, or under the Sons of Iraq programme and even the government-sponsored Afghan Local Police initiative, limits the liability, but also the leverage.

If 'no strategic shrinkage' is not mere rhetoric, it could be premature to conclude that more direct intervention and even state-building is a thing of the past. Such efforts are not doomed to fail, though they should be used more sparingly. Iraq is not peaceful, but it has a government, is no longer a regional threat and has not fallen back into civil war. And in Afghanistan, NATO combat operations to help create secure-enough conditions still have two years to run.

Security vital for progress

Despite doubts about Kabul's ability and will to govern, an overdue but adequately resourced multi-agency stabilisation campaign is creating the potential for progress. Polling during 2012 in Helmand put insecurity at number five in the rank of citizens' concerns, below electricity and health provision. This demonstrates that militaries can, when properly trained, equipped, deployed in the right density and – critically – working as part of an integrated civilian/military effort, create the local security vital for meaningful politics. Security does not guarantee the outcome, but without it, there can be no progress.

Yet officials are dusting off books on the Powell doctrine and in staff colleges the talk is once more of

'exit strategies'. Some seem intent on an ill-advised rush to abandon the skills associated with COIN in favour of a false certainty of 'proper' warfare against near-peers. Finding convenient adversaries willing to collude in their own tidy destruction might prove difficult, but the pressure to put distance between unpopular and – frankly – unsatisfactory interventions will be hard to resist. Resisted it must be: human terrain analysis, biometric evidence-gathering and close collaboration with intelligence agencies and NGOs alike are among the 'new basics' of warfare.

In 2001 and 2003 armies, indeed security establishments more generally, were ill-prepared in terms of their structures, training, equipment and thinking – the price in blood was high. Militaries certainly did not anticipate and were too slow to adapt. Evidence is stark; in the images of Abu Ghraib and the Baha Mousa abuse, or of the most powerful army in the world welding scrap metal to vehicles designed for 'manoeuvre warfare' but that could not protect against the all-pervasive IED. Whether the mission is to build states or not, future conflict is still likely to be a messy affair in which many of the new military basic skills acquired under a 'COIN' state-building banner will be relevant.

Interagency collaboration

More worrying is that interagency ways of working have not yet been locked into post-Afghan structures, much less cultures. Unless institutionalised now, they will not be available in future crises where humanitarian need, risk and vital interests intersect. Whether deployed under a 'state-building' banner or a less contentious mandate, or a combination of the two given that most conflicts evolve incrementally, closer integration of all the levers of power is essential given the prevalence of fragile states, growing populations and urbanisation.

In Afghanistan, the international community's assumptions about Taliban resilience, and thus the scale and pace of effort, were plain wrong, thus in part setting the conditions for a protracted 'stabilisation' mission. It is one in which the military continues to play a disproportionate role, for example, leading anti-corruption efforts. And in Iraq, the Coalition assumed there would be a functioning state after the removal of the regime. When this proved incorrect, there were not the judicial experts or civil police who could leave

■ Major General Sir Paul Newton, Commander, Force Strategic Engagement Cell with Brigadier General John Allen, United States Marine Corps (now General John Allen, Commander, US Forces Afghanistan, International Security Assistance Force) and Al Anbar tribal leader at an anti-al Qaeda gathering of Sunni tribal leaders in Ramadi, 2007

Officials are dusting off books on the Powell doctrine and in staff colleges the talk is once more of 'exit strategies'

In future crises, timely and synchronised application of all the tools will offer broadest utility

secure embassy compounds to grow capacity where it mattered most – on the ground.

Insurgency was not pre-determined in either case, but without the full spectrum of deployable governance and security skills to shape events at tempo and support local actors, it was given undue space. These capabilities have now evolved, but organically, of necessity not policy, in the field. Without a 'field' to act as a forcing function for the more nuanced relationships we see, for example, in Provincial Reconstruction Teams, these habits of co-operation will be lost, even faster than relevant military skills that are (wrongly) seen as an unfashionable COIN niche. This would be a strategic folly. Even though they are associated with 'fighting the last war' these habits – not yet deeply embedded cultures – of interagency collaboration are latterly emerging as a truly successful model.

Commanders in 2001 and 2003 were not ordered to 'build states', but the need to regain the initiative drove up the stakes of engagement. Hence politicians have paid this price, in treasure, reputation and public support. They take and leave office driven by an electoral cycle in which it can be difficult to act strategically. So their successors will rely upon advisers better able to explain the unchanging verities of conflict.

Assumptions were wrong in Iraq and Afghanistan, but there is nothing novel in this; the key is the speed of recovery and adaptation. As early as spring 2004, then UN Special Representative for Afghanistan and Iraq, Lakhdar Brahimi, warned the United Nations that the means being allocated were insufficient for the strategic ends, but it was not until 2010 that security force levels in some parts of Afghanistan reached the required norms.

Such errors of analysis and decision-making were compounded by a profound misunderstanding of the volatility inherent in warfare. In Iraq and Afghanistan, as indeed in Bosnia, Kosovo or Libya, war once unleashed was revealed yet again as a force with a nature and logic of its own. Not for the first time (nor the last), initially limited military aims expanded as the situation changed.

Conflict always has an internal dynamic: those who would use the military tool should not be seduced by new fashion offering false certainty. And while non-military tools of statecraft are preferable, an Iranian nuclear programme that flouts the will of the international community, and a regime in Syria

■ Pakistani protesters during a demonstration in Multan in January 2012 against the US drone attacks in the country's tribal areas
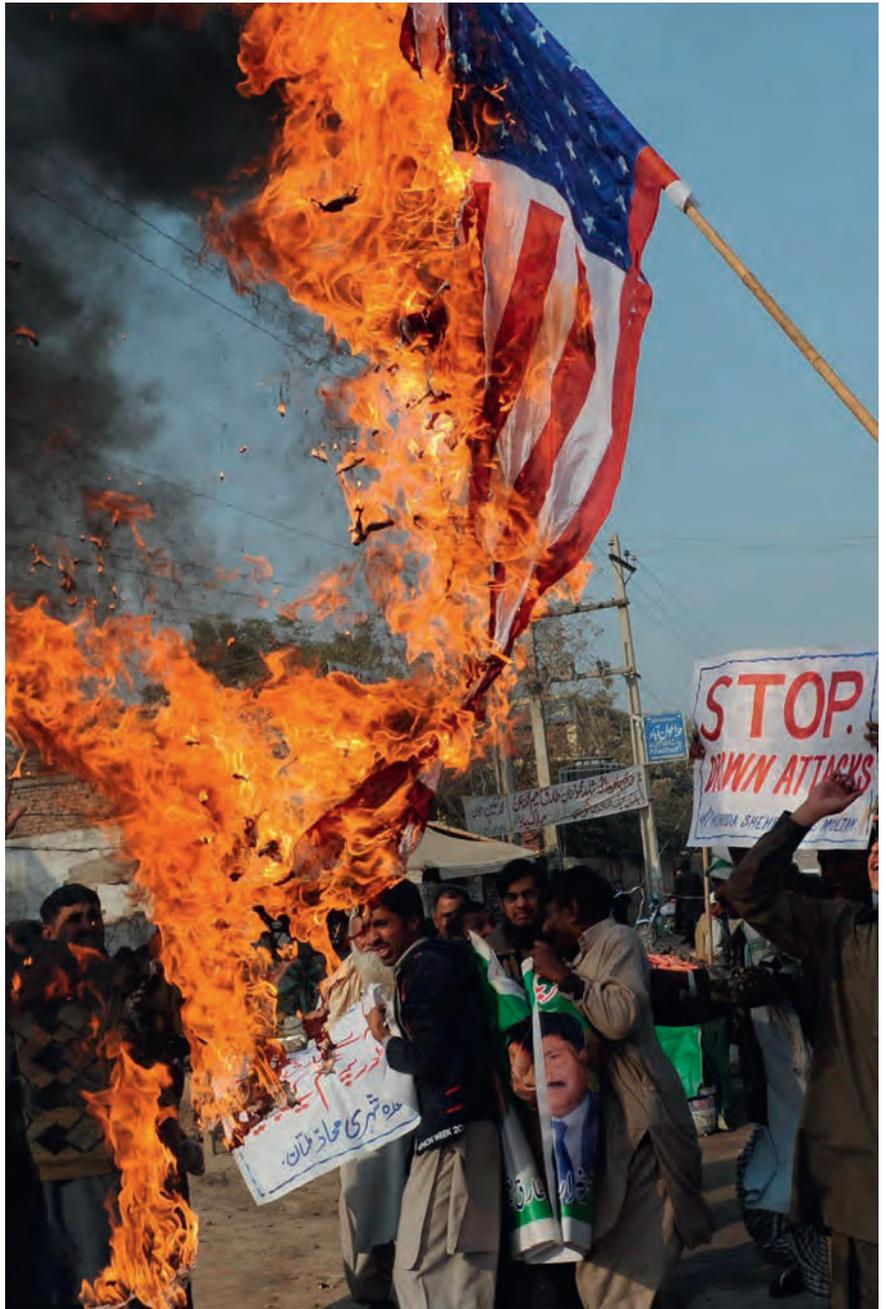
ignoring international outrage while conducting a war against its own people, remind leaders that other tools are not necessarily more effective.

In future crises, timely and synchronised application of all the tools will offer broadest utility: the international community should be wary of throwing the COIN baby out along with the cold political bathwater.

The key is that the right lessons are drawn; that the role of military power is better understood and its use better integrated with other instruments of power that are themselves made more fit for purpose, in order to offer the broadest range of options in a dangerous world. ■

The Arab Spring and the Middle East peace process

The challenges to dictatorship in the Arab region could herald a different attitude to Israel and Palestinian rights

By **Maha Azzam**, Associate Fellow, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

The Arab Spring has resulted in the removal of four dictatorships from Tunisia to Yemen and popular resistance is continuing to challenge other countries in the region, albeit in different ways, foremost among which is Syria. These momentous challenges to dictatorship in the region – while having primarily domestic implications for the nature of governance, the rule of law and human rights, all of which are yet to be defined and may evolve in different directions – are bound to have an impact on regional and international relations. Relations with Israel and the whole idea of the 'peace process' may be redefined by the newly elected governments of the region. Changes are likely to evolve over time reflecting the altered political landscape and a newly found political will.

Although popular protests have focused on regime change, the issue of Palestinian rights and Israel's policies continue to arouse strong sentiment. Frustration at the failure to achieve justice for the Palestinians is echoed across the region and across

■ **Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat joins Jewish and Arab Israeli children from Jerusalem as they release doves in front of Jerusalem's Old City walls**

party political lines. In Egypt, a key player in the peace process, both historically and as mediator between the Palestinian factions and Israel, support for Palestinian rights cuts across religious and secular lines to take on a powerful nationalist dimension.

Therefore new governments in the region may come under pressure to take a stronger line with Israel. Furthermore, it is unlikely that for the foreseeable future any government can be seen as compromising on Palestinian rights without undermining its own legitimacy and alienating some of its support base. The break from the previous regimes that were seen as allies of Israel is perceived as an opportunity to redraw the balance of power and assert rights that were neglected, primarily because of the terms of US support for certain regimes.

The 1978 Camp David Accords that form the basis of peace between Egypt and Israel and the 1993 Oslo Agreements and the resultant peace process have regularly faltered, and there is a general acceptance regionally that the latter is unlikely to deliver Palestinian statehood. While a cold peace has been maintained between Israel and its neighbours, Palestinians have continued to suffer, whether from military campaigns such as the assault on Gaza in 2006, or the more recent Israeli bombardment, with its civilian casualty toll in reprisal for the rocket launches from the strip, through sanctions and border controls, or from human rights abuses against the Palestinian population at large on the West Bank and in Israel.

Furthermore, creeping colonisation through the building of settlements (most recently even in defiance of strong advice from Israel's friends) and what that entails in terms of land confiscation and alienation of the ethnic population, exemplified by the 'security wall', fosters a reality on the ground that can be described as population 'separation'/'apartheid'.

All these developments have created increasing disenchantment with a dormant peace process among the increasingly politicised Arab populations at large.

Camp David revision?

Despite assertions by Egypt's new government that it respects all international treaties signed during the previous regimes, there have been calls from leading political figures and activists (both secular and Islamist) for a revision of certain aspects of the Camp David Accords. This does not mean an end to peace with Israel. However, what it does reflect is a growing consensus that the terms of the treaty were agreed by an undemocratic regime that could not be held accountable and that, in the new democratic era, Egypt needs to represent its people and national interests better.

Such is the general tenor of mainstream political parties, political leaders and the new military leadership. Today's generals are still the men who trained in the US and are eager to maintain the advantages of good relations with the US, including the military aid package from the US, but they are also likely to want to temper this with a renewed look at Egypt's national security interests.

Furthermore, Egypt knows that security in the Sinai is of major concern to its own sovereignty and security. It may serve Israeli security that Egypt is dealing with a terrorist threat, however, it is not clear to what extent Israel may also be exploiting the unstable situation in Sinai in order to justify the sanction regime against Gaza. Egypt's new government is under no illusion that it can simply walk away from the treaty, on the contrary, it knows peace is vital in order for it to move forward in dealing with the major challenges of political and economic development it faces.

The rethinking and redirection of the strategic vision and agendas of key states in the Middle East as a result of the Arab Spring is not going to happen overnight. The situation in Syria is still unfolding but as in Egypt, despite the antipathy to the peace process, it is unlikely that a post-Assad Syria, with all the challenges it will face, will want to find itself on a war footing with Israel. In Jordan the demands for greater accountability are still being kept under control. Jordan remains highly vulnerable economically, but one cannot entirely rule out at least a gradual process of democratisation, which given its large Palestinian population may alter the demands on Israel.

Rethinking national interests

In all these cases, it appears that as states and societies establish more democratic means of governance, there is likely to be a rethinking of the way in which national interests have been pursued for decades. Furthermore, new governments in the region may represent strong currents of opinion that may not be willing to compromise over Jerusalem. That is because elected governments, particularly Islamist ones, are likely to increasingly respond to popular sentiment that sovereignty over East Jerusalem, and specifically the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosque, is a pan-Islamic issue, not a Palestinian issue, and which cannot be compromised away, even by the Palestinians themselves should they choose to do so.

Given the growing emphasis on civil disobedience and non-violent protest as a means of propelling political change, the Palestinian populations of the West Bank and Israel may yet opt to go down that path as a means of demanding their rights.

The peace process will therefore come under ever-increasing strain and scrutiny partly because it has thus far failed to achieve its goal of a Palestinian state or to change Israeli policies regarding the Palestinians. If the Arab Spring is about challenging the political order and addressing political and economic failure in the region, then it is likely that its proponents will extend this approach to the peace process that has failed to deliver for so long.

The governments and societies of the Arab Spring countries have the opportunity to create a new impetus for the way forward, backed by regional and international manoeuvring.

This fresh impetus should be propelled by:
a) Civil resistance through a non-violent campaign demanding an end to settlements, encroachment into East Jerusalem and the acknowledgment of the right of return for all Palestinian refugees and their dependants, as per UN resolutions.
b) A forceful and renewed call led by the governments of the Arab Spring and supported by member states of the UN demanding that Israel as the occupying power respect UN resolutions (and at a more basic level accept the application of the Geneva Conventions).
c) Increased pressure from friends of Israel to halt settlements and encroachment into East Jerusalem
d) Granting the Palestinian Authority at least 'observer state' status at the UN General Assembly in order to express the seriousness of international intent vis-a-vis Palestinian rights (which has just been passed).

The Arab Spring has set in motion challenges to the domestic political order in the Middle East region. It is also likely to result in the emergence of a more forceful and independent stance on Palestinian rights from regional states. The peace process has failed to bring about results and is therefore likely to be increasingly undermined, giving way to even greater urgency to respond to the question of Palestinian statehood and rights through pressure from the international community and the United Nations. An urgent response will also be required to the ever-increasing economic crisis for the majority of Palestinians who may make their grievances heard through a new intifada. ■

■ **During the last hour of hostilities, militants launch rockets from Gaza City as an Israeli bomb explodes on the horizon on 21 November, 2012 on Israel's border with the Gaza Strip. An official ceasefire started at 9pm local time between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement**

There is likely to be a rethinking of the way national interests have been pursued for decades

Out of sight, out of mind

Once a conflict dies down, or the news agenda moves on, maintaining international interest in the reconstruction process is an uphill struggle

By Deborah Haynes, Defence Editor, *The Times*

Words like 'governance', 'reconstruction' and 'development' do not grab headlines, making it hard for foreign correspondents to interest their editors in a country when the fighting has stopped.

Covering a conflict is an expensive business for news organisations, but the guarantee that frontline action will get into the paper or on television, as well as the desire to be there to record certain major events as they happen, such as the fall of Tripoli, justifies the cost. The media is especially keen if their country is sending forces to fight in the war, as was demonstrated with the Libya uprising or, prior to the Arab Spring, in Afghanistan and Iraq.

International interest and the correlating foreign news coverage wanes, however, once peace is declared

the victorious and the vanquished. We carried pages of coverage in *The Times* that week and the next as the regime fell and the rebels took control. It was a feeling of history unfolding before our eyes.

The news agenda always moves on, however, and even the most epic of stories fades from the front to the back of a newspaper and then off its pages completely. Once a crisis reaches an initial resolution its value to the media and the coverage it receives drops off a cliff except for various landmark moments, such as subsequent elections or a resurgence in the violence.

Stories will appear intermittently to offer an update on what is happening on the reconstruction front or with the political process, but unless there is a hint of scandal, such as evidence of corruption or intimidation, then the piece will not gain much traction.

Limited resources

I was in Afghanistan in the summer of 2010, spending time with the provincial reconstruction team in Helmand. My news desk was not hugely excited at story proposals about the attempts to spread local governance around the province, or efforts to make central government channel funds down to the local authorities rather than rely on the international community to make sure the money goes where it is supposed to.

By chance, however, I ended up writing the front page after a patrol that I joined with the US Marines in a restive district called Marjah was ambushed as it attempted to find a good spot to build a school. Under fire and cowering in a ditch, my experience offered a very real illustration of the challenges faced by NATO-led forces in attempting to achieve success in the country after a decade of war with the Taliban.

The main international news agencies, Reuters, Agence-France Presse (AFP) and the Associated Press (AP), deliver a valuable service by maintaining an enduring presence in a country even when the fighting is over. But their resources are also limited and their most experienced correspondents rarely stick around once the main action is over. This means that a developing nation that dominated the news agenda for a chunk of time, such as Libya, will be largely neglected when the focus switches elsewhere. Egypt is a different matter because of its regional and strategic importance. Most of the major news outlets have correspondents permanently based in the country and international interest will be much more enduring.

The media played an important part in galvanising the international community into action when the first demonstrations erupted in Libya in 2011. It also proved hugely important in spreading the message of resistance and change in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen.

Emotive coverage of the violence against civilians carried out by forces loyal to Bashar al-Assad in Syria,

The media played an important part in galvanising the international community

and the intervening forces head home. Bombs still explode in the streets of Baghdad but they are rarely reported in Britain because dispatches from Iraq are competing with issues much closer to home, such as the recession, the euro-zone crisis and domestic politics.

The same is true with the Arab Spring states. Libya filled the news pages and TV broadcasts in 2011 as rebel forces, backed by NATO fast jets, clashed with troops loyal to Colonel Muammar Gaddafi around the oil hub of Ras Lanuf and the then besieged city of Misrata. The coverage climaxed with the surge into Tripoli by a rag-tag army of largely young men, hanging off pickup trucks, waving AK47s and singing victory songs.

I was there. I saw the shooting. I spoke to the fighters and the families that prayed for the conflict to end. I interviewed the wounded and the bereaved,

however, demonstrates the limitations of journalism in spurring the international community to intervene.

Six months after the initial large-scale bombing of Homs that left hundreds of civilians dead and took the life of Marie Colvin, the veteran war correspondent of *The Sunday Times* who courageously ventured to the front line to tell the world what was happening, the bloodshed is continuing and the international community is as divided as ever over what to do.

It is the job of foreign correspondents to tell the world what is happening in difficult places. Cynically, however, there is a limited period of time

It is the job of foreign correspondents to tell the world what is happening in difficult places

that the same kind of albeit very worthy story – supressed people in a distant land fighting to topple a dictatorship – carries value for news outlets in, for example, the UK, where they need to sell newspapers or attract viewers.

That is why humanitarian crises in Africa rarely feature in the mainstream media regardless of the appalling level of human suffering and the clear worthiness of the topic. It is also why the smaller countries of the Arab Spring have largely had their 15 minutes of fame when the revolutions that ended decades of one-man rule grabbed the global spotlight.

News is only news for a finite period of time and the public is prone to growing weary of hearing about the same problem, no matter how tragic. It also has a limited attention span to read about reconstruction projects in post-conflict zones, even when their money is being used to fund the effort.

Ultimately, the threshold for what is deemed newsworthy rises after every attack or atrocity during a conflict and can be depressingly fickle once the guns fall silent. ■

The role of the media: Influencing behaviour and driving change

Anthony Fairbanks Weston, Managing Director of The Platform, suggests that we should make more use of targeted media across transition countries to influence behaviour, restore stability and build for the future.

The Platform (www.platformsc.org.uk) is a neutral humanitarian media business that can draw upon a talent pool of over 850 media professionals to create bespoke media teams. A considerable number of these personnel have been directly involved in recent years in extensive, ground-breaking, influence operations. The Platform works in stressed territories to help governments manage and achieve lasting change, by utilising all forms of media to inform, influence and inspire communities.

The media is a powerful tool and yet, if we look at the international investment – temporal and fiscal – being channelled to support reconstruction efforts post-conflict or regime change, there is no mention of the media, strategic communications or the use of the media to impart information, influence behaviour, inspire and drive change.

Transition countries face a number of common challenges:
- economic recovery;
- restoring state apparatus and the rule of law;
- humanitarian priorities;
- security and reconciliation; and, crucially,
- managing expectations.

If the transitional authorities or newly elected governments are to meet these challenges they must do it with the consensus, support and belief of the people they lead; and be seen to be doing it. This requires governments to recognise the benefits of engagement and communication and to have the capability to communicate with – to 'message' – the people effectively and compellingly.

Seldom, however, does this ability – or willingness – to communicate exist in a post-autocratic society, so we must recognise this and work closely with the transitional authorities to develop the communications skills necessary. Not just putting in place the infrastructure and processes, but delivering media training, and assisting in the development and implementation of an integrated and coherent strategic communications strategy.

Central to this task is the use of skilled media professionals who can interpret the strategic intent, craft appropriately targeted messages that will resonate with internal and external audiences, and produce material of all genres, that is engaging (even entertaining) and delivered via the most effective media to influence behaviours. Through these efforts we can enhance the chances of successful transition and directly address the risks to stability, security and international reputation.

For example, a critical area in building stability is building confidence in the legitimate security services, undermining the notion that militias and other armed groups are necessary or legitimate. One such project led to the production of over 200, high-profile, weekly television features on the progress and activity of the national security forces to help build faith and confidence in them as a legitimate force for good. Critically, these programmes were also designed to influence the conduct of the soldiers and policemen themselves.

In parallel, the development of a strong and independent media will contribute to, facilitate and enable leaders to meet the challenges:
- communicating critical information;
- restoring faith and confidence;
- supporting good governance; and
- underpinning strategic objectives such as transparency, justice, engagement in the political and constitutional process and the creation of a vibrant civil society.

By nurturing a national media and inculcating vocational and ethical skills, we can build capacity and cultivate a strong, independent and professional industry: Empowering local people to tell their own stories and showcase their own regional successes; encouraging freedom of expression and a public voice; and holding governments, politicians and other authorities to account.

The events we are witnessing across North Africa and the Middle East are life changing, world changing. The media is a powerful tool and we should harness this power to inform, influence and inspire this change and help build peace and stability across the region. ■

THE PLATFORM

Precision Communications: Inform - Influence - Inspire

A media revolution

The use of user-generated content has been a major feature of coverage of the Arab Spring

By **Edward Mortimer** , **Chief Speechwriter and Director of Communications to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, 1998-2006**

In media history, the 'Arab Spring'[1] will be remembered mainly for the explosion of 'user-generated content' – or UGC, as it is known in the trade – and the fact that for much of the story this was the only first-hand source available to the mainstream international news media.

For several years before Mohamed Bouazizi set himself alight in December 2010, the role of the citizen-journalist had been widely debated among media professionals and scholars. It had become clear that, at a time when fewer and fewer 'traditional' news organisations could afford to maintain extensive networks of professional journalists and cameramen around the world, technology had placed in the hands of 'ordinary' people the capacity to film and record events as they were happening, and transmit them around the world in a matter of minutes, or even seconds. The iconic example of this was the photograph of the dying student, shot (in both senses) during the demonstrations that followed the 2009 election in Iran, which is said to have been on President Obama's desk within 15 minutes.

Yet nothing had quite prepared us for the sheer volume of footage of street protests, and of the violence used to repress them, combined with the inaccessibility of much of the action for independent professional media, which has characterised the Arab Spring.

Indeed, one might say that, combined with the existence of satellite TV channels able and willing to transmit these images, it has made the Arab Spring. Without those endlessly repeated jumpy images of crowds marching, crowds chanting, people running, falling, bleeding, and smoke rising from buildings, how many Arabs would have known that there was an Arab Spring, and felt emboldened to take part in it?

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[1] This phrase is probably a media creation and many commentators have tried to reject it on two grounds. Firstly, the word 'Arab' conveys a false sense of cultural and political uniformity, implying that the various upheavals in the region are part of a single phenomenon, when in fact they are disparate events arising mainly from local causes, each following its own distinct course. Secondly, the word 'Spring' conveys an expectation that these events all betoken a change for the better. I will not enter into the merits of these arguments here, except to observe that journalists are tasked with presenting facts in a way that enables the public to understand them, and that this cannot be done without some sort of narrative framework. 'Arab Spring' has become a widely accepted shorthand and other phrases that have been proposed, such as 'Arab Awakening', are open to much the same objections.

If that question is unanswerable, another admits only one answer: can we, the outside world, imagine the Arab Spring without those images? Surely not. UGC has not simply made the story more vivid, more exciting, more telegenic. It has been the story, or at very least has transformed its nature.

Accuracy and authenticity

How does the abundance, and dominance, of such source material affect the ability of mainstream news organisations to guarantee the accuracy of the information they transmit? Clearly it poses an enormous challenge.

My impression is that the BBC has made a greater effort than most to handle this material responsibly, and is in some ways better equipped to do so. As long as six years ago the BBC had the foresight to create a 'UGC Hub' in the newsroom. Designed originally to handle unsolicited material sent in by the audience, the Hub now combines this with a proactive newsgathering role, focused on the social media.

It is the Hub's job to get content verified and put out a bulletin, especially when there is a big breaking story and the key source or witness is an 'ordinary' person. The footage may be a news-line in itself, or may form part of a number of stories.

Clearly the BBC has learned fast how to check the authenticity of UGC footage. In judging material from the Arab world it is able to draw on the resources of the Arabic service and of the BBC Monitoring service in Caversham. Both contain people familiar with the life and topography of Arab cities – able to judge, for instance, as one Syrian producer from Monitoring was, when what had been presented as film of military police herding people on to a bus for transfer to a detention camp, in fact simply showed the normal scene in Damascus in the rush hour.

More often than not, they can now judge whether a scene was really filmed at the place and time that the supplier claims, by looking at such details as the weather, buildings visible, number-plates of cars – and by listening carefully to what the crowd is chanting and in what accent or dialect.

Ideally, of course, they communicate directly with the person who did the filming. That is not always possible, but people supplying content have become more aware of the need to prove their authenticity, and take trouble to include the kind of detail mentioned above.

Nothing had quite prepared us for the sheer volume of footage of street protests

Opposition agenda

But much of the international media has been slow to grasp the fact that, by its nature, UGC tends to come overwhelmingly from opposition activists, and thus to reinforce the perception that they are on the side of the angels, their opponents on the other. Most of the people generating it are not neutral bystanders or aspiring journalists, but citizens with a strong interest in the outcome.

They are not necessarily representative of the population – nor can one assume that all social and political groups are equally media-savvy. These pictures do not become available on YouTube and other social media by accident, but because those who film and post them desperately need and want the world to see and hear their story, which means, of course, their side of the story. While it may be good that they have become more sophisticated in the sense of understanding the need to prove their authenticity, the same sophistication can be used to 'improve' the image.

A good example appeared in early 2012 on Al Jazeera's media programme, Listening Post, showing how easy it is for activists to give an urban landscape the appearance of having been subjected to heavy shelling, simply by burning a few tyres. Yet Al Jazeera's own reporting, especially on its Arabic channel, has often been quite uncritical in its use of this kind of material.

Like all wars, the wars of the Arab Spring are being fought on the information and propaganda front; and just as advances in military technology give advantage now to offence, now to defence, so there is a premium for the side which is ahead in understanding and applying the latest developments in information technology. At least in the first phase of the Arab Spring, that advantage lay with opposition activists, but some regimes – notably the Syrian – have been catching up, learning for instance how to infiltrate and manipulate the email accounts, blogs and tweets of some of their opponents.

Sense of reality

UGC is evidently here to stay as a major component of news coverage. It contributes to a strong sense of emotional engagement for audiences, and also brings an important sense of the reality of the front line, which can contribute to perceptions of accuracy, if audiences are convinced that broadcasters have made the appropriate checks.

Ignoring or banning it is not an option. The sheer volume of material, and in many cases its nature, often give it overall credibility even when individual items are not fully verifiable – and the story it tells can be very important. The fact that UGC generally enables the public to see conflict through the eyes of opposition activists, rather than governments, seems an inescapable fact of life, and there is no obvious solution – other than to make sure that concerns about source material are fully shared with the audience. ■

This article draws on an independent assessment of BBC coverage of the Arab Spring, which the author wrote for the BBC Trust earlier this year.

Most of the people generating content are not neutral bystanders... but citizens with a strong interest in the outcome

Egyptian transition

**How does the country find a way to move from authoritarian
rule to democracy without triggering counter-revolution?**

By **Bahgat Korany**, **Professor of International Relations
at the American University in Cairo (AUC) and Director
of the AUC Forum**

Post-revolution transition situations – in Egypt
and elsewhere – often present a generalised
bottleneck. The challenge is to get through the
bottleneck toward democratisation, thereby avoiding
a potential counter-revolution. To cope with this
challenge, we must answer two questions:
- Why does this bottleneck exist? (Diagnosis)
- What are its components, and how to deal with
them? (Prescription).

Present-day Egypt is, rather than a monolithic
bloc, a set of competing groups in a Hobbesian state
of nature. The confrontation is among three principal
'Ms' not yet trained in the rules of democratic contest:
the military, the mosque and the (liberal-leftist)
masses. The winner that will determine the way out
will be the group or coalition most capable of coping
with three basic problems: daily security, the economy
and governance.

Uncontrollable fall-out

What happened in Egypt in January-February 2011,
after 59 years of authoritarian rule, is comparable
with a pressure cooker explosion. The outcome is
not, at present, a smooth transition to democracy, but
rather a huge fall-out of uncontrollable debris. Social
demands and political groups are mushrooming daily.
Many of these groups confront each other nakedly
in the liberated public space, exchanging blows to
undermine each other rather than working together
to build alliances. This public space becomes an arena
for zero-sum games rather than coalition-building or
Latin American 'pactos'.

The military, through the Supreme Council of
the Armed Forces (SCAF), is the only unified political

actor. It possesses gun-power and controls Egypt's
'deep state'. Its men head some public services and
governorates, and it controls considerable financial
resources through its economic empire. But because
of its mastery over these assets, SCAF is exaggerating
its capacity to run the country. This is apparent in
its (mis)management of 'deep society' dominated by
Islamists, their social units and mosque-goers.

The mosque allows its mass followers to meet
five times a day (during daily prayers) and holds a
form of general assembly once a week (during the
Friday prayers). Very few political parties have such a
capacity for frequent face-to-face co-ordination and
mass mobilisation.

Alongside these two polarised 'deep state'/'deep
society' groups stand the mass of liberals and leftists,
including feminist and workers groups – the third
'M'. They do not possess the power assets of the
other two Ms, but accrue power by arbitrating
between them and acting as 'balancer', if not 'bridge-
builder'. They could, if united, trace a path for a
coalition to get out of the bottleneck, mitigate zero-
sum tactics and provide a needed third way between
theocracy and militocracy.

The effectiveness and credibility, however, of any
group or coalition will be a function of its capacity
to get out of the bottleneck by coping with major
challenges. Three stand out.

Major challenges

The first is the issue of daily security. Not only are
police forces discredited because of past excesses, but
security infrastructure itself is in shambles. Prisons
have been forced open, police stations invaded and set
on fire and their ammunitions stolen. The result is a
situation where people feel increasingly responsible
for their own security, taking the law into their own
hands – with many excesses. Moreover, the public
space could be penetrated by thugs, drug dealers and
organised crime. There is even talk of emerging
al Qaeda cells in Sinai. If security sector reform is not
initiated and security re-established, revolutionary
forces themselves could be discredited as being
responsible for the chaos – and the way becomes open
for counter-revolution.

The second major challenge lies in the economy.
This sector presents the greatest challenge – and
prerequisite – to revolutionary success. The revolution
led to high expectations being immediately satisfied

**What happened in
Egypt after 59 years
of authoritarian rule,
is comparable with a
pressure cooker explosion**

at a time when resources are shrinking as tourism and foreign investment are drying up. Compared with 5.5 per cent in 2010, the growth rate in 2011 was 1.8 per cent. In addition, the local private sector suffers from wild-cat strikes, sit-ins and forced factory closures. If not reformed and boosted, it could depart, taking with it funds, know-how and networking assets.

Although Egypt could count on an International Monetary Fund loan, it has to pay the price by reducing subsidies, which account for 40 per cent of government expenditure. Although most subsidies go to the top 20 per cent of the population, their reform is risky and necessitates general economic reform. Such reform includes the tax system, which accounts for only 15 per cent of national revenue, and integration of the informal sector estimated now at 40 per cent of the labour force. Besides, economic reform has to show immediate dividends to bolster minimal governance.

The third and main issue is the one of governance. Although it is important to establish democratic norms (separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, rule of law, transparency and accountability), the most immediate challenge is civil-military relations.

Military mindset

For the last 60 years, all four presidents have been from the military with its mindset of hierarchy, obedience and non-transparency. When a civilian president was elected in May 2012, the military reacted with a series of decrees to limit his powers and give its organ – SCAF – legislation and veto powers. As yet, the military has refused to make public its budget or its huge economic assets (estimates differ widely but they are probably 15-20 per cent of the economy). Its intelligence service – the Mukhabarat – is the only security organ and information storehouse that remains intact. Increasingly it is filling the space left by Ministry of the Interior organs and the Military Police as the guardian of public buildings.

If civilian rule is not bolstered, Egypt would continue as a 'military society', even a Mukhabarat state. Neighbouring Turkey's experience, for instance, could be a source for security sector reform and the establishment of civil primacy in governance. ■

Today's Egypt

Professor Gareth Stansfield talks to Heba Morayef, Egypt Director at Human Rights Watch, about the challenges facing her country

The protestors in Tahrir Square and other parts of Egypt called for democracy, social justice and an end to rights abuses. How would you assess the success of the Egyptian transition with regard to each of these demands?

It is too early to assess success and answer whether the demands for democracy and justice have been satisfied. There have been different phases in the past two years, each with their own challenges and partial successes. First was the uprising against [former President Hosni] Mubarak's police state, then a year and a half of military rule, and now Mursi's presidency.

This last phase started on Sunday 12 August 2012, when Mursi pushed aside the two leading military generals: Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, the head of Egypt's Higher Military Council and head of state after Mubarak resigned from the presidency, and Chief of Staff Sami Annan. This is when the Muslim Brotherhood started to have full decision-making power. This current phase is full of challenges, especially regarding bringing about democracy, ensuring justice and ending rights abuses.

International election monitoring organisations concluded that although the elections were disorganised, they were sound overall and reflective of the parties that are most organised at a grassroots level. In sum, the elections facilitated a transition in power. None of us knew until the results were announced on Sunday afternoon who had won. In this respect, they set a good and important precedent for Egypt.

But the most serious challenge in this third phase came after Mursi's 22 November Constitutional Declaration in which he gave his decrees and laws immunity from judicial review, thereby undermining respect for the rule of law. This means that if Mursi were to pass a law that violates human rights, victims affected by that law would have no recourse to a remedy, a clearly unacceptable state of affairs. The judiciary in Egypt has always had a mixed reputation – there were the many judges who oversaw Mubarak's fraudulent elections and sentenced dissidents under repressive laws, but there were also judges who would annul executive decrees on the grounds of

constitutional and sometimes international rights. Egypt is in dire need of judicial reform but Mursi's Constitutional Declaration is not the way to do it and has created a political crisis with the legal community. At the moment, it's difficult to see what exit strategies there are, apart from a repeal of the declaration.

With respect to Mursi's record on justice and human rights, the picture is far more mixed. Elections are only ever one small part of the picture and are not in and of themselves sufficient to indicate a transition to a more democratic system. In addition, the functions and content of democracy, that of basic rights, are just as important as the procedural elections. With respect to freedom of expression, gender equality, the role of religion in legislation, freedom of religion and the impact on minorities, there is reason to be concerned.

I remain cautiously optimistic about the potential to successfully advocate for some human rights issues, such as police abuse. Mursi has shown that he is interested in addressing arbitrary detention and accountability for police abuse, albeit in a very ad hoc manner. At the discourse level, Brotherhood officials say that they are against torture and plan to reform the police, but in Mursi's first few months in office, we are yet to see any serious steps taken in that direction. However, as Mursi has only had full authority in this area since 12 August 2012 and as he must deal with the full bureaucracy of the security sector in Egypt – the backbone of Mubarak's police state – it is too soon to say conclusively whether they will push for true security sector reform and whether he has sufficient control over the Ministry of Interior to push this through.

Two areas of human rights are particularly worrying: gender equality and freedom of religion and expression. In Egypt, the understanding of the new political leadership is very different from international human rights law when it comes to women's rights and issues such as abolishing prison sentences for expression-related offences (e.g. the decriminalisation of defamation of religion).

We have already seen a number of cases filed against journalists and prison sentences handed down for "insulting the president". This carries with it obvious risks for the political space which currently exists, as well as for the ability of the opposition to criticise and hold the Brotherhood to account in the future. In addition, the idea that defamation of religion should not be criminalised has no buy-in in Egypt. We are seeing a spike in the number of blasphemy prosecutions, which represents a threat to religious minorities and those who interpret religion differently to Sunni majority views.

These battles are currently being played out in the Constituent Assembly, and it is still unclear at this stage whether the 'principles' or 'rulings' of Sharia will be the framework put down as the main sources of law, and how such a framework will

be ordered, whether for example Al Azhar will be given a role as sole adjudicator of these terms. It is unclear whether this will go through, but if it does, it will fundamentally affect the future of Egypt. The constitution is therefore key to watch.

The legacy of Hosni Mubarak's regime persists in contemporary Egypt. Could you give us an insight into the legal and institutional framework that, according to Human Rights Watch, continues to impede a democratic transition?

The year and a half of military rule was a continuation of the Mubarak regime but one where, for the first time, we saw the military exposed instead of being the power behind the throne. In addition to the corrosive nature of military rule, which saw new forms of military abuses, including violence against protesters and military trials of thousands of civilians, the military monopolised the political decision-making. They put a break on reform, including security sector reform, when civil society initiatives were attempting to bring in changes in the first months of 2011. With regard to reforming the legal framework, with the exception of the political parties' law, the military refused to amend other key laws, including the trade unions' law and the associations' law.

This means that, at present, the authoritarian legal and institutional framework of the previous regime in Egypt is for the most part still in place, and we see this with the security services in particular. The military remains the backbone and it will continue to attempt to protect its space and resources and to stay outside civilian oversight. This will be a barrier to a democratic transition.

In addition, the security services remain the same as before with regular reports of torture and excessive use of force by the police. There have been no trials of police for the crimes of torture they perpetrated for decades under Mubarak, nor has there been real accountability for the violence of January 2011. While Mubarak and his former Minister of Interior Habib al-Adly were sentenced to life imprisonment, all other assistant ministers of interior on trial and senior security chiefs – basically all those who were in command and control – were acquitted.

Out of 38 trials of lower-level police officials for the violence on January 2011, there have been 26 verdicts, with 21 acquittals and only five convictions and three of those were suspended. This has given even more support to police officers and the Ministry of Interior, which has warned the Muslim Brotherhood not to disrupt their activities, otherwise security on the streets will be affected. If no security sector reform is implemented, the same abuses of the Mubarak regime will continue.

Furthermore, the Mubarak legal framework remains largely in place, apart from the loosening of the law on political parties that now allows parties

■ **A mural in Cairo depicts a combination of the faces of Egypt's former president Hosni Mubarak and Field Marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi**

People have taken more space for themselves and there is less fear in today's Egypt about addressing taboos

Accountability and the issue of military impunity are very important battles for the human rights community

to form for elections. There was no reform of the NGO law, however, and staff of unregistered NGOs have been put on trial. Equally, the lack of a trade union law means that the executive power is able to deny freedom of association or assembly. With the significant exception of the plethora of new political parties in Egypt, it is business as usual, but with a different executive in power.

People have taken more space for themselves and there is less fear in today's Egypt about addressing taboos. However, there is no legal framework to protect this new space, no reform of Mubarak-era laws, which criminalise legitimate expression and assembly. So, without legal reform, police and security agencies can continue to interfere in their actions.

What is the situation with regards to corruption in Egypt?

There has been a lot of anti-corruption rhetoric from the very early days of the revolution in Egypt because an end to corruption was one of the main demands of the uprising. This rhetoric was first aimed at the Mubarak regime, his sons and their associates. Rage against the power practices of the former regime was a mobilising factor during the uprisings.

In the immediate aftermath of Mubarak's ousting, when the military took over, we did not see any attempt to comprehensively target corruption. And the reason here again is that the Egyptian military is complicit in ensuring that there continues to be a lack of transparency and that no one really knows what is happening.

The military controls large sections of the economy, nobody knows exactly how much. They own everything from real estate and heavy industry factories to mineral water companies and travel agencies. So far, nobody has managed to document evidence of corruption within their businesses. However, we know that the higher business community was operating with corrupt practices and that the military may have been involved.

Therefore, there was no interest in taking action against corruption beyond a few ad hoc trials against figures directly associated with Mubarak. These trials often took place in absentia. This was 'it' for the anti-corruption measures.

There are various activist groups who are pushing for anti-corruption measures. The Muslim Brotherhood has said that one of its priorities is dealing with corruption, but now that Mursi is in power, they have to balance this aim with outreach to the business community in Egypt, as well as their desire not to ruffle too many feathers.

How do you envision the future of civil-military relations in Egypt?

The military is very integrated into Egyptian society. Military officials are placed across Egypt as governors and leaders of key institutions in an omnipresent way, and they are integrated throughout the business sector and different layers of government. This cannot be rolled back with short-term measures. The process will take time.

In the year and a half when the military ruled Egypt, we saw a serious deterioration in human rights protections. We saw abuses that were terrible: protesters killed, female demonstrators sexually assaulted by military officers. There were hundreds of cases of torture by the military, none of which were investigated. The only two cases which were investigated were the sexual assault of female protesters in March 2011 under the guise of 'virginity tests' and the killing of 27 Coptic protesters in October 2011, when military vehicles ran over, crushed and killed 14 people and a further 13 were shot dead with live gunfire.

In both these cases, we have not seen proper accountability. The only military officer put on trial for the 'virginity tests' was acquitted, despite an admission from ruling military generals that the incident had taken place. And only three soldiers were given sentences ranging from two to three years for 'involuntary manslaughter' after a partial and unsatisfactory trial before a military court.

Accountability and the issue of military impunity are very important battles for the human rights community. Ultimately, there will never be accountability for military abuses until military personnel can be tried before civilian courts, instead of military courts, which fundamentally lack the independence to try these abuses.

Women have played a prominent role in the Arab uprisings. How and to what extent has the status of women in Egypt been challenged since the overthrow of the old regime?

After the first few days of the uprising, especially once the violence had ended, we saw a huge increase in the proportion of women in every demonstration across the country. There were therefore thousands of Egyptian women who experienced a new sense of empowerment and a desire to have an equal stake in determining Egypt's future. This did not translate into positions of decision-making in the aftermath, however.

This is not surprising as we moved from a popular uprising to a military-dominated regime, which did not understand women's rights at all. We also saw a rise in violence against women by military and police officers and a failure to investigate violence against them.

Under Mubarak, women were discriminated against in personal status laws as well as in some criminal code provisions derived from Sharia law. When the Parliament was convened in the first half of 2012, some Salafist members of parliament put forward proposals to repeal a women's right to unilaterally initiate no-fault divorce, to decriminalise female genital mutilation, and to lower the marriage

age from 18 – all proposals that amounted to a regression in women's rights. However, at the time, the opposition from women's rights activists, liberal political parties and the support of the independent media was such that they backed down.

However, we know that the Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood have a socially conservative agenda that is not consistent with the rights of women as defined by the international legal framework. This causes much concern with women's rights groups going forward who fear that once a new parliament is elected there will be further legal reforms that could roll back some of the small gains the women's rights movement has achieved.

The same debate exists in the Constituent Assembly drafting the constitution. As it stands, Article 68 does not allow full equality between men and women because it limits equality with the terms "insofar as it does not conflict with the rulings of Sharia". The retention of this provision will set a clear ceiling on future legislative reform for women's rights since the rulings of Sharia are clear on inequality of inheritance and marriage, divorce and custody rights for women and men. The compromise on the table is to delete that provision altogether, but it's not clear whether or not that will happen since Salafi members are adamant about retaining it.

How can the international community help support Egypt in its transition?
I think one way in which the international community can help support Egypt's transition is by developing a coherent policy on the promotion and protection of human rights, which, for many countries, is supposed to be part of foreign policy. The international community needs to remember the lesson of the Egyptian uprising: giving unconditional support to Mubarak was not a good strategy for ensuring stability in Egypt and human rights cannot be ignored, otherwise years of abuse will lead to an uprising.

This recognition was to a certain extent reflected in the changes to the European Neighbourhood Policy in the spring of 2011, which set out a form of human rights conditionality in its relations with Egypt, but we have not yet seen this implemented.

Western and other governments need to treat human rights as a serious part of their foreign policy engagement because there is still an opportunity to influence while the Muslim Brotherhood is susceptible to international pressure. At present, the Brotherhood is seeking international recognition and Egypt's political leaders need to hear messages concerning police abuse, freedom of expression, gender equality, inclusiveness and diversity, and the role of religion in the modern state.

These are difficult discussions but there are treaties that set out these issues in objective, legal terms. Related to this, the promotion of human rights as part of a foreign policy toward Egypt should be the norm rather than the exception, in order to make these issues become a normal part of regular discussions.

The second aspect that the international community should prioritise in its relations with Egypt is security sector reform. Comprehensive police reform that is based on a sound process and international standards is key to ensuring security and economic stability in Egypt in the future. So many of the crises of the past two years, which in some cases brought down cabinets, were due to excessive use of force by the police and the killing of protestors.

Finally, the economic situation is dire, and any international financial assistance, regardless of its conditionality, needs to take into account socio-economic rights, since huge sections of the Egyptian population live below the poverty line. Both donors and international financial institutions must remember that social justice was one of the key demands of the Egyptian uprising.

They need to act with transparency in Egypt about their operations and the conditionality they attach to this. Here again, police reform will be key since it will have an immediate impact on the tourism industry. ■

Playing by the rules

Tunisia has all the key elements to ensure a successful transition

By **Erik Churchill**, **Tunis-based development consultant and analyst**

Tunisia's transition to democracy following the popular uprising in January 2011 that toppled former dictator Ben Ali is widely seen as the most successful of the Arab Spring. The cohesiveness of Tunisian society and the relative strength of Tunisian state institutions were fundamental to this success. While the political and cultural structures in place have undoubtedly aided Tunisia's ability to withstand the difficulties of its transitional period, Tunisian leaders have made key choices that have ensured that the transition has remained peaceful and based on democratic principles, albeit with some recent concerning developments. Despite these gains, risks remain, particularly from the still-fragile economy and from cultural conflicts that have polarised the country.

While Tunisia's uprising was sudden, it did not come out of nowhere. The underlying problems that led to the overthrow of Ben Ali were widely acknowledged. Over the past decade, the Tunisian government had increasingly found it difficult to meet the growing challenge of unemployment in the country. Young people, in particular, struggled to find employment. Job seekers, who often had been

well educated and were ready to enter the workforce, were stymied by a stagnant economy made worse by increasingly rampant regime corruption. When Mohamed Bouazizi, the fruit-seller in the central Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid, self-immolated, many Tunisians saw in him a reflection of a wider struggle that the Tunisian government was unable or unwilling to confront.

Playing by the rules

Following massive popular unrest and the departure of then-president Ben Ali, the political transition was marked by a remarkable willingness for political actors to play by the rules of the game. The first transitional government, made up largely of former regime officials, was replaced under popular pressure by a committee to set up the elections led by jurist Yadh Ben Achour, and a technocratic government led by Béji Caïd Essebsi, who had been a popular figure in Tunisian independence leader Habib Bourguiba's government. While many questioned Essebsi's role in the previous regime, his insistence on holding elections and his commitment to stand down after these elections helped to focus political energy on building political parties and preparing for the elections.

The 23 October 2011 elections were a milestone. Well organised and internationally recognised as

free and fair, Tunisians brought to power for the first time a government that was truly representative. The government was tasked with a dual mandate of writing the new constitution and ensuring the day-to-day activities of the government. The Islamist party, Ennahda, which had been banned and repressed under the previous regime, calmed its fiercest critics with its insistence on forming a coalition government alongside two secular parties, the Congress for the Republic and Ettakatol.

While much of the debate over the constitution has remained inside the Constituent Assembly, one key element was a compromise by Ennahda on the issue of Islamic law (Sharia). Many conservative members of Ennahda fought for the inclusion of a reference to Sharia in the new constitution, but the moderate side of the party ultimately won out, under the pretext of not wanting to further divide Tunisian society over what would have been a controversial issue. By the end of November 2012, negotiations over the content of Tunisia's constitution were still ongoing

New-found freedoms

Much of the political debate during Tunisia's transition has been over cultural and religious issues, debates which the previous regime strictly prohibited. The rise of hitherto repressed ultra-conservative religious groups has divided Tunisian society and shaken the political and security apparatus. With new-found freedoms for both religious conservatives and secular liberals, these groups have often clashed over issues such as media bias, the rights of women to wear the Islamic face veil (which was previously banned), the showing of films critical of Islamism, and the display of artwork that many have deemed offensive.

Public debates over these issues have often descended into violence with many secularists accusing the government of being complicit in attempts to restrict freedom of expression. The government has argued that it is important not to repeat the mistakes of the past by cracking down too hard on ultra-conservatives, a measure which could push them underground and lead to greater violence. However, as attacks have increased and threatened the image of the tourist-based economy, the government has struggled to balance these competing movements.

While culture wars have often dominated the media coverage of Tunisia's transition, opinion polls have shown that the economy remains Tunisians' major preoccupation. As it stands, the political upheaval and extended transition has left the Tunisian economy vulnerable. The coalition government's first major challenge was to restart the economy and begin the process of creating more equitable economic development across the country. Progress has been slowed in two key sectors of the Tunisian economy: by the economic crisis in Europe, which has held back exports; and continued security issues in Tunisia and the region, which have hurt tourism.

The G8 summit in Deauville, France in 2011 promised Tunisia financial aid to help it through the transition – these commitments, while not yet entirely fulfilled, have proved critical for the government. International financial institutions have stepped up aid to the country while the United Nations has provided support for governance reforms and measures to increase the role of civil society and associations. Gulf countries, notably Qatar, have also played a major role in helping to meet Tunisia's financing needs.

Security issues remain an important factor for Tunisians. The perception of rising crime has been a major preoccupation. The conflict in Libya further destabilised the country, with previously secure borders becoming porous. Exacerbating the problem is the perception among Tunisians of security under Ben Ali. Under the former regime, a self-reinforcing feedback loop between the heavy presence of police, the absence of information related to crime, and the draconian penalties for lawbreakers created the impression of an extremely safe and secure society. With those elements gone, Tunisians are anxious for their government to take control of the situation. Major reforms in the security apparatus and justice system are badly needed, but will take time and help from outside.

Looking forward, Tunisia's transition remains on track. Elections are scheduled for 20 March 2013, which will be the first under the country's new constitution. Thus far Tunisia's success has been based on the ability of political actors to continue to operate within the norms of civil discourse. While major divisions separate the Islamist and secular camps, there is widespread agreement that these issues should be solved through elected representatives and at the ballot box. An increasingly organised and vocal civil society has taken root, which will pressure the government for positive changes through democratic, citizen-based action.

Nevertheless, major risks remain, particularly because the underlying causes of the uprising have yet to be systematically addressed. With high unemployment and high inequality, the government will be under pressure to deliver, making it vulnerable. Likewise, the ability of Tunisian society to deal constructively with ultra-conservative religious groups remains uncertain. These groups have shown their ability to destabilise the country quickly and there is not yet a clear policy response that has been articulated by a major political party. Finally, while Ben Ali is in exile, the vast majority of institutions, in both the public and private sector, remain in the hands of those who worked with the former regime. The rise of a new political party with elements of the former regime will be a major challenge for all political parties to handle.

Tunisia has the elements in place to transition to a well-functioning, responsive and inclusive government. Its future success will rely mostly on all political and civil actors playing by the rules and respecting the outcomes of democracy. ∎

■ The international community has promised financial aid to help Tunisia through its transition. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is pictured here greeting members of the public at the Baron d'Erlanger Palace in Carthage, Tunisia in February 2012

Tunisia has the elements in place to transition to a well-functioning, responsive and inclusive government

The quiet revolution

Professor Gareth Stansfield talks to HE Riadh Bettaieb, Tunisia's Minister for Investment and International Cooperation, about the challenges facing the country

Minister, it is often stated that Tunisia is the most successful example of a transition to democracy within the Arab Spring context. Why do you think this is?

Tunisia entered a new phase in its contemporary history after the revolution of 14 January 2011. This revolution, which impressed the world with its peacefulness and maturity, came to put an end to tyranny and corruption and to achieve the values of freedom and dignity. Since then our country has reached a crucial turning point towards establishing a democratic transition, a process that is being continuously strengthened.

Major steps have been made in this direction, the most important of which was the organisation of the first fair and transparent elections. These resulted in a pluralistic constituent assembly in charge of writing a new constitution for the country and preparing the needed laws regulating public life in the transitional

phase, particularly the electoral code and the press code. A road map was set up for the next political steps, and most importantly the presidential, legislative and municipal elections, whereby the end of October 2012 was determined as the deadline for the completion of the new constitution and the end of March 2013 would be the date of the future elections. However, the drafting and passing of the Constitution has been delayed, which will see a further delay in the elections.

This is a strong signal at both domestic and international levels showing a clear vision and a commitment to implementing the process of democratic transition within a framework of broad consensus.

One of the choices showing the success of this democratic transition is the formation of a coalition government composed of the first three parties that won the elections, which is working today in an atmosphere of harmony and co-operation with all

political economic and social parties, to serve the national interest and achieve the desired goals in spite of the difficulties it faces at times.

Dialogue and consensus are valued as key rules in addressing all the political sensitivities, with the participation of civil society and the various structures in developing orientations and policies. These are the most prominent factors in the success of this democratic transition, and we are determined to consolidate this approach to consecrate principles of freedom, democracy and the right of everyone to participate in building the new Tunisia.

Could you give us an overview of both the new business opportunities that have been generated by the Tunisian revolution and the country's urgent challenges?

The new Tunisia is now striving to meet the development challenges it is facing, aware and convinced that the success of the democratic transition and the consolidation of its foundations can be achieved only by setting a dynamic development and economic strategy to secure the grounds for growth and balanced welfare for all the people and in all regions of the country.

The process of essential economic reforms is consistent with the requirements of the new democratic reality of the country in the scope of an integrated and comprehensive approach aimed at establishing a system of sound economic governance, providing a business environment capable of ensuring economic and financial integrity and transparency in business management.

This strategic direction has enabled Tunisia to engage in the international system and dynamics of economic transparency, so as to provide the different economic actors and investors in Tunisia with a predictable investment climate, reinforcing their confidence in the country so that it can rapidly regain its position as one of the most promising destinations for investment in Africa, the Arab world and the Mediterranean region.

Could you describe in detail how your Ministry has sought to tackle the economic difficulties in Tunisia? Which aspects of development are considered as the most important?

Tunisia experienced economic difficulties after the revolution due to the disruption of production and the decline in the tourism sector, as well as in investment and export, which is quite normal in the midst of a revolution that overthrew the whole political system.

Thanks to the awareness of our people, the marked improvement in the political landscape of the country and the resulting progress on the path of democratic transition, the beginning of 2012 was characterised by an improvement in economic conditions. Domestic and foreign investment rates have recovered compared with 2010, as have

exports, agricultural production and tourism, which experienced a significant revival.

This improvement has helped to achieve a growth rate in most sectors of about 4.5 per cent during the first three months of 2012, as compared with 2011's negative outcome -2 per cent.

The Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation played an important role by working hard to intensify communication between Tunisia and our financial partners at both multilateral and bilateral levels in order to inform them about the government's future work programmes and the overall reforms to be introduced. This sensitised them to the country's needs in terms of financial resources to boost the economy and stimulate its activity, as well as the need to contribute to the completion of development projects to respond to urgent priorities, especially those related to employment, improving living conditions and fighting poverty.

The Ministry also made great efforts to recover the pattern of foreign investment through intensification of contacts and diversification of promotional campaigns with major emphasis on supporting businesses operating in Tunisia and providing all required assistance.

Thanks to these efforts, foreign direct investment recorded an increase of about 9 per cent during the current half-year, compared with the same period of 2010 and more than 40 per cent compared with the same period of 2011. These are important indicators with profound implications that confirm the confidence of investors and foreign business owners in the new Tunisia.

How are trade and foreign direct investment being encouraged? Which particular sectors have witnessed an increase and which do you hope to see expand?

Everyone knows that 2011 was characterised by a downturn in the investment rate but, at the same time, we recorded the highest proportion of foreign delegations to visit the country, aimed at discovering the new features of the investment climate. Most of them turned their ideas into real projects, which heralded an economic recovery through 2012.

The flow of requests confirmed which current and which new sectors should be on our list of operational priorities. The current sectors are: traditional and technical textile, mechanical engineering industries, electric and electronic, aeronautical components and food-processing industries. Alongside these, the expanding sectors of interest would be: offshoring and outsourcing of service activities, renewable energies, projects of infrastructure and franchising.

During 2011 the Tunisian economy maintained its position as the top-ranked African economy in terms of fair competitiveness, according to the annual classification of the World Economic Forum in

■ A girl holds a Tunisian flag as people wait in line to vote, October 2011, in Tunis, in the country's first-ever free elections, following the ousting of autocratic leader Zine el Abidine Ben Ali

We are determined to consecrate principles of freedom, democracy and the right of everyone to participate in building the new Tunisia

Relations between Tunisia and the Arab countries experienced a significant rebound after the revolution

Davos. Despite occasional disruptions, the economic cycle allowed Tunisian exports to get to most international markets at the agreed time and of the expected quality.

Today Tunisia moves forward confidently to absorb sectors that rely on human intelligence as a driving force and incentive to development. We are confident that the establishment of the principles of good governance and the embracing of transparency across our economy will enhance the ability of Tunisia to attract new investments. This is especially true for inland areas and in sectors with high technology content and will reflect the degree of efficiency enjoyed by Tunisian human resources.

How do you perceive Tunisia in the Middle East region? How is the country interacting, co-operating and competing in the Middle East?
Relations between Tunisia and the Arab countries – and the countries of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf in particular – experienced a significant rebound after the 14 January revolution. This was especially embodied by the multiple visits by officials of both sides and the exchange of delegations (Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait and Oman) to explore the opportunities of expanding development co-operation, sharing expertise and taking advantage of the capabilities of other countries, as well as studying elements of complementary action. The aim is to create a united bloc in order to overcome

■ **Improved relations: Tunisian Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali (centre) greets the Crown Prince of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani (right), July 2012 in Tunis**

the economic difficulties that countries may face individually and to create a strong alliance to open access to other regional and international markets.

After the 14 January revolution, Tunisia also worked to reinforce its position in the Arab world and particularly in the Middle East, by enhancing its relations with the Arab and Islamic countries. This has been done through the exchange of information on the establishment of a new quality of economic relations, which contributed to economic integration and the development of technical co-operation, which helped to create new employment positions for university graduates.

Tunisia sought to invite and attract Arab investors in Tunisia and learn more about the offered opportunities and incentives and the new investment climate, which has become based on transparency and good governance so that investors become more confident. This is a practical step to intensify co-operation and advance the level of effective partnership.

Tunisia is working to organise forums promoting investment in our country, taking care to participate in various events abroad such as in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. It is also working on activating the role of joint committees and works councils between Tunisia and its partners in the Middle East.

The most important objective that Tunisia is seeking to achieve is its integration into North African and regional blocs in order to exploit opportunities of fruitful co-operation and constructive partnership with its partners.

Minister, could you explain why Tunisia is a safe and attractive place to invest?
Many experts today are calling Tunisia the "smart site" of the Mediterranean and it is relying on its historical advantages to host investors and international corporations. Thanks to its preferential and structural assets, Tunisia has followed advances recorded by world industry. The textile, mechanics, electricity and aircraft component industries have enabled the country to occupy the position of first industrial exporter on the southern shore of the Mediterranean towards the European Union. And whether it is high-end garments or extremely sophisticated highly technological mechanical or technical parts, Tunisian institutions respond in a timely manner and with accuracy to orders coming from Europe, America and other Arab and Asian markets.

On 14 January, 2011, Tunisians – who are among the most advanced Arab people in terms of education and qualifications – stood up to

express their will to free the country from a rule that had lasted 23 years. In fact, these people who have the highest connectivity rate to information networks on the African continent according to the networked readiness index, used information and communication technologies to achieve the first electronic revolution in human history.

These people, known by their distinctive talents and passion for new technological innovation, were and still are the great wealth of Tunisia, continuing a business culture that has been known for its success for more than 3,000 years.

Since the beginning of 1970, thousands of international firms have flooded to Tunisia aiming to enhance their competitiveness and confident in the Tunisian skilled labour force and their eagerness to rise to challenges, as well as their experience and internationally recognised technical and scientific skills.

Thanks to its position at the heart of the Mediterranean, Tunisia has always been and remains an outstanding platform for the development of activities and international presence of companies. It has extremely favourable legislation, a living environment to international standards, modern networks of communication with neighbouring markets and more generally with international markets. The country provides investment opportunities incentive schemes, a comprehensive educational system and an environment conducive to sustainability.

Looking forward, what are the greatest obstacles and opportunities that lie ahead? How do you view the future of Tunisia?
After ending the dictatorship, the country is in the construction phase according to international democratic principles and has thus promoted a new positive image that it is experiencing for the first time in its history. In our reading of the international press, we note that the view of specialists about the future of Tunisia as a destination for foreign investment remains positive, especially since Tunisia has now emerged from being under the shadow of unrepresentative authoritarianism allowing her most valuable assets – her people – to show to the world their skill in the workplace and their passion to embrace challenges. ■

Libya: threats of division, evidence of unity

The problems facing the reconstruction of Libya are many, but there are hopeful signs – not least the apparent success of the recent elections

By Tim Niblock, Emeritus Professor of Arab Gulf Studies at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter

All of the revolutions and uprisings in the Arab world, forming part of the Arab Spring, sprang from similar causes and motivations. All, however, have different characteristics, outcomes and prospects. Much has depended on the socio-economic structures present in the country concerned, the strength and character of the different political groupings which ushered in the new era, the relationship that the armed and security forces had under the previous regime and the position they adopted during the uprising, the manner in which the previous regime handled the outbreak of unrest and opposition, and the role of outside powers/influences.

The problems facing Libya's transition and reconstruction have stemmed from the vacuity of the formal political structures present in Libya before the uprising, the absence of any coherent political discourse or organisation outside of those structures, the disintegration of most of the regular

army, the relative weakness and lack of credibility of the state's administrative organisation, the manner in which regional particularities were strengthened by the disparate character of the uprising (with each effectively waging a separate struggle), the emergence of independently-operating militias with their own agendas and interests, and the heavy military and financial involvement of external powers and bodies (each with its own political agenda).

Development and reconstruction

The problems facing the development and reconstruction of the Libyan state, in light of these characteristics, have been substantial. In the long term, Libya needs substantial expansion of its infrastructure so as to enable the emergence of a more balanced economy, educational facilities geared to the needs of the contemporary age and governmental/ administrative structures that ensure the proper use of the country's resources in the interests of the population.

Yet such developments are impossible without two structural requisites. First, central government must have a monopoly on the use of force in the country; and second it needs to enjoy a reasonable degree of perceived legitimacy. These two requirements, moreover, are mutually dependent. A central government with monopoly over the use of force but limited popular legitimacy will morph into dictatorial patterns of authority. A government with strong popular legitimacy but no monopoly over the use of force will be unable to pursue effective or coherent policies.

The possibility of Libya being able to satisfy the two key requisites may seem remote. In the current situation, powerfully entrenched and militarised political groupings have frequently been able to limit and undermine central government authority. The weakness of central government has been both a cause and an effect of nationally debilitating division. Strong militia groupings, with their own distinctive political agendas, exist in many parts of the country and are particularly powerful in Misrata, the Western Hills, the Sirte district, Derna and more generally in Cyrenaica. The groups in the south of the country are smaller and more disparate, but also exercise significant control over parts of that region.

One of the most highly publicised aspects of localist intransigence (from a central government perspective) has been the refusal of the Zintan militia to hand Saif al-Islam Gaddafi over to the national judicial authorities. But the problem is also evident in the relative autonomy with which the Misrata local council has acted (including making agreements with foreign governments and developing its own air links to the outside world), and also in unilateralist actions taken by groupings and authorities in Cyrenaica. The external provision of weaponry to particular militias has aggravated the problem.

The prospects for Libya's future are more positive than the background might suggest

Meanwhile, locally organised groups have, on occasions, taken the law into their own hands, accusing individuals and communities of complicity with the Gaddafi regime and exacting their own punishments. Sometimes this has been done in a racially prejudicial manner – where black Libyans have been the main victims. The vortex created by weak governmental credibility, ineffective administration and growing regional tension could easily destroy the country.

Positive future

Yet the prospects for Libya's future are more positive than the background might suggest. Despite the apparent disarray within the country, the population remains predominantly optimistic about the future. Most Libyans remain committed to a united Libya (whether or not accompanied by devolved powers at the local/regional level).

There is a widespread determination to create governing institutions based on popular representation and enabling genuine accountability, and an antipathy to external forces whose manoeuvres threaten to disrupt the country's harmony.

Association with outside powers, whether Western or Arab, has not brought popular support to those politicians who have sought to play this card. The country's hydrocarbon resources, moreover, give governmental authorities the means to build a unifying national infrastructure, with benefits to the whole population.

It will not be possible to move quickly to the disarming of militias, nor to the establishment of an effective, democratically based government, but current indications are that incremental progress in those directions is possible. In the short term, compromises have to be made. Governmental legitimacy must rest on the electoral process, but pragmatic arrangements with powerful local leaders/ movements will also be needed.

To agree to disarm, existing militias will need to feel trust in government, buttressed by a sense that their communities stand to gain from a less militarised environment and an effectively functioning state. Local sensitivities and identities, given an extra edge by the course and character of the revolution, will need careful handling. The existing militias are too powerful to be confronted directly, and they also carry their own dimension of legitimacy, based on their role in the revolutionary struggle.

■ Demonstrators cheer after storming the headquarters of the Islamist Ansar al-Sharia militia group in Benghazi, September 2012

Successful elections

The elections for the General National Congress, held at the beginning of July 2012, provide ample evidence that an optimistic scenario holds some realism – although a positive outcome is by no means guaranteed. Despite widespread expectations that the vote would lack credibility, disrupted by local dissension and reflective of externally supported Islamist radicalism, the elections have been a success. Voter registration was high (almost 2.9 million out of 3.5 million eligible voters), the turnout was about 62 per cent, there were relatively few disruptions to the electoral process, and external overseers (of which some 27,000 were present) were mostly convinced that the elections were fair.

In the party lists (allotted 80 out of the 200 seats) there was a clear winner: the National Forces Alliance (NFA) led by Mahmoud Jibril – who had served as Libya's initial prime minister after the outbreak of the revolution, having previously held office as head of the National Planning Council under the Gaddafi regime.

The NFA won significant support in each of Libya's three major regions, and gained almost half of the party list seats (39 out of 80). The ability of the NFA to pursue its liberal developmentalist line in future developments, moreover, is strengthened by the two seats won by its ally, the National Centrist Party of Ali Tarhuni. The Justice and Construction Party, regarded as the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, came second with a total of 17 seats. Other parties, whether Islamist or secularist, were

The elections have strengthened the basis for governmental legitimacy in Libya

confined to the margins – none gaining more than three seats.

In the constituency seats, where 2,639 candidates were competing for 120 seats, voting did not take place under party labels. While it is difficult to be sure of the ideological complexion of many candidates, there are indications that Islamists performed better at this level than in the party lists. Initial surveys suggest, however, that voters focused on the qualities of individuals and not on any supposed party alignments. The election of well-respected and well-known local personalities, of whatever ideological persuasion, should add to the strength of the Congress and its ability to prepare the basis for the parliamentary elections that should follow.

The elections, therefore, have strengthened the basis for governmental legitimacy in Libya. The centralisation of power may be a prolonged process, but the possibility of moving towards it incrementally now seems more realistic and feasible than it did in the early part of 2012. ■

A positive future

Professor Gareth Stansfield discusses Libya's prospects with HE Aref Ali Nayed, Libyan Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates; former Chief Operations Manager of the Libya Stabilization Team; and former Coordinator of the Support Offices of the Executive Team of the National Transitional Council of Libya

The Libyan revolution has surprised many people. On various occasions, you have identified four key foundations of the old system – tyranny, corruption, cruelty and injustice. Can you comment on the achievements made with respect to each of these aspects?

Libya has achieved a great victory in ousting the most serious obstacle to freedom, compassion and democracy in Libya: Muammar Gaddaffi. His rule was pernicious, strangling Libya's potential, limiting our growth, denying our history and resulting in the deaths and disappearance of untold numbers of innocent people. That said, we must remember, in Libya and outside, that not one person or family ever has a monopoly on tyranny, corruption and cruelty. All people have the capacity to do wrong to one another.

Over this past 18 months or so there have been a number of occasions to be proud of, and these are things that may have surprised those observing the situation in Libya. Libya has been lauded by a number of commentators as having bucked certain trends or having achieved a 'smooth' transition.

There are certainly some very promising signs in the relative calm of the current political scene in Libya, and the inclusive nature of the government

However, while we can be encouraged by these comments, Libya is not there yet.

The systematic destruction of Libya's religious heritage and the cowardly attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi in September 2012 ran counter to international and Islamic conventions and customs, which demand hospitality to travellers, emissaries and especially to diplomats. These attacks by extremist fringes in our society are a case in point. A small group took it upon themselves to lurk in the shadows and act without consent and public deliberation – dictating to the rest of Libyan society through violence and intimidation. These fascistic actions are tactics that Libyans know well and have hated for decades, and they are certainly not the goal for which tens of thousands spilled their blood.

The young people who bravely stood up to demand a free Libya in the very earliest days of the revolution against unimaginable violence set us very high standards to follow, and all those during the long fight who sacrificed their lives for the same cause mean that as a country we must live up to the very highest of ethical standards. The faith in a free Libya that I have seen from young people is phenomenal, and their tenacity in fighting tyranny, corruption, cruelty and injustice is formidable.

One of the major areas of concern for the National Transitional Council has been to focus on infrastructure developments. Why has this been the case and which aspects of development have been most important?

Forty-two years of systematic under-investment in Libya's infrastructure have set the country back considerably. Libya's natural and human resources, and its strategic position for trade between Africa and Europe, mean that a well-managed Libya has enormous inherent potential. A Libya governed for the benefit of its people can be an exemplar for the region.

In a country as vast as ours, with population dispersed across a variety of landscapes, infrastructure is the great enabler, and investment in this area will help facilitate much better access to public services and to the vitally-needed services that will be the backbone for growth at all levels and in all areas of Libya. I remember travelling in the south of the country some five years ago – a colleague was injured and we needed to travel all the way to the north of the country to seek adequate medical treatment. The neglect of Libyans living in remote areas cannot continue.

However, infrastructure development in Libya needs to be approached in two distinct but complementary ways. Libya needs a strengthened physical infrastructure including roads, ports, airports and communications, which together provide services to the population and create an enabling environment for growth. Just as important is investment in Libya's soft infrastructure, which will help Libya to ensure dynamism in the medium and long term. Investment in education, job creation, and the technical capacity to take Libya's communications into the 21st century will be a good start.

Looking forward, what are the greatest obstacles and opportunities that lie ahead? How do you view the future of Libya, particularly with regards to the government's ability to govern and unify tribes and other factions?

Libya is right now in its moment of greatest opportunity, but it is also facing great challenges. We have had elections, and are starting to get used to the democratic process and the responsibilities that come with it.

Libya is a diverse country and, like most others, has a wide variety of ethnic, regional and interest groupings. The challenge for the country as a whole, and for the government in particular, will be the inclusion of these different voices in the political process. There are certainly some very promising signs in the relative calm of the current political scene in Libya, and the inclusive nature of the government of national unity that has been created under the leadership of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan, which represents the broad range of mainstream voices in Libyan society.

Creating a unified army is a particular challenge, however, and one that needs to be approached with great care. Gaddafi feared a strong army and set about fragmenting Libya's armed groups into a series of battalions that were controlled by his close family and inner circle. The current situation with the militias is not a sustainable solution for Libya. The process of integration into a truly representative professional army, made up of individuals from across the country that are fighting for a Libya that is united and free, will be the only long-term solution that ensures both the stability of Libya and, importantly, its security.

What are your thoughts on the first free election since the toppling of Muammar Gaddafi, which took place on 8 July 2012? How important were they for the future of Libya, both symbolically and for the functioning of the state?

The elections were a tremendous experience and

a great achievement. Libyans had not had the experience of voting for around five decades, and went to the ballot boxes with great excitement, proudly taking pictures of each other, holding up their index fingers marked with indelible ink.

Some commentators were sceptical about the aggressive schedule for the elections, emphasising the time needed to prepare and for political parties to develop. However, it became clear that it was incredibly important for the country's stability that elections be held in good haste, so as to empower a new government to take the bold steps needed to make sure Libya could begin the process of rebuilding and renewal.

As the Libyan Ambassador to the UAE, what are your objectives and how do you plan to achieve these? How is the UAE contributing to the stabilisation of Libya?

Libya's relationship with the UAE is very important. The UAE was the first country to offer full diplomatic recognition to an NTC-appointed ambassador, and it has been supportive of the Libyan people from the start. The UAE offered vital diplomatic support in the early days of the revolution in the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League – both vital in laying the ground for UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which helped avoid a bloodbath in Benghazi.

I am not a career diplomat but was appointed by NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil during the turbulent days of the revolution and had agreed with him that I would stay on only until free and fair elections were held. During this time, my objectives were twofold: help to facilitate relations between the UAE and Libya which would support the stabilisation of the country and ease suffering, and the restoration of Consular Services to Libyans in the UAE and the region.

I actually submitted my resignation on the day of the elections but it was not accepted, and in this new era for Libya my goals will remain for the most part the same. However, the stabilisation of Libya involves a different set of challenges. Libyans right now are looking towards improving the education system, the generation of employment, and the building of infrastructure and public services that are intelligent and cutting-edge. After an era of neglect in all these

sectors, Libyans are impatient for a country that is flourishing and up-to-date. There are a great variety of sectors where the UAE has a unique experience in quickly establishing world-class facilities.

How do you perceive Libya in the wider Middle East and North Africa region? How is the country interacting, co-operating, and competing in the Middle East?

For millennia, Libya has been plugged into the wider networks of the Middle East and North Africa, as a hub for trade and a crossroads for learning across the north of Africa – interacting, co-operating and competing with its neighbours in the Middle East, Northern Africa and Europe alike.

This outlook of openness towards the region suffered a brief hiatus under the insular Gaddafi regime, which did nothing but result in a stunted Libya. Our economy suffered with corrupt deals that benefited only a few in Libya and many outside. It is clear that Libya can no longer isolate itself and its future depends precisely on Libya's strengthened interaction that is respectful of the Libyan people and mutually beneficial.

However, it is still unclear what the future will be for the Middle East, and how this will affect the longer-term scope for stronger international relations in the region. These tides of change that have resulted in the various Arab Springs, and in a new era of hope in Libya, are still ebbing and flowing.

Libyans are making their presence felt in international political and economic fora. They are making a bold case for their country and its potential. The opportunity is here right now for our country to be an exemplar in the region by fostering a strategy for sustainable growth and prosperity that is rooted in the region and in the possibilities for mutual growth that exist here.

How important is international co-operation and support to the current and prospective stability of Libya?

Libya's stability is first and foremost dependent upon Libyans being united and free. However, supportive international co-operation in a spirit of respect is fundamental to kick-starting Libya's positive future. That said, we have seen a number of instances in the world where external pressures after periods of conflict and change have been incredibly counterproductive.

Currently, Libya needs to narrow the gap between the capacities that it has and the expertise and education required for Libya to make the kind of advances that its people demand and deserve.

Expertise from abroad that is not found in Libya is a vital addition to promoting and revitalising Libya's economic and social growth. This will be especially important in fundamental areas such as education, health, infrastructure and communications. ■

The tides of change that have resulted in the various Arab Springs, and in a new era of hope in Libya, are still ebbing and flowing

Syria's perilous Arab Spring

Although the country's struggles are far from over, thoughts are turning to the challenges of creating a stable post-Assad regime

By **Dr Marwa Daoudy**, Lecturer in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, University of Oxford

People have risen in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya and Syria and initiated a worldwide quest for political rights and social justice. Wrongly characterised as politically and economically stagnant by neo-Orientalists, the Arab world has set the regional and international agenda since 2011. From Madrid to the Occupy Wall Street mobilisations throughout the US, a powerful source of inspiration was found in the courage and determination shown by protesters in Arab capitals.

However, after more than a year of popular uprisings, the revolution in Syria is still struggling to achieve its goals. The trigger was the arbitrary imprisonment and torture of school children in the small town of Deraa for drawing graffiti inspired by the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. From Deraa,

popular protests spread to the rest of the country. The tragic death toll is estimated at more than 40,000 civilian casualties (including more than 3,000 children), with an additional 70,000 disappearances. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of Syrian refugees seeking assistance in neighbouring countries has more than quadrupled between April and November 2012, reaching 400,000. The toll is expected to considerably inflate in the next months, as further insecurity and bloodshed are spread in the country. Indeed, the escalation of violence witnessed in Aleppo and Damascus since July and August 2012 raise the very real prospect of a civil war of devastating magnitude taking hold in Syria's urban centres.

Sectarianism, failed reforms and repression

Syria has been controlled by the Assad family for the past four decades. The family continues to rely on the support of key communal and interest groups, and their power base rested less in the political institutions and the Baath party than the links established with extended networks. The country is characterised by ethnic (Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Turks and Tcherkess) and religious (Sunnis, Druze, Duodeciman Shi'as, Ismaelites, Yezidis and Christians: Syriacs, Chaldeans, Greek-Orthodox, Catholics, and other) diversity. The Sunni Arabs represent about 70 per cent of the population.

The Assad family belongs to the Alawite branch, which constitutes about 11 per cent of the 24 million estimated Syrian population. However, the regime's leadership structure and security apparatus is dominated by only segments of the Alawite group and not the whole community.

In addition to the extended family and clan, the army, the security and intelligence services, known as the Mukhabarat, remain the cornerstones of the regime. Their mission is to defend the clan in power, rather than the state and its citizens. Bashar al-Assad's personal popularity since 2000 had also allowed the regime to limit the scope of internal reforms and preserve the power of the security services over society.

The path of neo-liberal economic shift with no political reform was adopted in 2005. The liberalisation of the economy followed steady progress with public-private partnerships in the oil and transport sectors; private banks, media and universities were legalised, and more space allocated to the private sector. However, no defined policy or adequate tools were adopted. The Baath Party and secret services were given increased power in administrative and economic decisions, and new monopolies controlled and established by governmental elites. Further crackdowns were carried out on intellectuals, activists and the private press.

Confronted by a large movement of revolts since 15 March 2011, the Syrian regime has opted for a survival strategy and chosen the path of repression rather than political settlement. Protests are said to be part of a wider conspiracy aimed at spreading insecurity in Syria. Another strategy was to play the sectarian card, in order to appear as a safeguard of minority rights. When the protests started, the regime mobilised the Mukhabarat, which are dominated by Alawites and remain loyal to Assad. The objective was also to prevent any shift within the Alawite community.

Until recently, protesters have shown extreme lucidity in keeping a united front beyond sectarian divides and resisting the regime's attempts at framing the unrest along confessional lines by arming 30,000 villagers in the Alawite provinces and giving licences to kill to their shadow militias, the Shabiha, or armed thugs, brought in from the Alawite regions. But Syrians are now killing each other in isolated incidents on the basis of their uniforms, alleged loyalties and religious affiliations. According to a commission of inquiry established by the UN Human Rights Council, war crimes were committed in June and July 2012 in Houleh and Tremseh, in the province of Homs, where unarmed civilians, including hundreds of children and women, were brutally slaughtered.

Resistance and insurgency

All components of the population, including Christian and Alawite elites, continue to actively contribute to opposition movements in the provinces of Deraa, Homs, Hama and Idlib, as well as in Damascus and Aleppo. Peaceful rallies are met with heavy military assaults and house-to-house arrests and killings. However, resistance to the regime has moved in recent months from non-violent rebellion to armed insurgency. A hundred rebel groups are believed to operate against regime forces throughout the country. Besides the Free Syrian Army (FSA), many of the groups are still unknown. It is also believed that Jihadists are now actively contributing to military operations on the ground.

The regime is still in control of the army and the security forces, despite increased defections to the FSA, but the balance of power appears to have recently shifted in favour of the insurgents. Areas close to the Turkish border around Idlib, as well as in Homs, Damascus and Aleppo, continue to escape government control. The battle for the country's two major urban centres, Damascus and Aleppo, will be decisive. As the regime clings to power and rebel groups launch simultaneous attacks throughout the country, the risk of a fully-fledged civil war is looming. The country appears to be heading towards a protracted conflict.

Foreign military intervention on 'humanitarian' grounds has been advocated by some, and firmly rejected by others (including the author) who believe that it will prolong the conflict, strengthen rather than weaken the regime's support base, result in considerable civilian casualties and put the country under external tutelage. The counter-insurgency is

■ Fleeing civilians walk past a member of the Free Syrian Army in Aleppo's district of Salahedin, Syria, July 2012

Syrians are now killing each other in isolated incidents on the basis of their uniforms, alleged loyalties and religious affiliations

increasingly, and successfully, relying on guerrilla tactics, backed by weapons smuggled by army defectors. Explosions and clashes have successfully targeted the heart of the security and defence headquarters in the capital, Damascus, killing high-ranking military officials.

Being in a web of strategic networks, the consequences of instability in Syria would be far-reaching. Events can turn in any direction and the next few months will be crucial.

Post-Assad challenges

In the international debate on state (re)building, state reform policies aim to eradicate conflicts and restore sustainable peace. The aim is no less than to preserve stability and the rule of law. A new interventionist consensus has emerged from this process whereby conflict prevention, resolution or transformation may be achieved through institutional reforms in so-called fragile states, through sustainable human development policies or the implementation of good governance principles.

However, foreign-led reform policies can have negative consequences; at the heart of the matter is the lack of internal legitimacy and the subsequent tension between national identity and a representative state based on a social contract. The international donor community can indeed play a role in providing advice and guidance on best practices, but it is crucial for the success of long-term reform policies that ownership of the process remains with internal actors. A stable and reliable (re-)building process has to be internally led.

A long-term and responsible vision is needed at this stage to prepare for sustainable and peaceful transition in Syria, as increasing violence and insecurity have led to the collapse of institutions and public authority. Declining incomes from oil sales and the public sector, and a freeze on trade with

Turkey and the European Union have impacted on the population's daily life. Most regions have no heat as fuel oil has becomes scarce or even non-existent. Prices have risen dramatically and electricity is being cut on a daily basis for six hours in major hubs such as Aleppo and Damascus.

In parallel with fighting the regime, among the challenges the Syrian opposition will need to address is planning for transition to a post-Assad Syria. All religious and ethnic components of the population, including the Alawite community, should be included in the process. If given guarantees for the post-revolution phase, the Alawites would be drawn into the transitional phase leading to political pluralism; otherwise, they might resist to the bitter end. Prosecution should be sought against the ones who have perpetrated crimes. But the bulk of the army (with approximately 220,000 soldiers and officers, with an additional 300,000 in reserve) will need to be integrated somehow. All this presumes that control of military and security affairs is effectively handed over to civilian rule in the transition period.

The new institutions will be confronting core issues: the challenge of dismantling the extensive security and intelligence apparatus, while maintaining public security; the adoption of a new Constitution representing all components of Syrian society; reforming the political and legal systems, and establishing the rule of law; and last but not least, preventing retribution from happening by allowing for an effective process of reconciliation.

Core debates on the relationship between religion, state and society, and the protection of the Alawite, Christian, Druze and Kurdish minorities have already been initiated among different opposition groups. To secure legitimacy, the battle should be won from the inside and transition planned by local actors, while preserving the country from chaos and insecurity, in an inclusionary rather than exclusionary process. ■

A long-term and responsible vision is needed to prepare for sustainable and peaceful transition

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Yemen since Saleh

New Yemeni President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi faces a number of challenges in his new role

■ Members of Yemen's elite Republican Guard and pro-army tribesmen gather for a group photo atop a military vehicle as they secure a road leading to Lawdar town in the southern province of Abyan, June 2012

By **Sarah Phillips**, Senior Lecturer, Centre for International Security Studies, University of Sydney

Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi was dropped into the Yemeni presidency in a single-candidate election following the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in February 2012. His promotion from Vice President – a position that he had held since 1994 – to the top job has not (at least not yet) altered the 'rules of the game' in the political system that he formally leads.

Despite having served as the Vice President for nearly 20 years, Hadi was never the secondmost powerful political figure in the country; this status was reserved for others. Therefore, while some of the lower-level players have been shuffled around, the underlying power structures remain largely unchanged. These more powerful figures include: General Ali Muhsin, the first major player to defect from the regime during the protests in March 2011

and whose defection triggered that of many others within the military and bureaucracy; the powerful al-Ahmar family (particularly Hameed al-Ahmar); and also former President Saleh and his family, some of whom still wield considerable influence and (arguably decreasing) disruptive power.

Since becoming President, Hadi has been trying to prise the grip of former President Saleh and his loyalists from key parts of the military and civil service by restructuring both. This has been a cause of conflict as the incumbents try to hold their ground. For example, when President Hadi attempted to remove Saleh's half-brother (Mohammed Saleh al-Ahmar) from his position as the commander of the Air Force in April 2012, Saleh's supporters retaliated by attacking Sana'a Airport and forcing it to close for nearly a day.

The Air Force Press Secretary stated at the time that the commander "had been convinced to step down, but the ousted president and his relatives

are forcing him not to do so". There are similar stories from elsewhere in the military, particularly surrounding the ongoing attempt to conclusively remove Saleh's nephew, Tariq Mohammed Abdullah Saleh, from his position as the commander of the Republican Guard's powerful Third Brigade.

Obstacles and ambitions

In addition to the obstacles posed by those loyal to the former president, Hadi must also contend with the ambitions of Ali Muhsin and the al-Ahmar family if he is to emerge as a relatively effective leader in his own right. Both Ali Muhsin and the al-Ahmar family appear to feel entitled to the spoils of Saleh's removal and each claims to have helped lead the protest movement.

This claim plays poorly to many of the independent protesters, who feel that they brought the Saleh regime down and that Muhsin and the al-Ahmars are capitalising on their success for their personal political ambitions – ambitions that clash with those of many of the young protesters.

The Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative that delivered President Saleh's resignation essentially tried to paper over the political chasm between elite factions and Sana'a's relationship with the rest of the country. Saudi Arabia and the United States each had strong interests in avoiding a prolonged period of political turmoil between Yemen's rival factions and as such, the Initiative was drafted with the apparent hope that the factions could be contained, or at least sidelined, by its edicts.

In Yemen, however, formal institutions have never had significant influence on the personal relationships that underlie processes of political bargaining. The depth of these rifts makes it important that observers not take seemingly positive steps in the formal sphere as definitive indicators that these divisions have been overcome. If this is to happen, it will almost certainly happen slowly.

The Initiative also set a hasty schedule for reform: a new government of national unity was formed and cabinet members were derived equally from the ruling party (General People's Congress – GPC) and opposition (Joint Meeting Parties – JMP). The resulting government is divided and the accusation of 'meddling by the other side' for political advantage is widely made. Some ministers from the GPC are believed (at times with good reason) to remain loyal to the former president, while ministers from the JMP are often charged (also fairly at times) with being beholden to either Ali Muhsin, the al-Ahmar family, or to both.

During its time in opposition, the JMP did not create shadow ministries to critique government policy in any systematic way. There is, therefore, a general lack of experience by the cabinet that is exacerbated by the fact that at least half of its members had no prior experience (or probably even real

expectation) of serving in government.

Of course, no system of power is transformed instantly, and this is particularly true for those built on networks of patronage and selective privilege for elites who remain included in the 'new' order. Genuine changes to the rules by which competing elites negotiate the balance of power will take longer to percolate through, and at this stage it remains uncertain whether such a shift will occur as a result of Saleh's resignation.

Constraining factors

President Hadi is significantly constrained by several factors in both the political centre and in the periphery. He is relatively isolated from many of Yemen's elites, in part because of his ongoing reliance on Ali Muhsin and the al-Ahmar family for political support. Second, being a southerner, he has no natural northern tribal constituency, something that has been key to the survival of previous leaders and political orders in the north.

His status as a southerner is not of major benefit to him either, however, as he is widely seen as being a part of the despised old regime by those southerners whom he most needs to convince of his legitimacy. These factors, combined with the very public proclamations of support for his leadership from the international community (particularly the US and UN), risks leaves President Hadi looking weak to significant sections of the Yemeni public.

Interwoven into each of these issues is a humanitarian crisis, in which levels of food insecurity and acute malnutrition in children are estimated to include at least 30 per cent of the population – levels that are comparable with those in Afghanistan. Ordinary Yemenis urgently require normalised access to basic necessities: security, food and markets.

If Hadi can – and chooses to – assert himself against the old order he could conceivably catalyse the trust necessary to either re-engage some groups in the political process or isolate those that seek to destroy it. This remains a challenging prospect and the external focus on Yemen's security problems risks further diverting attention from these urgent problems. ■

No system of power is transformed instantly, and this is particularly true for those built on networks of patronage and selective privilege

Bahrain: evolution not revolution

Bahrain is in real need of political reform, but to ensure stability, change needs to happen in stages

By Ronald Neumann, former US Ambassador to Bahrain (2001-2004), Algeria (1994-1997), and Afghanistan (2005-2007)

Bahrain's repetitive demonstrations, unlike a simple Arab Spring narrative, are part of a 40-year series of tensions that have divided the island's communities, introduced regional dimensions, and brought sharp tension among Western policy goals.

Bahrain became independent in 1971 as part of the regional reshaping that accompanied Britain's withdrawal from domination of the Arab side of the Persian Gulf. Iran officially withdrew its territorial claims to the island, but Iranian politicians mention them periodically. Weapons found on the island in preparation for a 1981 coup were sourced to Iran. Shi'a-Sunni tensions in Bahrain were frequently accompanied by charges and suspicions of Iranian meddling. While undocumented in the most recent troubles, the Shi'a demonstrators of the early 2000s frequently carried pictures of Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini.

Elections were held in 1929 and again after independence. However, after the 1973 suspension of parliament, the Sunni al-Khalifa family ruled alone, albeit with support from Shi'a as well as Sunni merchant families. Recurring demonstrations for greater democracy led to an uprising in 1994. While not exclusively Shi'a, the demonstrations were a predominately Shi'a affair. They were not very violent and were regularly suppressed, although allegations of torture were frequent.

Reforms

Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa came to power in 2000 and introduced numerous reforms. Political prisoners were released, exiles returned, the press became freer and in 2002 a true elected parliament took office. However, the constitution allowed monarchy control through an appointed upper house and limitations on parliamentary powers led many in the Shi'a

Where once Shi'a and Sunni were found on both sides of political divides... they are now deeply estranged

community to see the reforms as falling well short of the promised democracy. The Shi'a community, which claims 70 per cent of the population, was certainly under-represented (how much is uncertain without a census; the Sunni contend that the balance is closer to 60-40). Simmering demands for government accountability and equitable representation increased and, inspired by the Arab Spring, eventually overflowed into demonstrations and two radically different narratives of events.

The government points out that concessions including release of prisoners and removal of troops from the streets led only to threats and demands that the government yields on most major points before beginning negotiations. The Shi'a opposition sees government refusal and brutal suppression of calls for reform. The repression was real, as the commission requested by King Hamad and led by the internationally-respected Cherif Bassiouni documented many government human rights abuses. However, it also acknowledged abuses by the demonstrators.

The radical fringe on both sides has severely hampered efforts at compromise. Largely Sunni demonstrations supporting the government may have been as large as those for the opposition. An energised Sunni block opposes any concession, regards the Shi'a as Iran's proxies, and believes the choice is between firmness and revolution. The royal family itself appears divided between hard liners centred on the Prime Minister and senior court officials on one hand, and reformers, now heavily discredited, ranged around the Crown Prince.

On the other side, a hard-line opposition group has called for regime change. The major Shi'a opposition party al-Wifaq – immobilised by fears of being out-manoeuvred by its own radical fringe and suspicious of the government – has refused negotiations without pre-conditions, thus reinforcing government suspicions. A commission was called by the King to discuss solutions over represented government supporters and consisted of contrasting speeches rather than dialogue.

Community division

Community splits have deepened radically. Where once Shi'a and Sunni were found on both sides of political divides, intermarried and socialising more freely than in other Gulf states, they are now deeply estranged. The communal aspect is a particularly difficult part of the Bahraini issue. Community

■ An anti-government protester walks
in front of riot police as she arrives to
participate in an anti-government protest
in Manama, Bahrain, January 2012

losers cannot become winners; one-man-one vote democracy becomes a code word for sectarian domination. Bahrain badly needs political reform, but stability needs mechanisms to balance and resolve differences.

The regional dimension is important. The Arab monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), determined to support their fellow monarch, stationed GCC forces in Bahrain. While not used against demonstrators, they symbolise GCC support just as GCC money, principally from Saudi Arabia, ensures that Bahrain can withstand economic disruption. Clearly, the Saudis will not tolerate a Shi'a-dominated Bahrain. Yet continued cycles of violence and repression are also not in the Saudi interest since they risk inflaming Shi'a in Saudi Arabia. There are mixed views of how much reform the Saudis would accept in order to see Bahrain return to calm. What is clear is that the unified Arab pressure seen in Libya and

Yemen will not be replicated in Bahrain. Sufficient force is available to keep the opposition from winning by confrontation, but force alone cannot restore stability. There is a slow but dangerous trend toward greater violence that is likely to produce reprisals and make solutions harder.

Western interests

The West has multiple interests. One is the free flow of oil. A Gulf oil blockage would return Western economies to recession; avoiding this is a legitimate national interest. The US naval base is essential to the free flow of oil in the Persian Gulf and confronting Iran if necessary; roles that cannot be managed well from outside the Gulf. The GCC support of Bahrain guarantees that no Gulf state will help pressure Bahrain by relocating the base inside the Gulf.

Yet reform is also a major Western interest, both for principle and practicality, for without reform

instability will continue. US and UK policies of selling some arms and withholding others have alienated everyone. The government feels insufficiently supported and the opposition perceives double standards for Arab democracy. Finding a path out of the conflict will be difficult given the deep communal fears, divided counsels, the external involvement of GCC states and possibly Iran, and cross-cutting Western interests.

King Hamad's views of how to resolve his country's political dilemma are uncertain. He called for the Bassiouni commission and has announced several changes, including police reform and limited additional powers for the parliament. However, the new parliamentary powers are few, and the extent to which the security reforms have been implemented is unclear as reports of excessive police violence continue to recur. As positions have hardened, Bahrain has become more than ever a zero-sum political culture where suspicions are intense, compromise distrusted and direct dialogue is hampered by divisions within the parties.

There is still room to restart the political reform process of 2000. Without endangering the monarchy, grievances over land seizures and excessive corruption could be addressed along with more equitable representation, real judicial controls of security forces and true accountability for wrongdoing. However, a strong monarchy accountable under law with significant powers is needed to balance community divisions. Given the intense suspicions on all sides, change, if it comes at all, will probably have to come in steps; evolution rather than revolution but with enough guarantee of its end state to acquire support. If Western powers are to have influence, they need to speak openly of both reform and support for a strong monarchy.

Without this clarity the regime and its neighbours will reject 'reform' as tantamount to starting down the slippery slope to oblivion, while the opposition will hold back and hope for greater Western pressure on its behalf. Such a policy will be attacked as unworthy of democratic ideals. Yet policy must start from the situation as it is. Effective diplomacy has to meld both interests and principles and explain itself clearly. Without clarity, diplomacy will remain ineffective – and still be condemned for hypocrisy. ■

■ Bahrain's King Hamad arrives at a ceremony held to mark completion of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry's recommendations, in the Safria Palace in Sakhir

No more
ill-gotten gains

**Combating bribery and corruption in the leadership
elite is a critical step in reviving economic prospects
and ensuring there is no return to the old political order**

By **Brigitte Strobel-Shaw**, **Chief, Conference Support
Section, Corruption and Economic Crime Branch, United
Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Vienna**

The events in North Africa and the Middle East
over the past months are redefining the politics
of the region. Old regimes have been washed
away in a wave of protests and actions that have been
driven primarily by ordinary citizens seeking dignity
and a new way of life.

Frustrations with the status quo included a variety
of grievances, but standing at the centre of these is
the strong perception that the old leadership elite
were corrupt and accumulated wealth illegally at the
expense of the wider citizenry.

The issue was raised again and again: in blog
posts, in anguished interviews on the street as
protestors confronted security forces, and in animated
discussion groups convened to shape the future of
the emerging societies. While the Arab Spring is still
unfolding, the question of how to combat bribery and

corruption in the nascent new order must be one of critical concern to decision makers, both within the region and outside.

As has been so clearly articulated by those who stood at the forefront of bringing change, bribery and corruption have skewed patterns of wealth and ownership, insulated leaders from their citizenry and, thanks to the actions of a few, resulted in declining economic prospects for everyone.

Two key themes are now squarely on the table: the first is how ill-gotten gains from leaders who have now left office can be returned to their countries of origin and used in productive ways to promote development and prosperity for all; and secondly, how in the new order that is being constructed can systems and processes be put in place to ensure that the use of bribery and corruption on a large scale is confined to history, along with the regimes that practised them.

Both of these objectives are difficult to achieve. They will require clear leadership to put the issue at the top of the policy agenda. Effective justice systems equipped with measures to prevent and prosecute acts of corruption are essential in this effort. While there will be a need for external support, the role of outsiders will need to be carefully judged: critical to the success of new strategies that promote better governance is local ownership, which can be undercut if external ideas (no matter how good or effective elsewhere) are simply imposed. A country-led and country-based approach to any assistance is of great importance.

Returning assets

At the same time, much has been learned from past experience and new leaders can draw on this expertise, thus benefiting from outside assistance. Most prominently, in the case of stolen assets taken abroad, support is needed in the form of willingness from the countries that hold them to identify, freeze and return them. The return of assets has proved more complex than had been hoped.

While there has been broad political agreement that this should occur, the actual process of doing so has been hampered by a number of factors. These include the long time that it takes to gather and present relevant evidence, the lack of capacity and expertise to engage in processes that are comparatively new and untested, and the procedural, legal and administrative requirements that are in place in most countries which hold the assets in their banks.

These difficulties continue to illustrate the urgency of building trust and confidence between the different players; procedural obstacles are often used as a pretext for a lack of confidence as to the intentions of the other party. It must not be forgotten that freezing and returning the assets is of great symbolic value: it demonstrates not only that rightful

At the core of their vision when they took to the streets was that the wealth of the country belongs to all who live in it

ownership is restored, but is also arguably one of the most critical disincentives to those who assume leadership positions in future to engage in corruption – a resounding sign that impunity for criminal acts extends to no one, no matter their position.

Legislation and reform

The longer-term focus on putting systems in place has to begin as early as possible, building on the political momentum that currently exists for change. Here the United Nations Convention against Corruption provides a ready framework for guiding new policy makers.

A note of caution is appropriate: the Convention has been ratified by many countries, including those in the region before the Arab Spring. But the implementation of the provisions was selective, they were often not enforced for acts committed by members of the political elite who could act with impunity. New legislation and reformed institutions will be needed. But more important will be the political commitment to ensure that all are considered equal before the law and that no one is above it.

The men and women of all ages and all persuasions risking their lives on the streets of towns and cities across the region, with the aim of securing change for themselves and their children, have the right to see transparent governance free from the scourge of corruption. The idea, surprisingly widely accepted, that citizens in the region were content to accept their lot within regimes that did not act in their own interests and that were not of their own making, has been decisively disproved. At the core of their vision when they took to the streets was that the wealth of the country belongs to all who live in it and could not be stolen by only the few who had connections and political control.

Unless this vision becomes a reality, both through concrete actions and transparent political decision making and commitment, the risks taken by many brave people and the gains that they have made on the streets will be once again lost in the smoke-filled rooms of political power. ■

The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

■ Libyans in traditional dress participate in a protest organised by civic bodies and liberal and moderate political parties, demanding the handover of arms by a proliferation of militias, in Benghazi, 21 September 2012

Securing the future

What are the challenges and prospects for security and justice transitions in the wake of the Arab Spring?

By Mark White, Head of the Security and Justice Group, Stabilisation Unit and Stephanie Blair, Senior Security and Justice Advisor, Security and Justice Group, Stabilisation Unit

In general, security and justice sectors of those Arab states which have experienced upheavals have been intimately associated with maintaining 'regime security' rather than being the promoters of 'human security', leading to oppressive institutions which rule through repressive measures.

To a significant degree, the invidious behaviour of security actors combined with the lack of an independent judiciary provoked demands for change, alongside a range of other interlocking social and economic factors. This desire for change, driven by high levels of corruption and insufficient rule of law and access to justice, provides both an opportunity for

Crime and communal violence are a threat to political change as citizens assert their demands

meaningful change, but also brings the risk of further conflict and violence.

Lessons from previous leadership changes in the region suggest that violence such as crime and communal violence are a threat to political change as citizens assert their demands. Thus the reform of these institutions will be critical to peaceful transitions. In essence they are part of the problem and they will be part of the solution in a region where politics and security are intertwined.

The challenge will be to deal with issues of past impunity and corruption, while not undermining prospects for transition, particularly given that the roles of security actors, both formal and informal, will remain fluid. Success will rely on retaining the support of key institutions, most notably the army in the short to medium term, while not undermining prospects for longer-term reform.

It is also important to recognise that international donors are unlikely to be seen as 'neutral', and previous engagements with political elites will taint public perceptions, particularly in an environment in which security sector decision-making remains opaque. This article will review the challenges and prospects for meaningful transition and suggest some principles for support to security and justice reform.

Longer-term reform

It is clear that the Arab Spring is incomplete, particularly with regard to the shape of political and security relationships given the role of security actors in supporting, and in some cases removing, regimes. For example in Egypt, the military appeared to be setting the pace of events, and arguably negotiated the political settlement post-election, while state institutions remain weak and fragile. How these states organise the delivery of security and justice is what is currently at stake.

Security has been identified by actors across the region as critical to addressing the social contract between the state and citizenry, with improvements in public security and the capacity and responsiveness of the police in particular. Yet there can be no meaningful change while security actors continue to be above the law, given the legacy of the repressive actions of the security institutions and the significant role they continue to play.

Thus it is highly likely that any reforms will be challenging and time consuming before citizens

experience any improvements in security and justice delivery.

Security and justice transitions are political as well as technical processes, perhaps even more so in this region. Thus principles of political focus, legitimacy, capability and sustainability can help to ensure transition supports the wider political process. Transition lies ultimately in the hands of the host nation and is context specific. These are Arab revolutions, and the state/society relationships they may promote need to be negotiated and determined within their respective societies, not imposed by the West.

Rates of change

While best practice, and more likely lessons identified from other contexts, can be shared, it is not for us to dictate the pace or nature of change – the Arab Spring has been led by the people of the region and each country is experiencing different rates of change. Any security and justice intervention will therefore need to recognise different responses demanded by each country's circumstances.

A number of common challenges emerge from the lessons of previous security and justice transitions:

- the challenge of transforming the security sector in a country without a tradition of democratic norms and practice;
- the challenge of understanding the political context of transformation;
- the challenge of moving beyond the defence sector;
- the challenge of a highly limited knowledge base;
- the challenge of finding acceptable limits to state secrecy while respecting the need for confidentiality in certain areas; and
- the challenge of finding the appropriate balance between democratic accountability and control on the one hand and security body professionalism and discipline on the other.

Recommendations

In light of what we know of security and justice transitions, a number of recommendations emerge to support reform in the region:

Local ownership is a well-recognised principle of security sector reform as are the inherent political underpinnings of security and justice work. Thus our work must be conducted with and at the request of these new governments, delivered in response to locally led requests in co-ordination with others. The principle here is assistance, not aid.

We need to better understand the role of civil society and their demands for democracy promotion in response to the hard security approaches of these regimes as a catalyst for the Arab Spring. While taking into account the legacy of the authoritarian regimes and the support of the security institutions, security and justice reform is a new topic for the

■ On the same week that he was pushed into retirement, former Egyptian Defence Minister Field Marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi (left) received the Grand Collar of the Nile, Egypt's highest state honour, from President Mohamed Mursi at the Presidential Palace, 14 August 2012

region, which will require the continued support of a nascent civil society.

There is a requirement to understand the challenge of engaging on security and justice issues in a context where the legal tradition and social norms are dominated by Islam. For instance, do we understand enough about how traditional and secular link up? The international community will need to accept Islamic principles into security and justice doctrine while maintaining an approach that marginalises violent, extremist narratives.

Equally, there is a need to accept that some of the prior capacity-building support, particularly on counter-terrorism, was part of the problem rather than the solution. Hence, moving forward there will be a need to much more carefully balance international counter-terrorism objectives in the region with the need to create space for greater state/society relations.

A role and a voice

Finally, in managing transitions – the immediate goal of providing security through disarming militias and restructuring the security institutions – it will be important to show young revolutionaries that they will have a role and voice in the new countries.

In conclusion, meeting the demands for change, particularly in disentangling the symbiotic relationship between the head of state and the security sector, is an essential component of reform.

Yet, such security transitions take time and political will. The Arab Spring is not complete and while the opportunities for change exist, the prospects for change are fragile. ■

There is a requirement to understand the challenge of engaging on security and justice issues in a context where the legal tradition and social norms are dominated by Islam

Elections and the management of conflict

The vacuum created by rapid political change can generate further sources of dispute and even conflict as factions compete for power and other regional actors interfere. What are the factors to be considered when deciding the form such elections take?

By **Brendan O'Leary**, Lauder Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania and Professor of Political Science at Queen's University Belfast.
In 2009-10 he was the Senior Advisor on Power-Sharing in the Standby Team of the Mediation Support Unit of the United Nations

Competitive elections are a necessary component of democracy. They are both a means of conflict management, because they decide who should govern according to rules, and a source of conflict, because they confirm winners and losers. They are less conflictual when the losers accept the new rules and believe they have positive future prospects in the new order, inside and outside the electoral arena. Controversy, however, surrounds five pressing questions that confront the holding of elections in post-revolutionary or post-war countries.

When?

The first is when should the first elections be held? As soon as possible? That is, after there is sufficient public order and restructuring of administrative arrangements and the mass media to hold credible elections and render the newly-elected government legitimate? Should there, conversely, be a long delay to enable the provisional government to make the state (and civil society) fit for democracy?

What is at stake is not just a matter of time-management. At issue is to what extent, in scope and time, the unelected provisional government has authority to shape the permanent or final constitution. When parts of the old regime remain in place (especially the military, security and intelligence agencies) the legitimacy of any unelected transitional government is likely to decay rapidly. When the old regime is destroyed by war, in which outsiders have played a role, the establishment of order will not be quick, and an impatient public may be quickly disillusioned by the new incumbents.

Early elections favour both the old regime incumbents and the best-organised opposition under the old regime; late elections favour the provisional government, which can entrench itself and disorganise the opposition.

If making a widely acceptable democratic constitution is the first order of political business, that enables the when question to be answered. There is much to be said for electing a constitutional (or constituent) assembly within 18 months of the fall of the old regime, provided that assembly simultaneously serves as the state-wide parliament that elects and holds the second transitional government to account. An elected transitional government will have legitimacy while the new constitutional order is being drafted and ratified, after which there can be further elections under the new rules.

Democrats, therefore, need to think about the necessity of having two state-wide elections within three years: one within 18 months and certainly no later than two years to elect the body that serves as a constituent assembly and as a transitional parliament; and then another within a year, to elect the first state-wide government under the newly-ratified final constitution.

■ Nobel Peace Prize laureate Tawakkol Karman shows her inked thumb after casting her vote at a polling station in Sanaa, Yemen, February 2012

Sequencing

The second question is one of sequencing. Among state-wide, regional or local elections, which should come first? Multiple controversies may arise. The old regime may have restructured local and regional boundaries and rendered them controversial: in this case, state-wide elections and an agreed process for settling regional and local boundaries should come before regional or local elections. The state itself may not previously have been legitimate in some regions: in this case, great care has to be taken to achieve an inclusive constitution-making process, building support across all regions.

Some have argued that state-wide elections should come first, maintaining that if regional governments are elected first secessionist impulses may be encouraged. It is quite common to suggest that Yugoslavia broke up because its regional (republican) governments held democratic elections before federal elections took place (Linz and Stepan 1992[1]). That argument, however, overlooks the importance of the election system used in Croatia and Serbia (winner-takes-all in single member districts), which arguably

did much more to intensify polarisation than the sequence within which elections were held.

Other things being equal, there is a strong case for holding the first local, regional and state-wide elections at the same time, provided that the same electoral system is used at all tiers (to avoid confusion), and that there is agreement on the units of government. No harm is done if for practical administrative reasons there is a short interval of a matter of weeks between each election. Near simultaneous elections at all tiers of government ensure that all incumbents acquire early legitimacy, over-centralisation is inhibited and party-building is encouraged.

Functions

The third question is the most important: what functions are elections to serve? It is usually not asked because it is supposed that the answer is obvious: to enable the people(s) to choose their government(s). This answer presumes, however, that there is agreement on who should be entitled to vote. Creating an electoral register is often disputed when many citizens are in exile, the old regime developed exclusionary citizenship laws, or people have been internally displaced by conflict.

[1] Juan J Linz and Alfred Stepan. 1992. 'Political Identities and Electoral Sequences: Spain, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia.' *Daedelus* no. 12 (2):123-39.

The answer also begs the question of what type of government is being elected. What model of executive-legislative relations will be pursued? Presidential, parliamentary, or some hybrid of the two? Will the state be federal or a union-state or unitary? Whatever its precise territorial format, how decentralised will the state be? Will there be directly elected governors or mayors or collegial regional and local governments?

These questions have to be definitively decided by the constituent assembly rather than at the very first elections. The role of the constituent assembly should remind us that elections have another key function. They enable the people – or the peoples in a multi-people state – to be 'represented' in the full array of meanings attached to that phrase.

Choice of system

The entirely related fourth question is the choice of electoral system, which breaks down into many further vital questions. What numbers of offices are to be filled by elections? Should different election systems be used for different offices? Should there be many electoral districts or one per territorial unit? Should the electoral system focus on candidates or parties? What electoral formula should be used? One that encourages proportional representation (PR) or one that encourages the emergence of a clear winner or some hybrid? For comprehensive evaluations see Taagepera and Shugart 1989[2], Lijphart 1994[3], and Cox 1997[4]. These questions are again best resolved in each country's constituent assembly. Democrats should therefore focus on the election system to be used for the formation of the constituent assembly.

There is a strong case for using PR for such an opening election. Party list-PR in the country as a whole, or in regions (if there are agreed boundaries and reasonable prospects of collecting fair electoral registers) are both reasonable options. Under list-PR the constituent assembly is likely to represent reasonably all significant national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities that organise themselves (O'Leary 2010[5]), and it is easier to ensure that many female candidates are elected under this system. Using list-PR also encourages the building of political parties, the key agents of government in established democracies.

A constituent assembly elected under list-PR may decide to choose different electoral systems for

Those concerned with maximising fairness and transparency have a range of international organisations to which they can turn for advice

the future, or for different tiers of government, or for different offices, after an informed debate to which minorities contribute. By contrast, a constituent assembly elected under a winner-takes-all system is much more likely to dictate a constitution from a narrower base of support, and with less lasting legitimacy, and is highly unlikely to decide on the use of PR systems. To discourage too many micro-parties the assembly should not be too large or an overt threshold in votes should be required.

In the first recent democratic elections in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Iraq fantastic numbers of 'parties' imagined that they had viable prospects. Public education programmes are therefore required to encourage party-alliances and mergers. The United Nations Electoral Assistance Unit is especially competent at organising party-list PR elections.

Electoral administration

The fifth but not the last question in importance is electoral administration (Massicotte, Blais, and Yoshinaka 2004[6]). Again, it breaks down into further queries. Who should conduct the election? Parties should not, but they need access for scrutiny and they need to be consulted, and they may be permitted to make nominations. An independent electoral commission is the increasing international norm. It should, however, be federalised in federal countries to reduce suspicion that the centralists will steal the results.

Should there be uniformity in electoral administration? Should the electoral commission's decisions be open to judicial review? Not when the judiciary is contaminated by the old regime. Should there be a provisional election law with clear rules regarding registration, deposits (to deter frivolous or strategic candidacies), sources of funding, advertising, and campaigning? The answer in each case is yes.

What requirements must valid candidates fulfil, for example, in citizenship, residency, age, or educational qualifications? In particular, are some of those associated with the old regime to be excluded from the initial elections? How will these qualifications and disqualifications be validated? Many of these questions cannot be put off until the constituent assembly, although it will certainly have to reconsider them. Those concerned with maximising fairness, transparency and uncontentious review of these subjects have a range of international organisations, including the UN, to which they can turn for advice. ■

[2] Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1989. *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[3] Arend Lijphart. 1994. *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, Comparative European Politics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[4] Gary W Cox. 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems.* Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

[5] Brendan O'Leary. 2010. 'Electoral Systems and the Lund Recommendations.' *In Political Participation of Minorities: A Commentary on International Standards and Practice*, edited by Marc Weller and Katharine Nobbs, 363-400. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[6] Louis Massicotte, André Blais, and Antoine Yoshinaka. 2004. *Establishing the Rules of the Game: Election Laws in Democracies.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

■ **Behind bars – Bouzaid Dorda, former spy chief in Muammar Gaddafi's government, during a court session in Tripoli, July 2012. Dorda is the first senior Gaddafi official to be put on trial in Libya since the revolution**

Retribution or reconciliation?

The way in which the Arab world's fledgling democracies deal with their ousted leaders will have a significant impact on their future

By **Simon Laws**, QC, criminal law barrister and former prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

As the countries of the Arab Spring attempt to build new states in place of the region's repressive regimes, few choices will affect their futures as profoundly as their method of reckoning with the past. Crimes call out for punishment, but punishment alone cannot bring reconciliation. Each country must choose its own path; in doing so, the routes that have been followed by other nations in the past 40 years are the obvious place to start.

Criminal prosecutions are the first resort of successor regimes. As the prosecutor in the trial of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak is quoted as saying: "Retribution is the solution". Trials are legally inescapable: international law requires that those guilty of human rights abuses be punished. As recently as February, Spain's 1977 decision to grant amnesties for the crimes of the Franco era was condemned by the Office of the UN High

Will mass prosecutions promote the stability that is a condition for reconciliation?

Commissioner for Human Rights as being contrary to international law.

With the advent of the International Criminal Court (ICC), some choices may no longer be taken at a national level; the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), in referring the Libyan situation to the ICC, has triggered an unseemly tussle between the new leadership in Tripoli and the Court over the fate of Saif Gaddafi.

However, its geographic jurisdiction is a patchwork: among Arab nations only Jordan is a state party affording the ICC automatic jurisdiction. For the others, a referral by the UNSC is mandatory before the prosecutor can begin an investigation. As the case of Syria shows, this imperfect mechanism is vulnerable to member states choosing to protect their strategic interests over the lives of civilians.

There are three main models for non-ICC prosecutions for those accused of past abuses. Domestic courts have the virtue of emphasising the authority of the nascent nation: their use has a strong appeal to successor regimes.

The tribunals established for Cambodia and Sierra Leone offer the second solution, namely international involvement in a domestically based court. Additional resources, expertise and legitimacy are the prizes here. The third model, represented by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), sees prosecutions taking place in an international tribunal.

Their impact cannot be seen as solely retributive; they have also been highly effective in removing from the region those individuals most likely to undermine the process of reconciliation. Meanwhile, the courts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda show that the existence of an ad hoc tribunal is no bar to the operation of the domestic courts.

Bosnia has a caseload that will take perhaps another 15 years to complete, which will make the wars in the former Yugoslavia, by the end, the most heavily litigated conflict in history. Is it possible, or permissible, to imagine reconciliation being inhibited by retribution on this scale?

Criminal accountability

The leaders of the collapsing regimes of the Arab Spring will have to be tried; a free Syria will demand that Al-Assad and other prominent figures are held criminally accountable for what Hillary Clinton succinctly described as their "rule by murder and fear".

But prosecutions of the few cannot provide a complete solution to the challenge of breaking with the past. What is to happen to the thousands of soldiers and shabiha who carried out murderous orders or the many others complicit in maintaining the regime? Can they all be prosecuted? Could the infrastructure of the new court system cope, or might it be necessary to turn to an altogether different, possibly non-Western model?

Rwanda's Gacaca courts (lawyer-free, but local and swift) were born of necessity – they have dealt with staggering numbers of cases and are widely judged a success at the national level (despite the reservations of international human rights lawyers). But will mass prosecutions promote the stability that is a condition for reconciliation?

The army posed a recurring threat to the stability of Syria before Hafez Al-Assad assumed power. The Al-Assad family successfully yoked the military to the regime by, among other tactics, permitting military leaders to engage in lucrative criminality. The successor regime will urgently need to have the military under control; mass prosecution can only complicate this.

This may call for a realistic assessment of how far down the chain of command indictments reach. Greece adopted a pragmatic approach to the fall of its military dictatorship by prosecuting 100 senior figures – the process was swift and seen as satisfactorily punitive. Compromise can be an ugly word when it actually denotes widespread impunity, but without stability, reconciliation is unthinkable.

Truthful testimonies

Despite the enthusiasm of the Mubarak prosecutor, it is unlikely to be the case that retribution is the whole of the solution. Hostility and division tend to survive the fall of repressive regimes. Party members and the regime's wider power-base inevitably attract their share of blame.

Lustration – the removal from office or employment of those who had collaborated with repressive regimes – was widely used in Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism. In its primitive form, it was criticised by human rights campaigners as involving a denial of natural justice, but Hungary and Poland in particular evolved a more nuanced form that offered a second chance to those prepared to tell the truth.

El Salvador's model involved a commission that investigated abuses and recommended a purge of more than 100 senior military figures complicit in human rights abuses. This targeted approach is to be sharply contrasted with the disastrous blanket policy of 'de-Baathification' seen in Iraq, which contributed to the anarchy that followed the fall of Saddam Hussein.

The Truth Commission (TC), generally understood to mean an officially sanctioned body with power to investigate widespread abuses of the past, has formed a part of the reconciliation process in more than 20 countries.

The South African model, which offered amnesty in exchange for truthful testimony, is much the most well known. It provided a voice to the wronged and left behind an historical record of the wrongs of apartheid, available in perpetuity on its website. More than 20,000 people contributed to its proceedings, a level of inclusion impossible in conventional courts.

The experience of Sierra Leone shows that a TC is capable of functioning in parallel with the holding of trials, in theory providing the potential for retribution and reconciliation to take place simultaneously.

Nor should it be thought that the role of the TC has to be limited to providing a forum for victims and the establishment of an agreed national narrative, important though these may be. In Chile, the TC's findings were used as the basis for providing compensation for victims. It is a model that is highly adaptable to local needs.

It may, however, be simply naïve to think that a TC can achieve reconciliation in societies that retain toxic levels of underlying ethnic and religious tension. It may be no coincidence that the Yugoslavia TC came to nothing and that discussions in respect of a TC for Iraq have, so far, led nowhere.

The fledgling Arab nations must have all the help that the UN can offer in making the hard choices that lie ahead, and the time for planning is now. The list of potential solutions, already long, may need new and innovative additions. For criminal regimes under pressure, what could be less welcome than seeing plans for their downfall take shape and the time for retribution and reconciliation approach? ■

It may be naïve to think that a Truth Commission can achieve reconciliation in societies that retain toxic levels of underlying ethnic and religious tension

مدخل خاص
بالقضاة والموظفين

Building the rule of law

Moving towards a fairer and less arbitrary and exclusive political system is vital for political and economic development in the Arab world, but there are no quick fixes

By Andrew Rathmell, Senior Principal of the Governance, Security and Justice Team at Coffey International Development Ltd

The Arab Spring movements were, in part, motivated by protests against the absence of an equitable rule of law. Most noticeably, abuses by security forces were the proximate sparks for rebellion in Tunisia and Egypt. However, the pattern of protest against the arbitrary interpretation of laws and the discriminatory deployment of state security apparatus was clear across the region.

Unfortunately, the absence of the rule of law has been a feature of the Arab world in the modern period. The colonial and mandatory powers imposed very partial law and order that served metropolitan economic and political interests. Since the 1930s, most Arab states have been ruled by autocratic or, at best, oligarchic regimes under which the rule of law was notable by its absence. Whether republican or monarchical, Arab regimes have fostered a culture

A difficult legacy

While there is some variation across the Arab world, all Arab states face a grim legacy in trying to build a culture of the rule of law that can underpin political, social and economic development. Since the Mandate period, most Arab states developed as autocratic regimes ruled by an intertwined political, security and business elite. Whether operating in a republic or a monarchy, the state security and judicial apparatus was usually used to support the elite and defend the regime, not to provide justice and security for the wider population. The arbitrary deployment of state power was the norm.

In many cases the judicial and security apparatus had evolved from colonial/Mandate-era ones, which had similar regime security roles. During the Cold War, Arab world security apparatuses were variously supported by the Western and Eastern blocs in ways that strengthened regimes, paying little attention to developmental needs or to promoting an overarching rule of law.

There were, of course, efforts before the Arab Spring to promote a wider rule of law. From a commercial perspective, sanctity of contract was vital for economic development and made some progress in countries with more open economies reliant on international investment such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. In less economically developed Arab states, there were efforts by external actors such as the European Union, United Nations, World Bank and bilateral donors such as the US to promote technocratic improvements to the administration of justice, often with a focus on civil and commercial justice issues. None of these efforts, however, changed the underlying dynamics of the status quos.

The rule of law during the Arab Spring

Although the absence of a rule of law may have sparked many of the protests that led to the Arab Spring, there has been limited progress at best in the transitional states in addressing the issue.

Debate on the issue has been most evident in the states where transition has moved the fastest –albeit in very different ways: Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Not surprisingly, Tunisia's relatively smooth and relatively successful transition, albeit with some recent concerning developments, has allowed its polity to begin to address rule of law issues. It is here that we see the emergence of an open debate and some steps to curb the arbitrary power of state security agencies and to seek to hold elites accountable to the laws of the land.

In Egypt, with a much more deeply embedded political-military-economic elite, the status of the reform trajectory remains unclear. Indeed, with the breakdown of basic order in some parts of the country, the 'deep state' has had some success in arguing for a return to a more authoritarian approach to policing and the maintenance of public order. Nonetheless, activists in both the liberal and Islamist movements are

of impunity in which elites have applied their interpretation of the law and state coercive power in ways that have impeded political, social and economic development.

Since moving from the arbitrary whim of rulers to a robust rule of law culture is one of the critical factors underpinning economic and political development, the transitional Arab states face an immense, but vital, task in building rule of law within their societies. The omens have not been good so far.

The rule of law has many definitions, but its core tenets include equality before the law and the principle that the law imposes constraints on the arbitrary exercise of power.[1] The gradual and hard-fought ascent of the rule of law in the West is generally credited with enabling economic development, as well as the consolidation of pluralist political systems.

[1] For the purposes of this chapter, we focus on one of the elements in Albert Dicey's classic definition: "No one is above the law and everyone is equal before the law regardless of social, economic, or political status." Albert Dicey, *An Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* (1885).

The prospects for promoting the rule of law in the Arab Spring states are mixed but, overall, poor

actively engaged in an effort to articulate what a more lawful political system may look like and how arbitrary power may be constrained. In Libya, efforts to reassert a state monopoly over force have stumbled to date, but the relatively fair election in July 2012 provided an opportunity for the government to demonstrate that it can be a government "of laws and not of men".

In cases such as Syria and Yemen, internal opposition and state repression have made the situation even worse in the short term with breakdowns of basic order, leaving any prospect for longer-term reform a distant vision. In countries such as Algeria, Jordan, the GCC states and Iraq, there have been attempts variously to head off or quash incipient protest movements. In most cases, the states' responses have relied again on the arbitrary exercise of power.

Prospects and policy priorities

Taking a broader comparative approach, the prospects for promoting the rule of law in the Arab Spring states are mixed but, overall, poor. The absence of the rule of law is not a simple technical issue of adjusting legal codes or reforming judicial or policing institutions. Instead, it is about the deep structures of power and influence at the heart of a society's political economy. Even the most progressive Arab Spring states are a long way from tackling these issues. By way of comparison, most of the former communist states

of Eastern Europe have made considerable progress in strengthening the rule of law since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Their path was eased, however, by the fact that they have become tightly enmeshed in the structures, institutions and cultures developed in Western Europe since World War II.

A number of the Balkan states, while having progressed, are struggling to constrain state power and also to control non-state and criminal networks. Further afield, for every example of a former authoritarian state that has made progress – not least some of the Latin American and South-East Asian states – there are others where little progress is visible, notably in Russia, Central Asia and some parts of Africa.

For the Arab Spring countries and their international community partners, this is not a counsel of despair. Instead, it is a reminder that, while moving towards a fairer and less arbitrary and exclusive political system is vital for political and economic development, there are no quick fixes. The international community has learned that short-term technical fixes have little value. Instead, there needs to be real political will from key elites and social groups within Arab Spring countries to address this issue.

This will mean that established and new elites need to be willing to accept constraints and limits on their behaviour. While some may voluntarily do so, history tells us that such constraints often only come about as a result of sustained struggle over long periods of time. There is plenty of good work that is being done on these issues – for instance improving the supply of justice and security and empowering civil society to demand more accountability.

Nonetheless, the real lesson for the Arab world is that promoting the rule of law will remain a central issue in the struggles for power and ideas currently engulfing it. ■

Meeting the infrastructure deficit

Restoring infrastructure and stimulating economies will help to improve quality of life after the Arab Spring

By **Dr Walid Abdelwahab**, Director, Infrastructure Department, Islamic Development Bank, and **Irfan Bukhari**, Manager, Public Private Partnership, Infrastructure Department, Islamic Development Bank

The socio-political events that led to the Arab Spring are seen to have been motivated by a strong and genuine demand by the population for 'freedom and dignity'. In addition to the political rights and participation in decision-making, people are demanding quality public services such as access to affordable education, health, water, electricity, transport and, above all, jobs. These basic services were not provided to large segments of populations by governments due to lack of resources, poor governance and unfair distribution of the available services, largely focusing on population in capital and major cities at the expense of fringe and rural population.

Statistics on access to and quality of infrastructure services have, therefore, come into sharper focus in the post-Arab Spring democracies, including in most election campaigns. The search for 'technocrat' governments in most Arab Spring countries is also motivated by the strong desire by the winning parties to 'fix the economy' and provide decent and affordable public services.

■ Infrastructure projects such as the new metro line in Cairo, which opened in February 2012, will be at the top of the agenda for most MENA governments

Meeting the infrastructure deficit (in terms of access, quality and affordability) will be at the top of the agenda of most Arab governments in the region. These legitimate demands have inspired other governments in the region to focus on delivery of quality infrastructure services. Investment in infrastructure is now increasingly seen as investment in the future and stability of the individual countries and the region as a whole.

Economists suggest that a 1 per cent increase in public spending on infrastructure adds, on average, between 0.1 per cent and 0.3 per cent in GDP growth. However, when private sector-supported investments are made in infrastructure, then the growth relationship is said to be both larger and stronger. Accordingly, investment in infrastructure enhances GDP growth and contributes to improving the quality of life of nations.

Infrastructure

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) has been investing in infrastructure development since it started business in 1975. Recognising the importance of infrastructure in the development of economies and enhancing the living standards of its constituencies, the IDB has taken important steps to increase the private participation in infrastructure development under public private partnership (PPP) structures. These include the establishment of a PPP division within the bank, the creation of the Arab Financing Facility for Infrastructure (AFFI), and the continuing perusal to increase the flows of foreign direct investment for its member states.

The IDB development assistance revolves around supporting the efforts of member countries to fight poverty and achieve sustainable growth by, among other interventions, the development of sustainable infrastructure. From its inception in 1975 to the end of 2011, the IDB had supported a total of 1,009 infrastructure and related operations, with total investment amounting to $21 billion. Regional breakdown of these infrastructure investments is provided below.

Aggregate infrastructure financing

- 50% Middle East and North Africa
- 20% Central Asia
- 14% Sub-Saharan Africa
- 14% South and South East Asia
- 2% Regional
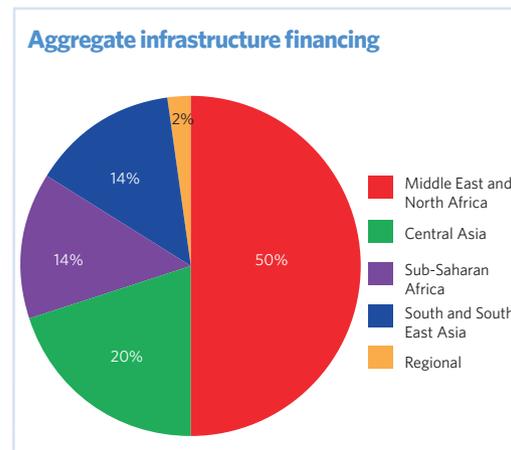
The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has, over time, improved access to infrastructure, although there are gaps across regions, countries and sectors. These gaps will increase given: increase in population; urbanisation; lack of emphasis on energy/water conservation; and a general slowdown in infrastructure investments due to the global economic crisis.

At one end of the spectrum, some of the oil-producing richer countries may have undertaken significant world-class (and sometimes non-optimal) infrastructure development on par with high-income countries; while at the other end, the resource-deficit countries, under severe budget constraints, have under-invested (sometimes neglected investment) in infrastructure. In the wake of recent events in many Arab countries, the need to rebuild damaged infrastructure is adding to the already massive infrastructure deficit.

Public versus private

Infrastructure development in the region has been undertaken largely by public resources (about $630 billion in the last 10 years). The private sector has not been leveraged as much as it would have been in the developed world. However, with spending cuts, reduced resources and the recognition of the benefits of private sector intervention into infrastructure development, governments are increasingly focusing on PPPs to invest in the development of infrastructure. These governments, as well as financing institutions, are therefore paying more attention to creating the right enabling environment for PPP, which includes good governance, private sector protection, regulatory framework, contract management and enforcements, ownership rights, etc.

The IDB's intervention in the MENA infrastructure has been primarily in the energy, urban development and transport sectors through its public sector financing. Although PPP financing has gained momentum, PPP investment has been ad hoc, given the absence of enabling environment.

Recognising the importance of PPP in the development of sustainable infrastructure and the positive impact it has on people, the IDB decided to streamline its support for PPP investments in its member countries and took two important steps. Firstly, it started building its PPP financing expertise in 2004, which now has a portfolio of more than $3 billion. Secondly, in partnership with the World Bank Group, it established the AFFI.

Supporting framework

The AFFI is a comprehensive framework of supporting activities to be undertaken by different stakeholders to support the growth of PPP-structured infrastructure projects in the Arab League countries. Launched in April 2011 in Amman, Jordan, as a partnership between the World Bank Group's

International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Islamic Development Bank, the AFFI's purpose is to enhance the implementation of PPP-structured energy, water, waste power, transport, information and communication technologies and social (health and education) infrastructure projects in the Arab League countries.

The AFFI is composed of four components:
(a)   The Policy Forum offers a platform for regional policy dialogue between public decision makers, PPP practitioners, representatives of the private sector and IFIs to foster co-ordination to address the common regional challenges of infrastructure development.
(b)   The Technical Advisory Facility (TAF) provides grant funding for transaction advisory services, awareness raising and an enabling environment to prepare PPP projects in infrastructure. TAF will also be joined by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, The European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
(c)   The Public Window provides funding to governments in support of infrastructure and PPP projects.
(d)   The Private Window, which, when established, will provide Sharia and conventional mezzanine financing in support of private investments in infrastructure projects.

While the AFFI is being launched in phases to ensure sustainability, the IDB is also looking at ways and means of increasing the flows of foreign direct investments into the infrastructure of the member countries. The global financial crisis, coupled with eurozone issues, has meant that infrastructure investment has significantly decreased due to a lack of risk appetite of lenders and investors, as well as very limited liquidity.

Sovereign wealth funds

The oil-rich countries have accumulated their oil revenues in sovereign wealth funds (SWFs). In more recent literature, the importance and need of utilising the resources of SWFs in the development of infrastructure has been emphasised. SWFs have their own investment strategies and are not restrained by the liquidity requirements that can affect other institutional investors, such as insurance companies and pension funds.

Infrastructure asset class has become increasingly attractive to SWFs. It is estimated that about 56 per cent of all SWFs actively invest in infrastructure given the long-term and stable returns and relatively low risks that such investments represent. However, in terms of geographical preferences, the most popular destinations are Asia and Europe. On an a-priori basis, it seems that these funds are concerned with political risks and associated credit risk. The IDB, together with its development partners, is considering ways and means to address the risk issues that are inhibiting these funds from investing in the region's infrastructure projects.

The writers believe that the successful unlocking of SWFs, together with the AFFI, represents a meaningful contribution by the IDB Group to stimulate the economies of the Arab League countries and the development of infrastructure, thereby improving the lives of the people of the region. ■

Infrastructure asset class has become increasingly attractive to sovereign wealth funds

A stable environment

Financial and banking stability are crucial if the Arab Spring countries are to achieve sustainable growth

By **Alia Moubayed**, Senior Economist, Middle East and North Africa, Barclays Bank

Financial sector stability and development are critical for achieving higher and sustainable growth rates by Arab Spring countries as they progress through their political transition and focus on improving the standards of living for their people. With a rapidly growing population and labour force, as well as high initial unemployment levels, those countries will need sound and deep banking and financial sectors in order to mobilise savings and allocate resources productively and to create jobs and help support equitable and socially-just growth strategies more effectively.

Yet, the financial sector in Arab Spring countries has not been able to fully assume this role; in many of them, it has, in fact, been a drag on growth during the past few decades. In these countries, the process of the financial sector's deepening remains at its early stages when measured by the level of private sector credit to GDP. This is particularly the case in Libya and Yemen, where the ratio stands below 10 per cent, in Syria where it hovers around 18 per cent and, to a lesser extent, Egypt where credit to GDP averaged around 41.4 per cent between 2006-10. Such low

levels still lag behind those in higher income oil-exporting countries in the Gulf (53 per cent of GDP), in Lebanon (72 per cent of GDP) and Jordan (82 per cent of GDP), where financial depth has caught up with other advanced emerging markets in Asia and Latin America. (See Figure 1, below).

Lack of depth and quality

In addition to limited financial depth, firms and individuals in Arab Spring countries suffer from 'low quality' financial intermediation. Large segments of the population and the enterprise sector – especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – face limited access to bank lending and other financial services, which many surveys reveal to be a key constraint for business expansion and development (Figure 2). The lack of competition and the state ownership of banks are often cited as key factors limiting access to quality credit. In Libya and Yemen, for example, where the banking sector is still dominated by public sector banks, financial repression, or government-imposed restrictions and price distortions on the financial sector, can inhibit growth prospects. Moreover, the banking sector is highly concentrated, with assets of the few largest banks accounting for more than 65 per cent of total commercial bank assets in several countries, and the entry of new banks is difficult.

Credit concentration remains among the highest in the world, reflecting the focus of banks on large and well-connected enterprises or clients to the detriment of smaller and nascent business ventures. Partly owing to the lack of competition and the prevalence of government ownership, many banks have not developed a sophisticated credit approach, and problems of non-performing assets remain pervasive in several banking systems, undermining asset quality and further constraining deployment of resources to the private sector.

Another key problem is that bank credit is skewed towards shorter-term loans, with medium- to long-term lending remaining either unavailable or prohibitively expensive.

Little diversification

The concentration of financial intermediation in the banking sector is another important challenge. Bank assets account for 85 per cent of financial assets in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries, compared with 48 per cent in emerging Asian countries, 41 per cent in emerging European countries and 35 per cent in Latin America. Most financial systems are undiversified, lacking the appropriate regulatory and legal framework for non-banking financial institutions, such as insurance companies, pension funds and mutual funds, which highlights the need for further developing alternative sources of financing – including bonds and equity. (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Private sector credit to GDP ratio (%)

	GCC (avg)	Libya	Algeria	Tunisia	Morocco	Egypt	Syria	Jordan	Lebanon	Yemen
1975-85	25.9	17.4	56.3	42.2	16.8	21.4	6.2	45.1	–	–
1986-95	35.9	30.8	39.9	53.7	13.8	26.7	8.7	61.7	62.2	4.4
1996-05	40.4	18.8	7.9	56.6	43.5	49.7	9.9	73.2	73.7	4.9
2006-10	53.1	7.0	13.8	58.3	60.6	41.4	18.1	81.9	72.2	5.2

Source: IMF, Haver Analytics, Barclays Research

Figure 2: Financial market development and institutional indicators ranking (rank out of 142 countries)

	GCC (avg)	Libya	Algeria	Tunisia	Morocco	Egypt	Syria	Jordan	Lebanon	Yemen
Availability of financial services	35	34	136	131	42	61	60	141	121	59
Affordability of financial services	23	33	139	136	31	56	69	141	114	55
Financing through local equity market	24	113	122	127	25	31	29	142	78	53
Ease of access to loans	9	33	87	67	30	44	49	142	101	59
Venture capital availability	15	60	55	81	21	40	41	67	107	62
Soundness of banks	38	9	116	121	59	69	61	137	59	40
Regulation of securities exchanges	28	55	135	137	38	43	67	142	76	89
Property rights	31	57	111	106	31	63	56	116	51	34
Judicial independence	29	127	95	112	40	79	63	139	109	49
Strength of investor protection	57	77	n/a	59	59	127	59	111	93	100

Source: Global Competitiveness report 2011-12 of the World Economic Forum, Barclays Research

As political and economic transition in Arab Spring countries unfolds, the consolidation of the financial sector's role in supporting economic growth will require the development of institutional, legal and regulatory reforms aimed at further deepening financial markets, as well as improving the quality of financial intermediation.

In particular, efforts aimed at improving access to finance (availability and affordability of financial services) through dismantling controls over credit allocation and liberalising interest rates should top the policy agenda. This will require removing barriers to entry and the operations of new domestic banks, foreign banks and non-bank financial intermediaries, in view of increasing competition, expanding the pool of available resources, and providing more competitive pricing of loans. A re-examination of the role of state banks will also be necessary in view of reducing the public ownership of financial sector institutions in some countries, improving their governance and strengthening their operational efficiency, notably where they exhibit weak performance. Financial sector reforms undertaken during the past decade in Egypt could provide lessons for other Arab Spring countries.

Regulation

Consolidating financial sector stability also requires strengthening supervision and prudential regulation. Several countries have taken steps to conform to international Basel standards by increasing capital adequacy ratios and reducing non-performing loans. These actions should be pursued and strengthened with a view to bolstering financial sector soundness and stability, and to keep up with a rapidly evolving international banking regulatory framework.

The development of the non-bank financial sector or alternative channels to banking finance, including the stock market and corporate bond market, is also critical to mobilise larger pools of domestic and international savings necessary for economic growth in the medium term. Setting stable legislative framework aimed at encouraging the emergence of domestic institutional investors, including insurance companies, pension funds and mutual funds, should help deepen financial markets. Moreover, there is scope for substantial improvements in microfinance, small and medium enterprises (SME) finance, as well as housing finance in most countries.

Finally, reforms within the banking and financial sectors need to be accompanied by other structural reforms aimed at improving the broader environment for doing business in Arab Spring economies. In particular, property rights enforcement tends to be weak while poor legal enforcement of contracts and loan recovery in several judicial systems are still susceptible to political pressure and long delays (Figure 2). Enhancing the transparency and efficiency of the judicial system and strengthening of property rights should also be given immediate attention. ■

Sources:
World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness report, 2011
IMF Regional economic outlook, various issues; IMF Global Financial stability report, 2011
World Bank 'Financial Access and Stability: A Roadmap for the Middle East and North Africa', 2011

Consolidating financial sector stability requires strengthening supervision and prudential regulation

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Poverty and exclusion: tackling unemployment in North Africa

The lack of decent employment opportunities, especially for young people, is hampering the growth of countries in the North African region

By **Dorothea Schmidt**, an International Labour Organization (ILO) employment specialist, and **Dahlia Hassanien-Roque**, an ILO researcher

As a result of the Arab Spring, the labour market challenges in the countries of North Africa have been greatly exacerbated from an already difficult situation. Consequently, the essential demands of people in the region, which include poverty reduction, social justice and equitable growth, have become even harder to achieve, with growing unemployment rates and an increasing lack of decent jobs.

High unemployment, low labour force participation and low employment-to-population ratios

The greatest threat to the region's tenuous socio-economic progress is its tremendous lack of decent work opportunities for young people (aged 15 to 29). Contrary to worldwide population trends, the share of young people in the North African region has been growing and will continue to do so in the near future. This should be an incredible economic asset, especially given that this is the highest educated generation ever. However, in the past two decades, employment growth has failed to keep up with the working-age population growth caused by these population trends[1], leading to high unemployment rates. Despite some variations among countries, overall levels of unemployment are extremely high in the region (10.9 per cent in 2011), especially for women (19 per cent) and youth (27.1 per cent). The highest youth unemployment rates for the countries of North Africa are in the 'revolution' countries of Libya, which has an estimated youth unemployment rate of more than 30 per cent, Tunisia at 30 per cent, and Egypt at 28.9 per cent. Algeria's youth unemployment rate stands at 21.5 per cent and Morocco's at 17.9 per cent.

The labour market situation in the North African countries is particularly worrying for women, given that their labour force participation rates were very low before the Arab Spring and decreased even

further immediately thereafter. In 2011, just under one-quarter of women were active in the labour market (either employed or searching for a job), which means that of every 100 women in the region, only 24 are active in the labour market. For young women, the rate is even lower, with only 20 women of every 100 in the labour market. This is matched with an extremely high unemployment rate for young women in the region of 41 per cent in 2011. (See Figure 1, right). Unique to the region is that unemployment exists across all income and education levels. Therefore, whether people are rich or poor, well educated or not, the risk of being unemployed is almost the same. This, again, was linked to the frustrations of the social uprisings in the region, which were dominated by young, educated people whose investments in education had failed to pay off. This situation is also a threat to the region's long-term development given that this might have a negative impact on families' decisions towards educational investments.

Taking the high unemployment rates together with the low participation rates, one finds that North Africa has one of the lowest employment-to-population[2] ratios in the world. The overall ratio stood at 43.7 per cent in 2011 (compared with a world average of 60.3 per cent). This means that of 100 people who could potentially work, not even half of them did so. Even though some of those who are not working might be in education, this share is still too large and creates an unnaturally high employment dependency ratio, whereby too many people without work depend on very few people with a job.

Poor job quality and low productivity rates
Despite the severity of the unemployment problem in the region, gaining a job is not a panacea, as the labour market challenge also extends to those who are in employment. Many people in the region who have a job are stuck with low quality, low productivity work, often in the informal economy. Such jobs do not even

In the past two decades, employment growth has failed to keep up with the working-age population growth

[1] This also includes a slight increase in female labour market participation.

[2] Employment-to-population ratios are a good indicator of how effectively a country uses its productive potential. The employment-to-population ratio represents the share of people actually employed against those who could potentially be working (working-age population). The group of employed people includes people in the formal as well as informal economy.

Figure 1: Unemployment rates by world regions, disaggregated by sex and age

- Male unemployment rate (%) 2011
- Female unemployment rate (%) 2011
- Youth unemployment rate (%) 2011
- Adult unemployment rate (%) 2011
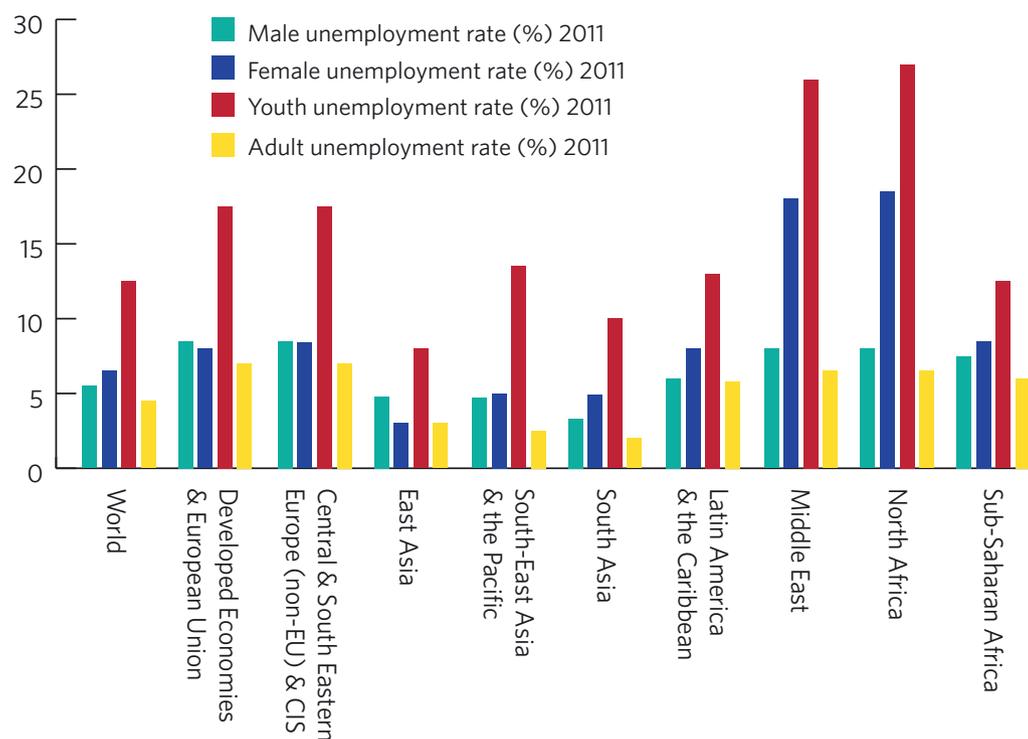
Source: ILO, Global Employment Trends, January 2012; preliminary estimate

provide sufficient income to allow workers and their families to live above the poverty line of US$2 a day. The quality of jobs available has even decreased over time, with young people in the region increasingly being forced into low-quality jobs. Almost four in 10 people working in the region in 2011 had a vulnerable job, either as an own-account worker or as an unpaid contributing family worker. In all countries, the share is considerably higher for women than for men. Wage and salary work – the type of job with a higher likelihood of being decent – has not increased considerably in recent years.

One of the reasons behind the high and increasing level of low-quality jobs is the lack of productivity increase. The causality also holds the other way whereby the low quality of jobs hinders people from becoming more productive. The increase in productivity levels[3] in the region has been very minimal in recent years. It was only 22 per cent in North Africa over the past two decades, while it was more than 350 per cent in East Asia over the same period. This is particularly ominous because it is productivity growth that provides the possibility for improved wages and living standards. As a result, real wage increases in the region have been minimal.

[3] Measured as output per worker employed, based on how much each worker on average produces during one year.

This lack of productivity increase is also discouraging for investors who are looking for places that have a potential for productivity growth.

The supply side: poor quality education systems and a lack of on-the-job training

Despite the increase in educational attainment, the overall education system in the region fails to be aligned with labour market demands. One primary issue regarding the quality of all levels of education, including vocational education, is that it does not equip graduates with the necessary knowledge required to work in a competitive labour market. Across the region, employers often identify this lack of the right skillset as a barrier to expanding business and employment. However, this level of concern does not appear to be matched by a similar level of commitment to provide on-the-job learning opportunities from the employers' side. The region has the lowest incidence of formal training at the workplace.

The demand side: a non-conducive environment for MSMEs, slow structural shifts and a high share of public sector employment

Although micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) can provide employment opportunities for

The region has the lowest incidence of formal training at the workplace

■ Women hold candles during a rally to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of Mohamed Bouazizi, the Tunisian man who set himself on fire in an act of protest which inspired the Arab Spring, 17 December 2011

young people in the region, the environment is non-conducive to entrepreneurship. Regulatory regimes do not facilitate opening and successfully running a business. Young people find it particularly difficult to obtain access to the financial means and the necessary support required to be successful. For example, in Algeria, 40 per cent of the firms stated that access to finance is a major barrier to their business expansion.

Also adding to the lack of decent job creation is the fact that sectoral shifts are very slow. Agriculture continues to play a strong role, employing one in three people. People in the region also often move straight into the service sector, which accounts for almost 50 per cent of overall employment. However, working in the service sector does not guarantee decent employment as many jobs are of very poor quality, often in the informal economy, and pay low salaries.

Finally, policies aimed at encouraging privatisation and supporting private sector development have been introduced in recent years in several countries in the region. This led to a downsizing of public sector employment. Still, the ideology remains that the government should be responsible for providing jobs. The government continues to be the employer with the highest likelihood of providing a decent job and thus remains the preferred sector of employment for young, educated people and particularly women, who are willing to wait several years for a public sector job[4].

[4] This is the common perception in all countries of the sub-region where the government still provides around 29 per cent of total

Poor public employment services, weak labour market policies and limited existence of solid labour market information

Adding to the challenge is an insufficient 'matching system', which further increases the difficulties for people to find employment opportunities and for employers to find suitable employees. Public employment services in the region do not have the means and the knowledge to provide adequate services. The absence of a regulatory framework for private employment services in most countries also increases the risk of abuses and fraudulent practices, and unnecessarily limits the labour market intermediation to public services and informal networks.

Active labour market policies are often poorly designed, under-resourced, lack monitoring and evaluation, and are not embedded in a coherent national employment strategy. The ability to design effective labour market policies greatly suffers from the fact that very little timely and transparent information is available. Therefore, there is simply no information regarding what is happening in labour markets and what measures could work.

Disrespect for international labour standards, poor social protection and weak social dialogue

The North African region spends around 11 per cent of GDP on social security. However, despite

employment, with the exception of Morocco, which has only 10 per cent of its labour force employed in the government sector.

social protection schemes[5] existing in all the region's countries, challenges persist. Social protection schemes almost always fail to cover the most vulnerable. They suffer from increased migration of workers, the expansion of informal economies, governance, overburdening and fiscal space limitations. These weak protection systems cannot support structural changes, and such needed changes are unlikely to have a positive impact on poverty.

Some of the labour market deficiencies are also the result of labour legislation not being in accordance with international labour standards. Ratification of International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions has been very slow, with implementation sometimes weak.

The presence of social dialogue based on freedom of association and collective bargaining is stronger in the Maghreb countries of Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria than it is in Egypt and Libya. This is predominately because the Maghreb countries (excluding Libya) were strongly influenced by the French system of social dialogue. Nevertheless, despite the Arab Spring, social dialogue[6] is still often limited, even in the Maghreb countries.[7]

The right to organise continues to be exposed to several violations. Also, social dialogue is restricted to negotiations on salaries or working conditions and does not include larger socio-economic development goals and other issues such as employment, education and the state's relationship with society. For investors, social dialogue is often not considered a means to increase productivity, due to workers advocating their rights.

Perspectives ahead

Despite the specificities within the countries of North Africa, the youth labour market outcomes are quite similar in the majority of economies in the sub-region.

In spite of the recent events, the majority of countries have not yet found solutions for these challenges. Even though young people in the countries of North Africa are more educated than ever before, high population growth rates, high levels of unemployment and few opportunities for young women to participate in labour markets all continue to be persistent country characteristics for the sub-region. This means that, in spite of the region's large youth population, which holds great potential for socio-economic development, it is likely that this potential will be wasted due to a lack of decent job opportunities. To avoid this, it is vital that decent job

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[5] Social protection schemes include social security, wage regulations, working conditions and occupational safety and health regulations.
[6] The International Labour Organization's definition of social dialogue covers various types of information exchange (eg, negotiation or consultation), between representatives of governments, employers and workers, on any issue of common interest, and includes tripartite mechanisms (ie, talks between representatives of labour, employers and governments). Although social dialogue supports democratic processes, it has also been proven to be positive for productivity growth.
[7] Social dialogue is stronger in the Maghreb countries that were influenced in the past by the French system and still profit from this.

Quality education needs to be made available... which corresponds to the needs of modern labour markets

opportunities are created in all countries of the region. Furthermore, quality education needs to be made available across all the countries, which corresponds to the needs of modern labour markets. This mismatch particularly needs to be addressed in Tunisia, which continues to have a high number of unemployed university graduates.

In addition, social protection systems which reach out to all need to be strengthened to allow for structural changes. Respect of and compliance with international labour standards must become part of labour legislation in all countries. A good set of labour market policies and labour market institutions built on solid labour market information can help to get more young people into good jobs. Social dialogue in the sub-region needs to be strengthened, more so in the non-Maghreb countries of Egypt and Libya. Finally the challenge for Libya is much greater than in other countries of North Africa, as reconstruction of its infrastructure, economic system, social compact, governance, and the establishment of a modern labour administration system, which includes migrant workers, are enormous and high priority tasks for the country. ■

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Labour Organization.

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Upwardly mobile

The Arab States are investing in information and communications technology and capitalising on a great opportunity

By **Ebrahim Al Haddad**, Regional Director for the Arab States, International Telecommunication Union

A salient feature of the Arab Spring events was the prevalence of social networks utilising information and communications technology. How telecommunications now develop in environments that may become decentralised is an important question to ask. One of six country groupings in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Arab States[1] region stretches from Mauritania to Yemen and from Comoros to Iraq. Like a mirror of the world as a whole, the region contains great contrasts in terms of information and communication technologies (ICTs), but is also forging ahead fast.

The mobile revolution

Similar to other regions, the number of fixed (wired) telephone lines in the Arab States is static, having peaked at just under one line for every 10 people – well under the global average penetration rate of 16.6 per cent. But today's technology of choice is mobile. ITU statistics[2] show that, between 2006 and 2011, the number of mobile subscriptions in the Arab States soared from 126 million to almost 350 million. This represents nearly 97 subscriptions for every 100 people, ahead of the world average penetration rate of some 87 per cent.

These mobile devices are bringing more and more people online. Several countries, including Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), were early adopters of 3G mobile, and the number of mobile broadband subscriptions in the region mushroomed from 3 million in 2007 to an estimated 48 million in 2011. ITU estimates that mobile broadband penetration has reached more than 13 per cent – not far from the 17 per cent world average.

Meanwhile, reflecting the low number of fixed phone lines, only 2.2 per cent of the population has fixed broadband internet links in the Arab States. Nevertheless, this equates to 8 million fixed broadband subscriptions, massively up from one million in 2006. Although data are difficult to obtain for some countries, it is likely that by the end of 2011, around 30 per cent of the population in the Arab states were internet users, at home or elsewhere, and via mobile or fixed connections. This compares with a global average of some 35 per cent.

A diverse region

Statistics speak volumes when it comes to illustrating the importance, and diversity, of mobile phone usage and penetration in the Middle East. For every 100 people in Saudi Arabia, there are around 188 mobile phone subscriptions; in Djibouti, there are fewer than 20. More than 80 per cent of the population in Qatar uses the internet, but the figure is below five per cent in Mauritania, Iraq and Somalia. Countries with higher incomes – members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – have more than twice as many internet users as the non-GCC countries. Between 2008 and 2010, Saudi Arabia saw a massive rise in mobile broadband, from two million subscriptions to almost 16 million. Morocco also substantially increased its number of internet users and mobile broadband subscriptions, and stands out as the star performer overall. It rose 10 places in the ICT Development Index (IDI) rankings, achieving a similar status in access to ICTs as economies in other regions that had significantly higher levels of GDP[3].

The Broadband Commission for Digital Development was established in May 2010 as a joint initiative by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO, to promote the deployment of high-speed, high-capacity broadband connections to the internet as an essential part of modern infrastructure. Along with Saudi Arabia,

[1]The ITU member states of the Arab region are Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. All data on Sudan refer to today's Sudan and North Sudan.
[2]Unless otherwise stated, figures are from ITU's World Telecommunication and ICT Indicators database.

[3]GDP figures are from the World Bank. See: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD

■ The use of social networks and information and communications technology has been a feature during the Arab Spring and Arab states are fast catching up with the rest of the world when it comes to internet usage

Morocco is well placed to meet the goal of the Broadband Commission[4] in having half of its population online by 2015. Qatar has already reached the target, as have Bahrain, Oman and the UAE.

Prices and capacities

At the level of individual countries, disparities are revealed in line with wealth. In Arab States with relatively high gross national incomes (GNI) per capita, the cost of accessing ICTs represents less than 1 per cent of an average person's monthly income (UAE and Bahrain), or less than 2 per cent (Saudi Arabia and Oman). The figure is below 4 per cent in Qatar, Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. In contrast, ICT services remain largely unaffordable in Comoros, Yemen, Djibouti and Mauritania, for example, where they cost more than 20 per cent of an ordinary person's monthly income.

But what might customers get for their money? Access to the internet is now an essential element of modern life and its speed and capacity depend on bandwidth. While all regions in the world have substantially increased international internet bandwidth per internet user since 2005, there are great disparities. Europe had almost 80 Kbit/s of bandwidth per user in 2010, compared with one Kbit/s per user in Africa. Internet users in the Arab states had around 11 Kbit/s per user at their disposal, slightly more than internet users in the Asia-Pacific region, but lagging behind the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Americas, where users enjoyed more than twice the amount of bandwidth.

The Arab States region is improving though, and between 2005 and 2010, raised its amount of international internet bandwidth per user by nearly 1,400 per cent. Broadband links to the internet are the

[4]For more information see www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/Broadband_Targets.pdf

foundation for the future. To help deliver them, fibre optic infrastructure is available in most Arab States, but coverage remains limited to urban areas and high-income customers. Most ICT regulators understand the potential economic and social benefits of broadband and they are putting priority on improving access to it.

Meanwhile, popular demand for broadband services will increase as more content is produced locally and in Arabic. In May 2010, Egypt was the first country to introduce an internet domain name in Arabic, and other countries have followed. The region is undergoing a boom in the supply of Arabic digital content and governments could encourage more to be created by supporting new young entrepreneurs, and by reviewing tax and copyright regimes.

We can do more

Progress is taking place in the Arab States — and even more could be achieved, given the relative wealth of some countries. The UAE, for instance, has been very active in promoting ICTs and has a rank of 32 in the ICT Development Index; however, Iceland – with an almost identical GDP – is in third place in the world rankings. Similarly, Barbados has a lower GDP than Oman, but is placed at 41 in the index, while Oman is at 60. Oman is moving forward, however, and has substantially increased the number of internet users and mobile broadband subscriptions.

There is room for continuing and rapid improvement in the use of the region's resources. With effective regulatory policies and more investment in infrastructure, all the Arab states could achieve their full potential in ICTs and take advantage of a uniquely powerful engine of development.

Furthermore, the provision of affordable access to ICTs would also provide new opportunities for sustainable development and offer job creation potential with relatively low entry capital. This would lead to an increase in ICT-based services, such as e-government channels, e-education, e-health, and would also create supporting services such as web design and creation opportunities.

Another benefit from this investment is the increase in not just the literacy rates (traditional illiteracy eradication) but also in digital literacy, leading to the development of a digitally based economy and population. This, in turn, would lead to a better standard of living for the citizens of the region.

Broadband represents the next great leap forward for countries worldwide and the Arab region is extremely well placed to capitalise on this opportunity, thanks to its exceptionally talented, innovative, well-educated and hard-working young population.

We confidently predict that, in 10 years' time, many of the world's most exciting new ICT companies will be based in this region and that the ICT sector will have become perhaps THE major employer of young talent. ■

The provision of affordable access to ICTs would also provide new opportunities for sustainable development

A renewed effort

Is renewable energy a panacea for North Africa?

By **Paolo Frankl**, **Head of the Renewable Energy Division, International Energy Agency and** **Emanuela Menichetti**, **Director of the Renewable Energy Divison, Observatoire Méditerranéen de l'Energie**

The aspirations of populations in the Arab Spring countries of North Africa will not stop with the removal of authoritarian regimes; understandably expectations will now move towards living standards, economic matters and social and cultural developments – all of which will be underpinned by the need to secure clean, reliable and cheap energy.

The North African region has an abundance of renewable energy resources. Yet today the energy mix is largely dominated by fossil fuels. In 2009, renewables contributed 5 per cent of total primary energy supply (TPES), about 17 million tonnes of oil equivalent, according to the Observatoire Méditerranéen de l'Energie. Traditionally, the most exploited renewable energy sources have been biomass and hydro. In recent years, wind and some solar, both for electricity and heat production, have entered the energy mix.

The amount of installed capacity of renewable electricity generation technologies in the region is increasing. In particular, the installed capacity of non-hydro renewables has progressed at an average rate of 27 per cent per year from 1990 to 2009, albeit from a very low base, and reached 1.8 gigawatts (GW) in 2009. Largely underlying this trend is the increase in onshore wind generation capacity, mainly in Egypt and Morocco, which together account for the majority of the wind capacity in North Africa.

Implementing plans for improvement

This picture is likely to improve, if the national plans that have been announced by several North African governments are implemented effectively. For instance, Egypt plans to install an additional 7GW of wind power, in pursuit of its objective to supply 20 per cent of electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020. Morocco has established a wind energy programme aiming to reach 2GW of capacity by 2020, with an associated investment of $3.5billion. Wind energy targets have also been defined in Algeria (1.7GW by 2030), Tunisia and Libya.

Regarding solar photovoltaic (PV), so far numbers of installed capacity in the North African region are relatively small, amounting to few megawatts in Algeria and Tunisia and about 10MW in Egypt and Morocco. Solar installations are mainly of a small size, as this technology is used for rural electrification, water pumping systems and some public lighting projects. However, solar PV plans, including larger size projects, have been announced by several North African countries.

For instance, Algeria intends to develop several solar PV projects with a total capacity of 800 megawatts-peak (MWp) by 2020, as part of its national renewable energy development programme. The Algerian government's objective is to reach a PV capacity of almost 3GW by 2030. Tunisia aims to install 15MWp of solar PV capacity in individual households and public and private buildings. In addition, it intends to equip 200 agricultural farms with hydro-pumping PV systems, to electrify 1,000 households and 100 rural farms by solar and wind, to install PV systems for street lighting (0.5MWp in total) and 100 grid-connected PV systems in petrol stations.

Finally, concentrating solar power (CSP) is gaining momentum in the Mediterranean region. Algeria has set a target to achieve 1,200MW of CSP capacity by 2020, and 7GW by 2030. Morocco aims to develop 2GW of solar capacity by 2020. CSP projects are ongoing in other countries including Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.

Barriers and the need for concerted action

Despite some progress, the development of renewables in the region is still constrained by a series of institutional, technical, regulatory and economic barriers. Although the costs of several renewable energy technologies are rapidly decreasing, market competitiveness and grid parity is unlikely to be reached if subsidies to fossil fuels and low electricity tariffs are maintained. Historically, energy prices have been subsidised in the North African countries to guarantee access to energy for all; however, they create market distortion and undermine the growth potential of renewable energy in the region.

In order to accelerate renewable energy market progression, one of the most important measures to be taken is an accurate assessment of the many societal benefits of renewables. Also, the progressive adjustment of energy prices, including incorporating the externalities from energy production and the removal of subsidies, will help ensure a more level playing field for renewables. Of course, such a process should be implemented smoothly, taking into account local social and economic constraints.

Another main barrier to large-scale deployment of renewables around the North African and Mediterranean region is represented by current limited grid capacity and weak interconnections. The creation of a fully integrated Euro-Mediterranean electricity market will necessarily require a significant reinforcement and integration of the North African power network, and possibly the eventual completion of the Mediterranean Energy Ring (linking Europe with the Southern Mediterranean through interconnecting electricity and gas networks).

Capacity building in the sector is also key in ensuring that renewable energy installations are

The progressive adjustment of energy prices will help ensure a more level playing field for renewables

■ Giant wind turbines generate electricity at the Zafarana Wind Farm along the Red Sea Coast, Egypt. Egypt plans to meet 12 per cent of its energy needs with wind power by 2020

accurately designed, installed and maintained by a network of local professionals.

These challenges have been addressed recently by several multilateral initiatives, which have contributed to heightening attention on renewable energy in North African countries and which aim to achieve substantial uptake of renewable electricity capacity in the region.

Among these, the Union for the Mediterranean Solar Plan aims to install 20GW of renewable electricity capacity by 2020. Its Master Plan should be submitted to the Union for the Mediterranean Energy Ministers by mid-2013. In order to allow the exchanges of electricity in the Mediterranean basin, the Medgrid initiative has been launched to evaluate the infrastructure needed to support the integration of electricity markets and inject more renewable electricity onto the grids.[1]

The World Bank's Clean Technology Fund should also increase the renewable electricity capacity by providing financial aid for the development of commercial-scale power plants in the South Mediterranean region.[2] Finally, the Desertec Industrial Initiative plans to create a market for renewable electricity from the deserts. Its aim is to provide up to 15 per cent of the European Union's electricity from the Middle East and North Africa as renewable – mostly solar – electricity by 2050.[3]

In its recent communication titled *Renewable energy: a major player in the European energy market*,[4]

the European Commission highlights the importance of co-operation mechanisms as described in article 9 of the directive 2009/28/EC to further deploy renewables in the Euro-Mediterranean context and proposes: (i) specific measures aiming at encouraging trade of electricity from renewable sources in the framework of a future agreement with Northern African partners; and (ii) to extend the entire framework of the directive 2009/E8/EC to South Mediterranean countries.

These initiatives and renewed commitments come at a time of rapidly evolving socio-economic frameworks in many North African countries, instability in energy markets, rising energy needs, concerns about security of supply, climate, environmental and geopolitical tensions, and – last but not least – of economic crisis in several European countries.

The challenge is to turn these initiatives into concrete steps in such complex times. This will require a strong and sustained political vision on both sides of the Mediterranean in order to attract the necessary public-private partnerships that can trigger the necessary investments in renewable electricity capacity and infrastructure. Joint partnerships have the potential to reduce investment risk, make projects bankable and enable the creation of a sustainable energy market and industry.

Such a vision needs to recognise the advantages of investing in new strategic and interconnecting networks and the enormous potential of renewables in North-Africa: maybe not a panacea, but certainly a huge opportunity for energy security and diversification, market creation, economic development and co-operation, that neither North-African nor European countries can afford to miss. ■

The challenge is to turn these initiatives into concrete steps in such complex times

[1] IEA Renewable Energy Medium-Term Market Report 2012, Paris, OECD/IEA, 2012.
[2] UNEP Green Economy Report, 2011.
[3] OME, Mediterranean Energy Perspectives, Paris, December 2011.
[4] European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Region, Renewable Energy: a major player in the European energy market, Brussels, 6 June 2012, COM (2012) 271 final.

Keeping the oil flowing

Restoring production and ensuring transparency and security in post-conflict states will depend in large part on getting the politics right

By **Raad Alkadiri**, **Partner and Head of the Markets and Country Strategies at international energy advisory firm PFC Energy**

What are the key conditions for effectively restoring oil and gas production in post-conflict states? Political turmoil in the Middle East over the past decade, beginning with the US-led overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and followed later by the Arab Spring, have provided a number of test cases.

The hydrocarbon sectors of Libya, Yemen and Egypt have all felt the impact of political change, just as much as Iraq has done. The experience of each state has been different and it is from that variance that policy lessons can be gleaned.

Although they are at different stages of transition, Iraq and Libya, in particular, offer stark contrasts in the ability of post-conflict states to restore hydrocarbon output. In the former, it took almost eight years to restore production to pre-war levels on a sustained basis, despite great initial optimism and intensive post-war rehabilitation efforts. By contrast, output in Libya returned to almost its pre-conflict levels within months, confounding even the predictions of the country's new leaders.

What differentiated the two states? Both had one key element in common, namely institutional capacity and a functioning technocracy that could manage

the restoration of the industry. Oil production was the principal source of government revenue for both the Hussein and Gaddafi regimes and the sector was therefore accorded particular attention. Moreover, the senior levels of the technocracy in each country benefited from foreign education and training, despite nationalisation of their sectors in the 1970s. The hydrocarbon industry was a place for the best and the brightest.

Institutional differences

But even at the institutional level, there are key differences between Iraq and Libya that offer important policy prescriptions. For all the quality of its senior technocrats prior to the 2003 invasion, the Iraqi sector was ravaged by international sanctions that isolated the country for more than a decade and robbed it of human capacity. Younger Iraqi technocrats had little practical experience of international best practices.

Libya had faced its own sanctions in the 1990s, but the opening up of the country at the end of that decade and the renewed engagement of international oil companies (IOCs) – something that persisted after the fall of Gaddafi, in contrast with Iraq where it took six years for IOCs to be invited in – helped to initiate a process of renewal.

Whether Libya can maintain the post-war resurgence of its hydrocarbon output will depend in part on how the new regime handles its human resources. Thus far, the country has not witnessed the rapid erosion of technocratic capability brought about by political conflicts that was seen in Iraq.

There, a combination of targeting technocrats suspected of links to the Hussein regime and politicisation of oil ministry appointments served to compound the aforementioned age effect, essentially robbing the sector of a large part of its most experienced staff within a period of a few years. Those that were left were, in many cases, unsuited to or incapable of handling the challenges of restoring the hydrocarbon industry. Years of isolation and political opposition also left many suspicious of foreign investment.

This human resource problem was part and parcel of the biggest obstacle to the rapid restoration of production in Iraq, namely the absence of stable politics. This challenge has negatively impacted the sector in a number of ways. First and foremost, conflicting political agendas in Iraq and the resulting series of crises has undermined governance in the sector and made coherent decision-making difficult.

Government in Iraq has become ever-more dysfunctional, making it impossible to implement strategic plans for the sector or to ensure the necessary co-ordination between different departments within the oil ministry and between the ministry and other offices of state. Four sets of bid rounds have been held since 2009, which promise to raise oil and gas

production several fold above current levels. But expediting foreign investors' plans in full looks less and less likely over time as the deleterious effect of political infighting interferes with payment mechanisms, infrastructure development and day-to-day operations.

Second, these political disputes – and particularly disagreement over the structure of the state – have blocked key hydrocarbon legislation, thereby creating uncertainty in the Iraqi sector. The rush to inaugurate a new post-war constitution in Iraq, which was driven in part by the necessities of US domestic politics, meant that key disputes over federalism, its implications for the management and licensing of the oil and gas sector were papered over.

Speed trumped substance, leaving a somewhat ambiguous document, of which the rival interpretations by competing political factions led to confrontation and legislative stalemate, and retarded the redevelopment of the Iraqi oil and gas sectors, including in Kurdistan.

Competition between federal and regional governments has hampered investment and blocked exports, and created a sense of uncertainty for foreign companies. It has also prompted both governments to adopt policies calculated to be incendiary and which, in a worst-case scenario, could lead to armed confrontation. Finally, it has left all parties more prey to external interference, as they seek to find allies for their cause.

Need for compromise

Thus far, Libya has avoided both these problems, although the seeds of both are there. Understanding the need for compromise and for careful crafting of constitutional frameworks is critical to long-term political stability and the establishment of an attractive investment environment. It is also essential for a stable security situation, something that has existed only periodically in Iraq.

In contrast with Libya, where a home-grown revolution engendered common interest in protecting the infrastructure of the sector, political disputes in Iraq have encouraged repeated and damaging attacks against hydrocarbon infrastructure. Those marginalised from power have sought to deny the government the fruits of oil and gas production and in the process have increased the costs of investment in the sector.

In the absence of a relatively smooth and inclusive political transition in Libya, and if a commonly agreed distribution of regional power cannot be agreed, the country could face similar challenges.

The importance of getting the politics right cannot be emphasised enough. It is the key test for any post-conflict hydrocarbon-producing country. Technocracy, infrastructure, foreign investment; all these are important ingredients. But it is the political environment in which they function that determines whether they will be ingredients for success. ■

■ **An armed National Transitional Council fighter provides security inside the Zawiya Oil Refinery, west of Tripoli**

The importance of getting the politics right cannot be emphasised enough

Mitigating risk

The future prosperity and social cohesion of the MENA region rests on the ability of governments to enable the private sector to respond to the job creation challenge

By **Paul Barbour**, Senior Risk Management Officer, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, World Bank Group

An estimated 40 million jobs are needed in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in the coming decade and this will require significant investment in productive assets. Yet, so far, the private sector in the region falls well short of transforming MENA countries into diversified, highly performing economies and there is a mutual mistrust between the government and the private sector in many MENA countries.[1]

Even prior to the Arab Spring, the MENA region was considered one of the riskier regions in which to invest. From 2005-2011, developing countries within MENA accounted for 4.9 per cent of all foreign direct investment (FDI) into the developing world, yet accounted for 10.6 per cent of all political risk insurance into the developing world.[2]

The Arab Spring and subsequent events have increased further the political risk perceptions of the region for foreign investors. In those countries directly

1 For a broader discussion of the role of the private sector in MENA's economic and social development see *From Privilege to Competition, Unlocking Private-Led Growth in the Middle East and North Africa*, World Bank, Washington DC, 2009.
2 World Bank estimates for FDI. Estimates of political risk insurance are for Berne Union member organisations only.

affected, events have led to disruptions in economic activity, including plummeting tourism and FDI flows, all of which have negatively impacted economic growth. While the economic impact has been uneven across the region, for the developing countries in MENA the growth rate has fallen from an average of 4.2 per cent between 1998-2007 to an estimated 2.4 per cent in 2012.[3]

Prior to the Arab Spring, the global financial crisis in 2008 was already affecting FDI flows into MENA. As events unfolded in 2011, FDI flows into MENA fell further in the directly affected countries. The World Bank estimates that FDI inflows into MENA declined from $22.7bn in 2010 to $8.6bn in 2011. There may be a recovery of FDI in 2012 and 2013, but this will depend on the global economy, the economic situation in Europe and the progress in restoring political and economic stability across the region.

Investment intentions

Evidence that the Arab Spring has led directly to reduced FDI inflows is found in a foreign investor survey jointly undertaken in 2011 by the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)[4]. This survey found that the turmoil did have a significant impact on corporate investors' investment intentions into MENA: a quarter of investors put their plans on hold, while others reconsidered (18 per cent), cancelled (11 per cent) or withdrew investments (6 per cent). Only just below a third did not alter their investment plans.

Despite heterogeneity among the different countries in MENA, on balance, the turmoil has stressed existing investments and dampened plans for expansions and new investments. Some investors in the countries directly affected by the civil disturbances, especially investors in the energy and service sectors, have reported suspending operations.[5] All of this has been amplified by the worsening state of domestic economies, as current account deficits and budget deficits have widened, private capital flows have weakened, inflation has risen, and production and investment have declined. Political violence – especially civil disturbance and to a lesser extent war and terrorism – ranked particularly high as the risk of most concern, as did governments' abilities to honour their sovereign financial obligations.

Yet over the medium and longer term, the region's economic and demographic factors will continue to attract market-seeking foreign investors, more so under conditions of improved governance. Investors

3 World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects*, Washington DC, June 2012.
4 *MIGA World Investment and Political Risk* 2011 (World Bank 2011). The survey covered a representative sample of 316 senior executives from multinational enterprises investing in developing countries. The survey was conducted in June-August 2011. The particular questions on MENA involved a self-selection of firms active or intending to invest in MENA.
5 'Arab Spring cleaning: What regional turmoil has meant for Western investment,' *Business Law Currents*, 25 August 2011.

will return fairly quickly once stability returns given the vast opportunities in the region, and current turmoil could in fact portend an improvement in the business environment in the future, particularly if the previous crony capitalist system based on access to power is replaced by a more open economic system based on competitive advantage. This would be good for investors, for consumers and for the economy. So there may be future opportunities in today's turmoil.

Meanwhile, investors face a very fragile and uncertain investment environment. One way that investors can mitigate the political risks they face in the region is through using political risk insurance. Political risk insurance is a tool for businesses to mitigate risks arising from the adverse actions – or inaction – of governments. The identified risks are typically expropriation; currency inconvertibility and transfer restriction; war, terrorism, and civil disturbance; breach of contract; and non-honouring of sovereign guarantees.

Once a decision is made to obtain political risk insurance, an investor or lender needs to choose between the private and public insurers. The industry consensus is that, while private insurers are generally more price competitive on transactions such as export credit insurance, the public insurers are generally better placed for long-term deals in risky markets – especially in energy and natural resource investments.

Because public insurers have a development mandate, they put a lot of muscle into resolving disputes before they reach a claims situation. MIGA, for example, has been involved in more than 80 disputes between investors and governments in its 24-year history. In all but two cases the disputes were resolved before they reached a claims situation. While it is clear why this is important from the insurer's perspective, the benefit that accrues to the insured is also important: few would disagree that what most investors want is to keep their projects on track.

MIGA's volume of business during the past two years is at an historic high. From the Agency's perspective, this indicates more interest in emerging markets coupled with greater perceived risk, which results in increased business for political risk insurers. MIGA's *World Investment and Political Risk 2011* report (which also contains the survey results mentioned earlier) notes that the percentage of FDI covered by political risk insurance grew from a low of 5-8 per cent in the mid-1990s to a current level of 13-15 per cent. So while the uptake is still low, it's growing. MIGA has also seen an increased demand for its insurance products in MENA, both in countries that have experienced upheavals and in neighbouring countries that have been affected indirectly.

MIGA sees sustainable and sustained FDI as a critical part of developing countries' success stories, including in MENA. And we see political risk insurance as an important arrow in the quiver of investors and risk managers operating abroad. ∎

■ The abandoned construction site of the 'New Benghazi' project in the Libyan rebel stronghold, June 2011. Hundreds of cement mixers, cranes and forklifts stand silent among buildings left unfinished when Chinese workers fled Libya as fighting flared

Political risk insurance [is] an important arrow in the quiver of investors and risk managers operating abroad

Ready to respond

To achieve a global humanitarian system, building networks and partnerships is essential

By Baroness **Valerie Amos**, Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The wave of protests and insurrections known as the Arab Spring, or Arab Uprising, has had a deep impact on the lives of millions of people in the Middle East and North Africa, and its effects are likely to play out for years to come. The humanitarian dimensions of this social and political upheaval have varied enormously by country.

In Tunisia, Egypt and Bahrain, there was dramatic and traumatic unrest during a period of transition, but so far, the governments of these countries have not asked for international aid. In Libya, we launched a humanitarian response mission during the uprising but it has since been scaled down. In Yemen, there is an ongoing humanitarian crisis, rooted in water scarcity and economic stagnation and exacerbated by conflict. In Syria, we are witnessing a human rights and humanitarian catastrophe which has forced more than one million people from their homes and left many more struggling to cope with violence and economic collapse.

The circumstances vary in each country, but the unrest shares some common roots. The underlying issues of poverty, inequality and lack of representation in the Middle East and North Africa have been documented for years. Social and political upheaval should not have come as a surprise; in 2009, a UN report warned that development in Arab countries was threatened by unjust political, social and economic structures, and by competition for power and resources among fragmented social groups.

Neither aid, nor changes in the power structure, can address these causes; only political, economic and social change can do that. International humanitarian agencies will continue to work to save lives in Syria and Yemen, but whatever we achieve can only be a temporary solution. In the longer term, people and the impact of conflict on them must be at the heart of our thinking about next steps and the best ways of tackling the causes and continuing effects of the Arab Uprising.

Other aspects of the transition, like state-building, the role of religion in the state and the best ways to stimulate economic growth, may grab attention, but stability depends on political transitions with broad representation and the fair allocation of resources. International organisations and institutions have much to contribute to the transition process, starting with an inclusive approach that recognises the importance of dialogue and interaction with all sectors of society.

For those of us who are part of the humanitarian system, this means building links with aid organisations, governments, the private sector, academic and philanthropic institutions and civil society, across the Middle East and North Africa. Building networks and partnerships will help us to provide assistance more quickly when it is needed.

A more inclusive approach is also vital if we are to meet our obligation to help people in crisis around the world. The number of emergencies and disasters is growing every year as a result of global trends including the effects of climate change and urbanisation. In 2011, we provided humanitarian aid to 56 million people in 33 countries. We can only respond to rising needs by working together with our partners around the world.

One of the basic principles of humanitarian work is that when people need help, we must be ready to respond quickly and effectively, and who we help is not in any way dependent on which side a person is on in any given conflict. We cannot speak of a truly global humanitarian system if we are not inclusive and diverse. We must win the support of everyone, in order to provide support to everyone. ■

■ A Syrian refugee plays with her child at the Al Zaatri refugee camp in the Jordanian city of Mafraq

Complex emergencies

Events in the Middle East and North Africa have highlighted the challenges of responding to humanitarian crises in deeply politicised environments

Natalie Samarasinghe, Deputy Director (Policy & Communications), United Nations Association – UK

In early 2011, the democratic promise of the Middle East and North Africa uprisings seemed to outweigh the risks. Buoyed by the swift toppling of dictators in Tunisia and Egypt, many believed the entire region could change course. Even Libya's brutal civil war offered hope: Gaddafi was defeated relatively quickly, as Arab and Western states joined hands – and forces – to protect civilians.

Two years on, there is no euphoria. Shocking images from Syria continue to pummel our screens as the bloodshed beds down into a grisly routine. The region's new governments wrestle with security threats; the old ones fear they have not contained theirs. Violence has spilled across borders and many fear that the September 2012 embassy attacks were a sign of the opportunities opening up for smaller armed groups.

In a region that has long been a lightning rod for wider tensions, it is hardly surprising that international attention has focused largely on the political and security dimensions of events. But with policy-makers and commentators absorbed with questions of intervention, or the role of Twitter in protests, the most pressing problem – the suffering of those on the ground – has often taken a backseat.

Thousands of people have been killed since 2011 and millions have fled their homes. Countless

more are suffering from the collapse of services and the economy. At present, only Syria merits the term 'humanitarian emergency'. Yet it is clear that prolonged volatility and deprivation could lead to a large-scale regional crisis. This is particularly evident in Yemen, the Middle East's poorest country, but also in Egypt and Tunisia, where tourism, foreign investment and remittances have been badly hit. Food insecurity is also spreading and dependence-creating subsidies are becoming unaffordable. Syrian farmers used to supply the region with nearly 2 million tonnes of fruit and vegetables a year. Now, exports have ground to a halt, affecting stocks and prices from Turkey to Saudi Arabia.

Together with other humanitarian organisations, the UN's frontline agencies have been supporting those affected since violence first broke out. The World Food Programme has reached over 1.5 million people in Libya alone and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has distributed emergency packages to nearly 300,000 Syrians. But the uprisings have highlighted the complex challenges they face.

A difficult environment

The region has several underlying complications. It includes states suffering from long-term instability like Iraq, Lebanon, Algeria and Yemen; latent and not so latent conflicts – from the intractable Israel-Palestine dispute to simmering tensions between Turks and Kurds, Sunni and Shi'a, liberals and Islamists; cross-border security threats such as terrorism; the looming crisis over Iran's nuclear ambitions; and severe and widespread humanitarian pressures.

Syria, for instance, was home to over a million Iraqi refugees and nearly 500,000 Palestinians. Many have had to up sticks again. The UN Relief & Works Agency (UNRWA) believes that some three quarters of Syria's Palestinian refugees now need assistance. Yemen – where a third of the population is malnourished – is absorbing thousands of refugees from the Horn of Africa, even as it struggles to support its own displaced. Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, meanwhile, have restricted refugee access. Conditions in the West Bank and Gaza remain shameful. Much of the population there cannot even choose to become refugees. And aid agencies throughout the area are facing overstretch, simultaneously managing acute crises in this region and the Sahel. In late 2012, UNHCR warned that its financial reserves were "zero".

The political backdrop is perhaps one reason why humanitarian appeals for the region remain grossly underfunded, despite high-profile attention from governments and media. Radhouane Noucier, the UN's regional co-ordinator in Syria, thinks the "predominance of the political debate has… made many countries not pay enough attention to the humanitarian conditions". Another explanation is that donors are worried about money falling into the hands of a repressive regime or rebel groups about whom little is known.

This relates to a bigger trend: the proliferation of actors on the ground. The humanitarian community has expanded rapidly and is almost too diverse to be classified as such, with grassroots groups, established agencies and private firms sharing, and at times jostling for, space and influence. They, in turn, now engage with a wider spectrum of non-state actors. Today's combatants are often not soldiers or even rebels in the traditional sense but doctors, teachers and vendors. Others are part of larger movements, including terrorist networks, which hardline governments have exploited to blur the distinction between 'terrorist' and 'rebel' and 'angry civilian'.

All this has had a profound impact on aid agencies, who must navigate this web and negotiate access without risking the safety of their beneficiaries or staff, or exposing themselves to accusations of collusion.

Lessons for the humanitarian community

This confluence of challenges constitutes what is known as a 'complex political emergency'. Such emergencies are likely to become more frequent as the nature of the humanitarian operating environment continues to change. The Arab uprisings provide an indication of what this environment might look like: highly localised, diverse in terrain and increasingly urban, with a plethora of actors and political, ethno-religious and socio-economic overtones – all under the glare of the 24-hour news media, which puts added pressure on agencies to act, without making mistakes.

So what lessons does the region hold for aid workers, agencies and donors?

First, it is vital that humanitarian actors remain neutral, impartial and independent. To operate effectively, they need to work with unsavoury regimes and non-state actors, and this message needs to be communicated clearly to donors. Improved systems for transparency and reporting will be crucial to winning this pitch.

Co-operation should not, however, lead to silence on abuses. While the UN did not need to convince others of heinous crimes in Libya and Syria, it has faced criticism for withdrawing from counting the dead when authoritative figures could have lent weight to calls for action, and for not protesting more loudly at violations in countries like Bahrain. The responsibilities of the entire UN system, including its agencies, were underscored in an internal report released by the Secretary-General in November 2012, which concluded that it had failed to meet its civilian protection mandate in Sri Lanka in 2009. The report included several recommendations on strengthening the management of the 'whole UN' crisis response.

Second, agencies must maintain the distinction between political and humanitarian actors. It might be tempting for governments to combine their operations on the ground, but conflating military, political and

aid activities will only increase the risks to all involved. Valerie Amos, UN Emergency Relief Co-ordinator, believes her organisation's reputation is "a matter of life for the people we are trying to support," pointing to the challenges of negotiating with the Assad regime whilst her political colleagues were condemning its actions. A clear separation of duties, prominent branding and public information are key to ensuring this distinction is understood and respected.

Third, local and regional actors need to play a bigger role. By employing local staff, working more closely with local communities, and seeking out regional donors, aid delivery can become more targeted and effective. It is also more likely to be perceived favourably. Advocacy on issues such as civilian protection or the neutrality of aid workers would have far more resonance if conducted through local or regional partnerships. Two relatively simple steps would support this: the translation of key humanitarian documents into Arabic, and research into local perceptions of aid and aid agencies. There is a reason why countries such as Brazil and China speak about humanitarian co-operation, rather than humanitarian aid.

Fourth, there must be greater co-ordination. This includes refining the UN's 'cluster' approach as well as engaging new organisations. Since 2011 hundreds of local NGOs have been formed, often spontaneously and in particular in Egypt and Tunisia, to perform tasks ranging from healthcare to cash transfers. Most remain outside humanitarian co-ordination mechanisms and act in isolation, even from neighbouring groups. Harnessing their knowledge, skills and access would greatly enhance operations. At the other end of the scale, Arab donors – who provide large amounts of aid but often in a non-transparent fashion – should be encouraged to work through multilateral mechanisms.

Finally, humanitarian organisations must become more nimble. In the Middle East and North Africa,

agencies have had to move quickly from Libya's built-up centres to Yemen's tribal sprawl. Many have found it difficult to scale up or transfer operations, even within states. Ensuring that staff are briefed on local contexts, experienced in multiple settings, and focused on working with local actors will help agencies to move in, deliver, adapt and move on.

From coping to capacity

For all its shortcomings, the UN is well-placed to drive these changes. When disaster strikes, the world still looks to the UN. It remains the only organisation that has the reach, remit, experience and legitimacy to provide a comprehensive emergency response. It alone combines on-the-ground assistance with overall co-ordination and wider political and developmental functions. And it plays a unique role in creating 'humanitarian space', mounting international appeals, and setting operational standards.

Most importantly, perhaps, it can provide leadership on a fundamental re-think of the international community's approach to humanitarian aid. A rapid response with life-saving assistance will always be essential. But enhancing preparedness and local capacity must be given equal prominence if aid is to become more than a sticking plaster.

Too often, humanitarian efforts in complex emergencies have resulted in people being kept alive at the minimum standard, some times for years if no political or economic progress is made. Other models exist. The UN Development Programme's emergency livelihoods project, which targets the displaced in Yemen, and UNRWA's microfinance initiatives provide good examples of moving beyond the minimum-standard paradigm.

To be truly effective, humanitarian organisations must seek to have a lasting impact. Their 'end game', therefore, should not be only to protect those in immediate danger, but to facilitate a transition towards a more stable environment in the long term. ■

Agencies must maintain the distinction between political and humanitarian actors

Protecting refugees

Massive human displacement across Libya and Syria in particular is causing a refugee crisis that must be addressed

By **Leila Hilal**, Director of the New America Foundation Middle East Task Force and former Senior Policy Adviser to the Commissioner-General of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

The Arab uprisings have produced significant human displacement crises in instances where the challenged governments have responded to popular revolts with gross violence, provoking insurgencies and international interventions. This trajectory has played out in Libya and Syria, with broader regional impact.

Libya

Libya's refugee crisis was characterised by the mass displacement of both Libyan and third-country nationals (TNCs). Nearly one million TNCs and around 650,000 Libyans fled during the country's eight-month revolution[1] of which some 200,000 Libyans sought shelter in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt.[2] A further 500,000 people were displaced internally.[3]

The million migrant or 'guest' workers residing in Libya prior to February 2011 included an estimated 11,000 refugees.[4] Libya, a signatory to the African Refugee Convention, had not previously instituted adequate refugee status determination procedures or registered migrant workers, making the repatriation of the thousands of TNCs who took flight a major humanitarian challenge. Others were unable to return home due to ongoing insecurity in their countries of origin (i.e. Eritrea, Sudan, Chad and Somalia). Many attempted to reach Europe by sea; some 1,500 people died while crossing the Mediterranean from Libya in 2011.[5]

Displacement issues continue to haunt Libya's transition. While the vast majority of Libyans were able to return home after Muammar Gaddafi's fall, some 6,000 asylum-seekers and migrant labourers remain in camps along the Egyptian and Tunisian borders.[6]

Black African guest workers and asylum seekers have been unable to return to Libya due to the threat of retaliatory violence provoked by the regime's use of African mercenaries and general enmity towards Africans.[7] Some 8,500 persons are still detained in militia-controlled prisons, many of whom are sub-Saharan Africans.[8]

In general, continued and sporadic violence has rendered certain areas still unsafe for return and reintegration. Some 80,000 Libyans are still internally displaced ten months after the transition began due to unresolved insecurity, communal tensions and revenge sentiments.

Persistent internal displacement in Libya implicates larger issues of transitional justice and post-conflict reconciliation that should be addressed in a comprehensive manner by the nascent government. While the National Transitional Council endorsed a transitional justice law and proposed the formation of a Fact Finding and Reconciliation Commission, the extent to which a transitional justice strategy will be advanced by the newly-elected assembly and the government is unclear.[9]

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[1] UNHCR Libya, www.unhcr.org/pages/49e485f36.html.
[2] OCHA, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya Crisis Situation Report No. 53, 11 August 2011. The number of Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans who left Libya during this time is an estimate as people of this nationality regularly cross the border.
[3] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Global Overview 2011: People internally displaced by conflict and violence – Libya, 19 April 2012.
[4] www.unhcr.org/4ea14d6e9.html.
[5] UNHCR, Mediterranean takes record as most deadly stretch of water for refugees and migrants in 2011, 31 January 2011. www.unhcr.org/4f27e01f9.html.

[6] Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Egypt Libya: Misery for stranded refugees, 11 July 2012.
[7] *The New York Times*, Libyans Turn Wrath on Dark Skinned Migrants, 4 September 2011. www.nytimes.com/2011/09/05/world/africa/05migrants.html?pagewanted=all.
[8] UNHCR, Statement to the Security Council by Navi Pillay, 25 January 2012.
[9] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Libya's Troubled Transition, June 2012. http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/06/014/

Syria

The ongoing violence in Syria has sparked a burgeoning refugee crisis impacting the Levant, a region already burdened by the world's largest and longest-standing refugee situation (Palestinian) and which has also responded to the mass displacement of Iraqis within the past decade.

As of 27 November, 2012 the UNHCR had registered and assisted more than 381,358 Syrian refugees who had fled their homes to Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt.[10] The unofficial estimate is double that figure. Following a spike in fighting in Syria that saw the armed insurgency gain ground in Syria's largest city, Aleppo, the number of Syrians registered with or awaiting registration with the UNHCR shot up to 250,000 by the end of August, and continues to rise. More than 1.5 million people are also believed to be internally displaced in Syria.[11]

The neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have received the majority of refugees, but the humanitarian response in each country has been complicated by a lack of systematic treatment of refugees consistent with international standards.[12]

Turkey is the only country receiving Syrian refugees to have ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, albeit with a vague geographical limitation that has been applied to justify specialised treatment of Syrian refugees,[13] who have been placed in camps along the borders and who are largely expected to return home once conditions permit. While Syrians have been provided temporary protection in Turkey, Iraqis and Somalis fleeing Syria are transferred to holding areas and processed individually for refugee status determination.

Lebanon and Jordan both consider Syrians as Arab 'guests'. Syrians who enter Jordan illegally are held in buildings near the border. They are permitted to leave if they pay a fee to a Jordanian sponsor – a practice that leaves the refugees vulnerable to exploitation. The treatment is indicative of longstanding gaps in Jordan's ad hoc asylum regime.[14] However, Jordan's acceptance of more than 40,000[15] Syrians has muted international criticism of these harmful practices.

The situation is far more difficult for those

libya-s-troubled-transition/bzw4#.

[10]UNHCR Regional Refugee Response, 3 August 2012. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Syria Update3August2012.pdf.

[11]Strategic Research and Communication Center, Weekly Brief: 30 July-5 August 2012. www.strescom.org/briefings/weekly-briefings/item/288-syrian-weekly-brief-30-july-5-august-2012.html.

[12]Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, Asylum and Migration in the Mashrek, December 2008. www.euromedalex.org.sites/default/files/Migration_and_asylum_in_Mashrek_2008_789732742.pdf.

[13]The instrument of accession stipulates that the government of Turkey maintains the provisions of the declaration made under section B of Article 1 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, according to which it applies the Convention only to persons who have become refugees as a result of events occurring in Europe, and also the reservation clause made upon ratification of the Convention to the effect that no provision of this Convention may be interpreted as granting to refugees greater rights than those accorded to Turkish citizens in Turkey. www.asylumlaw.org/docs/international/New-York1967.pdf.

[14]Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, Asylum and Migration in the Mashrek, December 2008. www.euromedalex.org.sites/default/files/Migration_and_asylum_in_Mashrek_2008_789732742.pdf.

[15]OCHA Syrian Humanitarian Bulletin August 3.

While Arab refugees are able to manage the ad hoc regime, refugees of African origin face considerable hardships

experiencing secondary displacement. Palestinian refugees escaping to Jordan are reportedly being detained at the border indefinitely, disallowed the option of entering the country that is offered to persons of Syrian nationality.[16] Some have been forcibly returned.[17] The arbitrary treatment of Palestinians coming from Syria highlights demographic tensions within Jordan that have been exacerbated by reform debates in the country following the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt.

Lebanon has also opened its borders to Syrian nationals, but the presence of Alawite communities living in close proximity and the dominance of Hezbollah has led to incidents of inter-community fighting, anecdotal reports of targeted attacks, and fewer Syrians seeking refuge there than in Turkey and Jordan.

Syrians have widely indicated their preference to repatriate once the conflict ends, with some refugees voluntarily returning to their country as hostilities in their areas have subsided. This demonstrates that the duration and scope of the refugee crisis will be measured in direct relation to the duration and scope of hostilities, although refugees frequently cite the benchmark as the fall of President Bashar al-Assad.

Of significant concern in the longer term is the possibility that inter-communal challenges to repatriation and rehabilitation may play out in Syria as they did in Libya. Given the long duration of the civil war, the trauma being inflicted by repeated mass killings and shellings, and growing incidents of inter-communal violence, new demographic lines may be created inside Syria that could complicate refugee repatriation. Whether or not a transitional regime will seek to reverse these changes through a strong return and restitution programme will likely depend on the end-game scenario. Transitional plans will also require an effective transitional justice strategy to address the breakdown of the social fabric in Syria and the harms of the past and the current conflict.

Opportunities for improving national and regional protection frameworks

As most Arab countries are not signatories to the international refugee convention, they do not have independent refugee status determination processes in place. This means that protections from refoulement have largely depended on UNHCR recognition. Where UNHCR recognition is denied or access complicated, refugees have been at risk of being returned or subjected to arbitrary visa requirements that leave persons vulnerable and dependent on international aid.[18] While Arab refugees, such as those of Syrian and Iraqi origins, are able to manage

the ad hoc regime, refugees of African origin face considerable hardships.[19]

Prior to December 2010, international organisations responsible for displaced and migrant populations – namely the UNHCR, International Labour Organization and International Organization for Migration – were engaged in extended dialogue initiatives with governments to strengthen their bi-lateral agreements regarding national asylum and migration regimes. The uprisings have nonetheless presented limited opportunities to advance refugee protection strategies at the national and regional levels in the near term given the high priority paid to transitional politics.

In Tunisia, where it can be argued that the country is in a phase of establishing democracy, more opportunities have presented themselves for progress on the national refugee protection framework. The UNHCR has commended Tunisia for its "remarkable generosity" to those fleeing Libya, including a temporary protection scheme for Libyans that was de facto applied by the Tunisian authorities. Subsequently, an accord de siege was signed with the UNHCR in June 2011 that formalised the UNHCR's presence in the country. This accord seems to have increased engagement with the agency, as the UNHCR has been assisting the government since August 2011 in developing a new national law on asylum.[20]

Whether similar opportunities are present in Libya remains in question. The transitional national government did not use its term in power to significantly address post-conflict refugee reintegration or protection issues as security dominated the early state-reconstruction agenda before it handed over power to the newly elected assembly.

The domestic agendas that dominate these states in transition likely mean that governments will not be keen or able to take on new international responsibilities. Widespread public demand for improved services and job opportunities further preclude the possibility of a concerted, widespread effort to address the xenophobic tendencies that have harmed refugee rights in most of the Arab region. Nonetheless, as the new governments engage with the international community and assert their legitimacy during this dynamic period of state-building, it would be a missed opportunity for third-party organisations and humanitarian agencies not to push further. ■

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[16]Human Rights Watch, Jordan: Bias at the Syrian Border, July 4 2012. www.hrw.org/news/2012/07/04/jordan-bias-syrian-border.
[17]Human Rights Watch, Jordan: Bias at the Syrian Border, July 4 2012. www.hrw.org/news/2012/07/04/jordan-bias-syrian-border.
[18]Abeer Allam and Michael Slackman. '23 Sudanese Die as Egypt Clears Migrants' Camp.' The New York Times 31 December 2005.

[19]Nour Samaha. 'Lebanon's Forgotten Refugees.' Aljazeera. com. N.p., 31 July 2012. www.aljazeera.com/indepth/featur es/2012/07/201272714143849106.html.
Sixteen Sudanese refugees in Lebanon have been on hunger strike since 11 June, citing frustrations with delayed status determination and resettlement and frequent detentions, in addition a pervasive racism. One refugee noted: "Because we are black, we face racism everywhere here, and the authorities treat us even worse."
[20]UNHCR, Universal Periodic Review: TUNISIA. http://lib.ohchr. org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session13/TN/UNHCR_UPR_ TUN_S13_2012_UNHCR_E.pdf.

Governance starts with accountability: Making MENA universities accountable for their results

At a time when young people, and in particular new university graduates, around the world are having trouble finding jobs, it is important to look for reasons for the disconnect between the demand for and supply of educated youth. In many parts of the world, the ability of universities to provide quality learning opportunities and teach the skills necessary for graduates to succeed in the 21st century is under scrutiny.

Higher education systems in the MENA region are particularly under pressure, as there is a significant gap between the skills demanded by labour markets and those acquired by higher education graduates. The unemployment rates of tertiary education graduates in the MENA region have been persistently higher than those in any other parts of the world for the past decade, and the recent financial and economic crisis makes this even more critical. Universities need to innovate to provide the kind of education that will enable their graduates to be competitive and to contribute to the economic and social growth of their countries. Innovative institutions must have governance systems that encourage all constituent groups to have a say in improving the institution and advancing its mission.

The key role that university governance plays in the improvement of education quality has been the focus of attention in MENA countries since even before the Arab Spring. Higher education ministers and policymakers expressed their specific need for benchmarking university governance at a seminar held in December 2009 at the Marseille Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI).

As a result of this request, the World Bank Regional Program on Higher Education, based at the CMI, initiated the process of developing an innovative University Governance Screening Card based on benchmarking tools used in other parts of the world, such as the UK, Australia and the US.

Universities need to innovate to provide the kind of education that will enable their graduates to be competitive

Prior to the Arab Spring, one of the most important development challenges throughout the Arab World was the lack of information on service delivery. The recent political changes in the region give hope that governance in MENA will be more democratic, transparent and efficient in the long term.

The positive consequences of the Arab Spring can already be seen by the enthusiasm expressed by universities and government officials in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. Ninety universities from these countries have gone through this benchmarking exercise and many others have demanded to be part of it.

Laying the foundations

The University Governance Screening Card assesses the extent to which universities in the MENA region follow governance practices aligned with their institutional goals and international trends. It also allows MENA universities to compare themselves with universities around the world and to monitor their progress over time. It can be used to:

- identify strengths and weaknesses at individual institutions;
- identify trends at the national level;
- identify trends and practices by type of institution;
- generate interest to initiate reforms at the institutional, national, and regional levels.

It is a first step toward developing a more comprehensive tool for assessing other dimensions of performance, such as quality assurance, student-learning outcomes, quality of teaching and research, and graduate employability.

The interest and openness shown by these 80 institutions in benchmarking constitutes an important step in the right direction, because it has laid the foundation on which further systematic monitoring of university performance can take place in the future.

This is a significant achievement in improving accountability of service delivery, and will become a cornerstone of the strategy for developing greater capacity for evidence-based policymaking regarding higher education in MENA. ■
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Investing in education

The employability of young people is an urgent and difficult social and political issue, but working together could hold the answer

By **Peter Clack**, Director, Education & Programme, MENA Region, British Council and **Melanie Relton**, Regional Vocational Education Manager, MENA Region, British Council

Throughout our education work in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region there is one predominant issue, that of youth employability, and it is an issue that is increasingly challenging societies, governments and those external agencies and organisations that are seeking to provide guidance and support. The scale of the challenge is daunting and yet the cost of not meeting that challenge is too high to calculate. After all, the call for change in the MENA countries has been as much to do with jobs as with democratic reform. This has been most obvious in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan.

There is a significant youth bulge in the demographic – half of the population is under 25 and 65 per cent is under 30 – and with employability rates among the highest in the world, it means a worryingly high percentage of those young people are looking at a future without a means for economic independence. Consequently they are increasingly vulnerable to social exclusion or radicalism.

The British Council's own 2012 research *Young People and Employability in MENA: post-Arab Spring* is focused on the issue of graduate employability, which is estimated at more than 30 per cent across the region. It indicates how the employability of young people and especially graduates has grown as an urgent political and social issue, particularly because unemployed students have the method, means and motivation to make their dissatisfaction heard, often via social media, at a local and regional level.

Pressure to act

Seemingly, as the pace of change increases across the region, we are seeing governments, emerging NGOs and business increasingly driven to respond to the

socio-economic and political pressure to act. We are also seeing significant and encouraging commitment by large multi- and bi-lateral international organisations and agencies to providing the kind of ongoing support both in terms of knowledge and experience, as well as considerable financial investment.

However, along with the urgency comes an attendant danger that interventions will be short-term, reactive and uncoordinated, with little, if any, long-term positive systemic impact. Political reality means that leaders are not always given the space and time to make strategic decisions. So, international agencies must balance their duty to be realistic about what is really attainable in short time frames with a pragmatic acknowledgement of the political expediency of achieving some 'quick wins'.

"With investments in early visible and measurable gains, governments in MENA could consolidate their credibility. This could take the form of investments in training programs to help people develop new skills and increase their employability, as well as the launch of labour intensive public works projects to develop critical infrastructure and social services using public/private partnerships. This would set the stage for the game-changing reforms that would drive competition, generate jobs, and allow the region's great human potential to become the source of prosperity."[1]

No one should underestimate the differences between the Arab states, but there are also some striking similarities in terms of the employability agenda, and with that a real opportunity for multi-lateral engagement between MENA countries. International organisations and agencies that seek to provide support should be willing to join that dialogue.

Where to start

A sensible starting point for a number of agencies (e.g. the World Bank, European Training Foundation, International Finance Corporation) has been the commissioning of extensive research into the employability issue – both at a macro, regional level and also with in-depth country specific analysis.

Looking at the research published by these agencies since the Arab Spring began, it is actually encouraging that there is significant concordance both in terms of analysing the problem and in terms of proposing meaningful responses. International agencies also seem more willing to listen to local concerns and to share the process of developing measures that fit with national needs, rather than the all too common paternalistic model of the past where policy and structural support has been practically imposed upon a country.

As international support organisations gradually move from being a 'donor' to being a 'critical friend', it is against a backdrop of global recession that nations across the globe have been forced to revisit their own attitudes and strategies towards vocational education and training.

When no country has a perfect solution to the employability there is more impetus to identify common issues and recognise that there are no quick wins, but that meaningful solutions need to be developed through mutual sharing and discussion. It is fortunate then that in some countries we are seeing a new generation of leaders beginning to emerge – internationalised, technically savvy and with the passion, enthusiasm and knowledge to drive change. But it isn't just leaders that need to be included for transformation to occur; we also need to see other parts of society represented at the table.

Collaborative approach

From our extensive work across the region over the past 70 years or so, the crucial lesson that we have learned is the need for a long-term, holistic and sustainable model for partnership working – a collaborative approach that brings government, the private sector and NGOs together with a network of multi- and bi-lateral agencies.

"Overcoming the… challenge cannot be achieved by governments alone – efforts must span all relevant stakeholders (public and private education providers, civil society, public sector policy makers and administrators, private employers, and youth) in order to achieve speed and scale."[2]

In our discussion with the other agencies, we realise that we are not alone in this understanding and, despite differing cultural perspectives, we think a consensus is beginning to emerge between international partners and donors concerning the need to co-ordinate and consolidate efforts in order to address the employability challenge in the MENA region. It is essential that we seek to align our efforts on the ground with those of our partner organisations.

Since the Egyptian revolution, we have seen a number of very interesting interventions by international and bi-lateral agencies in that country. The British Council, for example, has been working with policy-makers, employers and young Egyptians to look at the pressing need to raise the status of vocational education and training, and has helped provide both negative and positive lessons learned from the UK experience.

Looking at inter-connection with what other agencies are doing on the ground in Egypt, we are now actively pursuing greater co-operation at the country level to ensure that our programme areas are mutually supportive and continue to be fully aligned with the aspirations of the Egyptian government. Ultimately, we believe that the more we achieve accord in our actions, the more impact those actions will have. ■

Meaningful solutions need to be developed through mutual sharing and discussion

[1]World Bank: *Seizing the Opportunity: Jobs and Change in the Arab World, 2012:*
www.worldbank.org/en/news/2012/10/10/seizing-opportunity-jobs-change-in-arab-world

[2]IFC: *Education for Employment: Realising Arab Youth Potential, 2011*
www.e4earabyouth.com/downloads/IFC-ExecSum_A4.pdf

Creating a healthy future

What are the health priorities facing countries in the aftermath of the Arab Spring?

■ A Médecins Sans Frontières doctor conducts emergency medical training for staff at Kararim Advanced Medical Clinic, Misrata, Libya

By **S Bruce Dowton,** Vice Chancellor & President, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

As countries emerge from the Arab Spring, a powerful signal of the legitimacy of a new government is its early attention to the redevelopment of healthcare. Each country has a unique context around healthcare – the health status of its people, the short- and longer-term needs of the community, the state of healthcare infrastructure, prior models of clinical care, past healthcare systems and workforce availability.

Critical stages in healthcare redevelopment
Immediately after conflict, the urgent need is for emergency medical care for the injured, often concurrently with humanitarian relief (clean water,

food, sanitation and prevention of outbreaks of communicable disease).

However, planning for medium- and long-term healthcare reconstruction should begin as soon as possible with staged, but overlapping, activities.

Developing a national policy framework deserves early attention. First, the degree of decentralisation of healthcare delivery and management by the new government – hospitals, clinics, medicine supply chains etc – needs to be considered. Across the Middle East, the prevailing healthcare model has traditionally been highly centralised. During a period of conflict, decentralisation of any care still operating becomes the norm as local communities help the sick and injured, sometimes aided by international agencies.

Post-conflict, it is tempting to recentralise control of all healthcare. Instead, development of emerging policies and practical operations of a healthcare system should involve vigorous engagement with local communities so that centralist authoritarianism does not resume.

Second, a macro model of delivery of healthcare needs to be determined. Often in Arab Spring countries, governments have both funded and delivered care. Many imperatives have resulted in a different model in stable developed economies – governments funding care through a social insurance programme and providing regulatory oversight through contracts with private and non-profit organisations that deliver care.

A reliable finance plan is also required to pay for healthcare. Key considerations include: prioritisation for use of donor and aid funds; a financial model to sustain the country's own health systems once donations and international aid decrease; linkages between funding and a basic package of health services for all; compliance with policy-driven standards in professional licensure and hospital accreditation; and contracting mechanisms for public-private partnerships for care delivery.

Equity of service access and expanding geographic coverage must also be ensured.

Building institutional capacity and a skilled workforce

The development and deployment of a skilled healthcare workforce is perhaps the most important factor that will create sustainability. In this regard, governments must consider the paucity of highly qualified doctors and nurses; the need to modernise programmes of professional education in universities and in continuing education; and the development of leaders in medicine, nursing and allied health. Skilled professionals and administrators to fulfil the traditional public health and non-clinical functions of a health system are also important.

There are many aspects of developing the workforce that will stabilise a country's healthcare

Rapid implementation of a merit-based appointment system is needed in most jurisdictions

system after conflict. These include: identification of the existing human resource pool; rapid identification of leaders for key central and dispersed roles; establishing a specific organisational unit to drive development of policy and implementing a comprehensive human resource development strategy; the basic building of capacity for all the roles required; clear codification of roles and responsibilities; clarifying health worker equivalencies; and bolstering training programmes at all levels, both short-term and long-term.

Redevelopment of physical infrastructure is also key, as is strong community development and engagement with civil society. The implementation of a sound programme of staged redevelopment of healthcare can be one of the most obvious public signals that leaders of a reborn nation are serious about not reinventing past authoritarianism under a new guise.

Addressing the potential for recurring cronyism in appointments at multiple levels of the healthcare system is important. Many regimes preceding the Arab Spring appointed under-qualified people to senior roles in health systems at ministry and care institutional levels. Rapid implementation of a merit-based appointment system is needed in most jurisdictions.

The challenges of redeveloping a healthcare system in a nation emerging from conflict are substantial. Rapid attention to a plan and concrete steps for the development of a sustainable healthcare system, with progressive elevation of standards and equity of access, are key metrics for donors, aid agencies, the international community and – most importantly – the citizens of the newly emergent nation.

The reconstruction of a healthcare system should never be about transplanting what works in another country. Government and professional leaders must lead in redeveloping their systems, institutions, policies, frameworks and workforce with support from the international community.[1] ■

[1] Many experts and authors have contributed to understanding the pathway to reconstruction in healthcare after violent conflict. References that were consulted in developing the above ideas include: www.msh.org/Documents/OccasionalPapers/upload/HRH_Postconflict.pdf.
http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACN511.pdf.
www.wider.unu.edu/stc/repec/pdfs/rp2007/rp2007-06.pdf.
www.hrhresourcecenter.org/node/3296.

The end of cheap food?

Food prices and scarcity played a significant role in the civil unrest and will also be a factor in the stability of the post-transition states

By **Phil Bloomer**, **Director of Campaigns and Policy, Oxfam**

A commonly forgotten contributory factor to the genesis of the Arab Spring events was the price of food – Egypt's annual food inflation had reached nearly 19 per cent on the eve of President Hosni Mubarak's downfall, for example. Just as food prices were formative in the events that led to the Arab Springs, so they will be determinants in the stability of the post-transition states. However, with the OECD estimating that, by 2030, nearly half of the world's population will live in areas with severe water stress, with Algerian projections seeing a decline by 2050 by 4.9 per cent, and Iran and Iraq seeing a decrease three times greater, the ability of Middle East and North

Across Oxfam's programmes, poor people tell their story of moving from two to one meal a day, and of the tragedy of putting their children to bed hungry night after night. They also speak of their anger and frustration that governments can abandon them to hunger in a world of such plenty. And they are right to be angry. Tonight 925 million people will go to bed hungry, the majority of them will be women and children. This outrage will happen despite the fact that we have more than enough food in the world to feed everyone well: we would need to redistribute just 1 per cent of the world's food supply to meet the calorie needs of the 850 million people on our planet without adequate food. The poor usually go hungry because they don't have enough money to buy food, not because there is no food in the markets. In food emergencies from Somalia to Niger, Oxfam provides 'cash hand-outs' to the hungry as the most effective way of helping – there is almost always the food there, ready to be bought.

At present, world food prices have thankfully fallen back from their peak in 2011, but only to around 30 per cent above the levels of eight years ago (in real terms). And for poor people, it is not just the inexorable rise in food prices that is the worry, but this extraordinary volatility of the last four years. Poor people do not have savings or social security to fall back on. So a sudden rise in food prices can mean only one thing – less food on the table and cut-backs in any other urgent spending on school books or medicines for their sick family members. Poor people define their poverty as much in terms of this vulnerability to shocks, as their chronic lack of funds.

In our world, one in three children in developing countries lives through a period of intense malnutrition in their first five years. This is not only a haunting time of suffering, but it often leaves a 60-year scar on the child's cognitive development, limiting their potential in life.

Contributing factor

It should surprise no-one that food price rises and volatility bring people out on the streets. 2010 and 2011 saw riots and social unrest in Algeria, Mozambique, Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, to name just a few countries. Robert Zoellick, former President of the World Bank, said food security was now a global security issue. But many governments are also seeing it as a national security issue – the elites who have done little to prevent hunger in their populations feel threatened by the anger on their streets.

As Paul Mason, the BBC Economics Editor, has said: "Nobody would be crazy enough to say food prices were in any way a sole causal factor of [the revolutions of] 1848 or the revolutions today: but they are clearly contributory factors." And there's the rub. Many people have suffered uncaring and self-serving governments for years: governments run by, and for, a tiny minority. But when this disregard leaves

African states to provide cheap food will be challenged even more than it has been in the past.

End of an era

We are entering a new era of food, and with it a new era of protest. After 30 years of steady decline in world food prices, the trend has reversed, probably for decades. Experts are predicting the end of the 'era of cheap food'. In 2008 and 2011 we saw two sharp spikes in global food prices, where prices doubled compared to just five years before. For the worst-off in Britain, in the midst of an intense recession, this has led to 128,000 people, no longer able to feed their families on their wages or benefits, getting their supplies from 'food banks'. But for the poorest third of humanity, who spend over half their income on food, these price rises have meant deepening hunger.

After 30 years of steady decline in world food prices, the trend has reversed, probably for decades

What we need most is a people's movement for food justice

communities in danger of falling into hunger, they may decide that it is time for a more radical change.

A key factor in this political landscape is that it is not the chronically hungry who are the instigators of protest movements. The one billion poorest, who often go without food, may be too beaten, too preoccupied with getting food for the next meal. They are also usually rural, and geographically distant from the capital. The drivers of revolutions and unrest have tended to be a mixture of urban slum-dwellers, fearful middle-classes, graduates with no future, and a progressive intelligentsia. Women often predominate, as the social costs of hunger are passed to them.

Together, these groups have formed networks of like-minded, angry people who are ready for change, and have given each other the confidence to believe that change is possible, often for the first time in their lives. Social media, like Facebook and Twitter, have given them an ease and flexibility of communication and organisation that has allowed their networks to flourish and often outwit security forces.

Future change

So what of the future? Food prices are set to continue to rise, and so unaccountable and unresponsive governments can expect more protest and challenge. They will have two choices: change or repress the protesters. And we can already see unaccountable elites around the world increasing their ability to suppress legitimate protest and organisation. Laws are being enacted that make it illegal to use Skype, to prevent meetings or marches without explicit agreement from the authorities. And we see increasing evidence of these states sharing their experience with each other – learning how to hold onto power in this new era of social unrest.

The good news is that some states have taken a different path, and sought to deal with the poverty and inequality that drives hunger and food price volatility. Brazil reduced hunger by a third in just five years through a 'Zero Hunger' campaign led by President Lula. This relied principally on redistribution in one of the world's most unequal societies: Brazil's cash transfer programme, Bolsa Familia, provides a guaranteed small income to the 46 million poorest people, paid to the woman of the household. The result is obvious: women have spent it on food and other essentials that the family needed. Together with a doubling of the minimum wage, this was enough to see the numbers of hungry Brazilians tumble.

Vietnam took a different approach and halved hunger in 12 years. The government sought to focus economic growth where the poorest people were. They redistributed land and provided government services, new agricultural techniques and credit to poor farmers. It worked: Vietnam has reached its UN Millennium Development Goal on poverty five years ahead of schedule, and the country has moved from being a rice importer to the second largest rice exporter in the world.

We will need many more transformations like these as the world's food supplies are increasingly stretched by climate change, a worrying shift to biofuels production on agricultural land in the USA and EU, and an increasing (and welcome) demand for food from regions of growing prosperity like East Asia. But we also need international leadership from governments and the United Nations to bring about a transformation in greenhouse gas emissions; an end to biofuel mandates and subsidies that confiscate food and put it into fuel tanks; and a major investment in small-farmers' agriculture and their adaptation to a changing climate. Without these there will be many more unnecessary food crises and increasing social unrest born from hunger and fear.

But what we need most is a people's movement for food justice: a movement of consumers who will change their habits to live more lightly on this planet and share its enormous natural wealth; and a movement of citizens who demand that all the world's population have enough food to eat, forever. That's not a radical demand in a world of immense prosperity and growing inequality. It is just common sense. ■

■ Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva launching his 'Zero Hunger' programme in Brazil, 2003. Via the initiative, Brazil reduced hunger by one third in just five years

A softening of hard lines?

Many of the leading armed groups opted for non-violent party politics once they were allowed to participate. But the continuation of the 'de-radicalisation' processes is essential if the democratic transition in countries affected by the Arab Spring is to be successful

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"**R**evolution gave us a new life, new worldview, new beliefs and new opportunities," said the former political prisoner and the former deputy head of the Egyptian (dissolved) parliament, Ashraf Sabet.[1] Sabet is on the leadership board of al-Dawa'a al-Salafiyya (The Salafi Call or SC), an ultraconservative organisation whose leaders did not believe in the legitimacy of democracy. This belief changed following the removal of former dictator Hosni Mubarak. The Nour Party, the political arm of the SC, was the second largest party in the Egyptian Parliament, after the Muslim Brothers' Freedom and Justice Party (FJP).

Indeed, the Arab Spring has left major impacts on the ideology, behaviour, rhetoric, organisational structures, capacities and resources of almost every Islamist movement and faction in the region. The

1 Meeting with author, 28 May 2012.

transitions from armed to unarmed activism, from rejection of democracy to wholly or partly accepting it, were quite evident in each of the Arab Spring countries.

In Egypt, the Islamic Group (IG) was the largest armed Islamist organisation in the country and second largest in the region, after the now defunct Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA). During its Jihadist phase, the IG operated in more than a dozen countries. In armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya; in training camps in Pakistan and Sudan; in assassination attempts in Ethiopia; in bombings in Croatia and the United States; and in a five-year insurgency in Egypt, the name of the IG usually came to the fore.

The IG's Consultative Council of today is quite different from the one that decided to assassinate President Sadat in 1981. Four of the nine members hold doctorate degrees, including Dr Safwat Abd al-Ghani, the former head of the armed wing. He was also the author of *Another God with Allah? Declaring War on the Parliament*, the IG's anti-democratic manifesto, which was also quite popular among other Jihadists. Abd al-Ghani's dissertation, however, was on political plurality in Islamic law.

Rather than stockpiling weapons, rebuilding its armed wing, recruiting and training angry teenagers, and manipulating weak security arrangements, the IG held internal elections, established a political party (Construction and Development Party – CDP), participated in the parliamentary elections (won 13 seats in the dissolved parliament), organised anti-sectarian violence rallies and issued joint statements with the Coptic Church of Assyut calling for peaceful co-existence.

"We were finally capable of taking revenge from the state security officers who tortured us for years. Instead we chanted *silmiya* (peaceful) in the protests," said Muhammad Abbas, a former member of the IG's disbanded armed wing, a graduate of the infamous Khaldan training camp in Afghanistan, and a veteran of multiple battles against the Soviets in Afghanistan. He was imprisoned, without charge, for 10 years.[2]

Egypt's second largest, once-armed organisation is al-Jihad. Due to its non-hierarchical, de-centralised organisational structure and the fact that many of its charismatic leaders joined al-Qaeda, the movement could not formulate a united stance on abandoning and de-legitimising armed tactics, including coups and terrorism. The movement fractured with each leader commanding a small faction.[3] However, many of those leaders abandoned armed tactics. Some even de-legitimised those tactics via a mix of theological, political and instrumental arguments.[4]

Some of its commanders tried to form political parties (like Peace and Development and Democratic Jihad).[5] Other commanders joined Salafi parties like al-Nour and al-Asala or tried to run as independent candidates in the parliamentary elections.[6]

In Libya, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) upheld an anti-democratic stance in the 1990s. The LIFG was modelled along the lines of the Egyptian al-Jihad: secretive, elitist and exclusively paramilitary.[7] The group led a three-year, low-level insurgency mainly based in eastern Libya and tried three times to assassinate Gaddafi in 1995 and 1996. By 1998, the LIFG was crushed in Libya. Most of its leaders and members fled and joined forces with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

De-radicalisation processes

After 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan, most of the LIFG leaders fled that country, only to be arrested and handed over to Gaddafi's regime. In 2010, Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam was trying to apply the Egyptian model of 'de-radicalisation' on the LIFG and then sell it to the West. Like the Egyptian Islamic group, six of the LIFG leaders authored a 416-page document de-legitimising armed opposition to Gaddafi's regime and other rulers by theological and ideological arguments, regardless of their standards of oppression. The book was titled *Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Enforcement of Morality, and Judgement of People*.

But the LIFG heavily participated in the Libyan armed revolution against Muammar Gaddafi. Abd al-Hakim Belhaj, the former commander of the LIFG, spearheaded the attack on Gaddafi's compound at Bab al-Aziziya. That was not a relapse to the previous stage. The LIFG transformed to become the Libyan Islamist Movement for Change (LIMC). Its commanders established the al-Watan (The Nation) Party to contest the constitutional assembly elections. "We accept party politics. We don't intend to go back to the previous stage. There is no reason to do that when you have political freedoms," said former commander Abd al-Hakim Belhaj.[8]

In Tunisia, the transitions of Salafi parties like al-Islah (Reform) and al-Asala (Originality) followed the same pattern. Many of the senior Salafi figures rejected democratic principles and accepted armed activism as a method for social and political change during the rule of dictatorship. After toppling Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's regime, that stance changed, with the very same figures establishing political parties to peacefully contest elections.[9]

2 Interview with author, 3 February 2012.
3 Jahin, Salih. Former Commander in al-Jihad Organization. Interview by author, 21 May 2012.
4 Al-Sharif, Sayyid. *Wabiqt Tarshid al-Jihad fi Masr wa al-'alam al-Islami* (Document for Guiding Jihad in Egypt and the Islamic World). Cairo, 2007.

5 Nabil Naim. Former Commander in al-Jihad. Interview by author, 10 April 2012.
6 Tamer Abd al-Khaliq. Senator for Asala Party in Egyptian Parliament - Upper House (Majlis al-Shura), 3 May 2012.
7 For detailed study on the LIFG and its transition, see Omar Ashour: 'Libya and the Global Transformations of Armed Islamist Movements,' *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (July 2011): 377-397.
8 Interview with *al-Arab* newspaper, 21 June 2012, p7.
9 Fouad Ben Sali. Co-founder of Jabhat al-Islah (Reform Front)

■ Previous page: Egyptian Muslims from a group called 'Salafyo Costa' take part in a march in Cairo on 9 October 2012 to mark one year since nearly 30 demonstrators were killed in a Coptic Christian demonstration that was violently crushed by security forces

Government pressure and interaction with non-jihadis often cause leaders to rethink strategically

Earlier research on 'de-radicalisation' processes and programmes shows that a combination of charismatic leadership, pressure from the government, interactions with non-jihadis, as well as from within the organisation, and selective inducements from the state and other actors are common causes of abandoning and sometimes de-legitimising political violence.[10]

Revising a world-view

Government pressure and interaction with non-jihadis often cause leaders to rethink strategically, learn politically, and revise their world-view. Following this, the leadership initiates a 'de-radicalisation' process that is bolstered by selective inducements from the state, as well as by internal interactions with the followers. De-radicalised groups and individuals often interact with armed ones and, in some cases, the former influences the latter, a sort of domino effect demonstrated in the cases of the IG and al-Jihad Organization in Egypt, the Islamic Salvation Army and factions from armed groups in Algeria and de-radicalised Islamist figures and individual suspects in Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere.

The Arab Spring provided a new, supportive context for these transitions. The policy implications need to be reformulated and readjusted accordingly. Facilitating the transition from armed to unarmed activism, or from militia to party politics, will be critical for the success of democratisation efforts, not only de-radicalisation processes. Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR), Security Sector Reform (SSR), and counter-narrative production delegitimising armed tactics in democratic transitions will all be critical processes for determining the long-term results of the Arab Spring.

Many of the aforementioned armed groups and pro-violence ideologies were born under repressive conditions, mostly in reaction to brutal state repression. Some of the security apparatus in the aforementioned states acted more like organised crime syndicates and much less like professional security services. Reform will be necessary to bolster democratisation efforts and prevent another cycle of repression, producing new organisations and pro-violence ideologies and therefore new waves of terrorism and political violence.

The Arab Spring did not put an end to Jihadism. The central premise of Jihadism is that armed activism, with all of its known versions, is the most effective and the most legitimate method for social and political change. Offshoots of the Egyptian al-Jihad, the LIFG, small new organisations operating in Sinai, such as al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, Ansar al-Islam, al-Qaeda affiliates and branches in Sinai, Yemen and Sahel still uphold the old rhetoric, ideologies and behaviours. Attacks on police stations, military checkpoints, bombings of oil pipelines, kidnapping of foreign workers were all witnessed, particularly in the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, and various parts of Libya and Yemen.

The relative empowerment of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the usage of some of Libya's southwestern oases as a logistical support bases for elements affiliated with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) reflect the attempts by al-Qaeda to manipulate weak security conditions during the Arab Spring. Still, the impacts of the Arab Spring on consolidating transitions of many organisations from armed to unarmed political activism were major. The argument that repressive autocrats produced 'violent theocrats' was partly, if not totally, vindicated. Many of the leading armed groups opted for non-violent, party politics once they were allowed to participate.

The continuation of the 'de-radicalisation' processes and the encouragement of armed groups, factions and individuals to join it will be largely a function of the relative success of the SSR, the DDR, counter-narrative production, and the interaction of formerly violent groups during the democratic transition in the Arab world. ■

Omar Ashour's latest Brookings paper is entitled 'From Bad Cop to Good Cop: The Challenges of Security Sector Reform in Egypt.'

Party. Interview by author, 30 May 2012.
10 For detailed analyses of some of these transformations see Omar Ashour: *The De-Radicalization of Jihadist: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements,* London: Routledge, 2009; Omar Ashour: 'The Impact of Egyptian Islamist Revisionists on Al-Qaeda', *Perspectives on Terrorism,* Vol. 2, No. 5 (Spring 2008); Omar Ashour: 'Islamist De-Radicalization in Algeria: Successes and Failures', *The Middle East Institute, Policy Brief,* No. 21 (November 2008); Omar Ashour: 'Hamas and the Prospects of De-Radicalization' in: Klejda Mulaj (ed.) *Violent Non-State Actors in Contemporary World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010; Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan. (eds.) *Leaving Terrorism Behind,* London: Routledge, 2009; Chris Boucek: 'Saudi Arabia's 'Soft' Counterterrorism Strategy;' Sidney Jones: 'Deradicalization and Indonesian Prisons', *International Crisis Group Report,* 19 November 2007.

■ **A Muslim holding the Koran and a Coptic Christian holding a cross are carried through opposition supporters in Tahrir Square in Cairo**

Ethnoreligious conflict and the Arab Spring

Are ethnoreligious divisions an inevitable consequence of new democracy in parts of the Arab world or are they a convenient excuse for maintaining authoritarian rule?

By **Adam Jones** PhD, **Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of British Columbia and author of, among other works,** *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*

In evaluating the role of ethnoreligious identities and mobilisations in the turbulence that has swept the Arab world since late 2010, we must first address a common stereotype. What might be termed the 'ancient hatreds' model posits that ethnoreligious identity is essential and immutable. Authoritarian rule may be necessary to unify divided societies, however superficially, and 'keep a lid' on the erstwhile animosities bubbling beneath the surface. When the strongman disappears, so the argument goes, ethnoreligious hatreds leap to the fore, sometimes in genocidal fashion. Yugoslavia after Josip Broz Tito and Rwanda after Juvénal Habyarimana are often cited in support of this framing.

A counter-framing depicts such thinking as simplistic – and often self-serving, in that it justifies support for authoritarian or even tyrannical leaders, on the grounds that the alternative would be endless sectarian violence. Ethnoreligious diversity produces ethnoreligious conflict, it is contended, only when and because it is manipulated for political ends – whether by those in power, or by ethnoreligious forces challenging for power.

Certainly, the manipulation and exploitation of ethnoreligious identities, anxieties and grievances is a longstanding hallmark of Arab politics. A powerful example is the Assad regime(s) in Syria. In classic divide-and-rule fashion, the Assads built their ruling structure on the support of the minority Alawite population. Privileging Alawites among other ethnoreligious formations inevitably stoked alienation among the Syrian majority. The flip side of such privilege is the quite realistic Alawite conviction that

if their benefactor falls, they will be exposed to violent retribution, even genocide. Other minorities – notably the Syriac-Christian population – also perceive themselves as 'protected' by the Assad dictatorship, and vulnerable were the protector to be vanquished.

Bahraini rulers' manipulation of Sunni fears vis-à-vis the Shi'a majority, and Hosni Mubarak's patronage of the sizable Coptic Christian minority in Egypt, likewise point to the centrality of ethnoreligious manipulation and politicised division in shoring up the authoritarian regimes that the Arab Spring has rocked and in places shattered.

More than 'ancient hatreds'?

The ethnoreligious tinge to the conflicts of the Arab Spring period also attests to the power of popular reactions against such manipulations. These have taken one of two forms: constructive appeals to national unity transcending ethnoreligious divisions, so prominent in Cairo's Tahrir Square demonstrations ("Muslims, Christians, we are all Egyptians"); and disturbingly, political counter-mobilisations along ethnoreligious lines, exploiting longstanding but not necessarily atavistic grievances.

The fury of (a minority of) Syrian protesters demanding "Death to the Alawites" is matched by the actions of post-Gaddafi militias in Libya, notably those in the eastern city of Misrata, who have expelled virtually the entire 30,000-strong population of the city of Tawergha and launched sometimes murderous raids on the refugee camps to which Tawerghis have fled. In substantial part, the militias' rage derives from a conviction that Tawerghis allowed their city to be used as a base for Gaddafi's protracted and devastating siege of Misrata in 2011.

Yet are all manifestations of ethnoreligious conflict during the Arab Spring so readily classified as political? Perhaps there is more to the 'ancient hatreds' argument than political scientists like this one are prone to acknowledge. In a pair of respects, the notion of atavistic animosities, latent for long stretches before exploding into violence, seems viable. The first is when ethnoreligious identifications are intrinsically

■ **Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Qandil attends the enthronement ceremony of Pope Tawadros II, the new leader of Egypt's Coptic Christian church, on 18 November 2012**

oppositional – that is, defined in terms of conflict with others. The Sunni-Shi'a rivalry in Islam, for example, is definitional to Shi'a identity in particular.

To be Shi'a means to have inherited the legacy of a monstrous injustice (the murder of Imam Hussain in Karbala in 648 CE), which can only be remedied by overturning that injustice (that is, establishing Shi'a hegemony within the Islamic umma). Divisions between Muslim communities on one hand and Christian and Jewish communities on the other are perhaps not so profound. But neither can one depict Muslim-Christian-Jewish divisions and rivalries as merely the product of self-interested political manipulators.

The other respect in which atavism may be relevant is with regard to racial identities. Consider the Libyan case, in which majority fears of being challenged and 'swamped' by racial 'outsiders' – whether Tawerghis or sub-Saharan immigrants – have

One yearns for the emergence of Arab Gandhis or Mandelas, so far in notably short supply

their parallel in similar anxieties in Western Europe and elsewhere. Although it lies (so far) beyond the parameters of the Arab Spring, the example of Sudan, with its deeply rooted and highly-racialised 'Arab-African' divide, can also be cited.

It is not my intention to dismiss the powerful ways in which 'race' overlaps with social class and religion, in Libya, Sudan and elsewhere. Nor would it be wise to deny that these differences have been politically constructed and manipulated over time. Rather, I am suggesting that certain prejudices and hostilities may be so existentially rooted – so intimately intertwined with individuals' sense of self and destiny – that they transcend 'politics' as normally understood.

What is to be done? As countries and populations around the Arab world seek to chart a fresh course, how can ethnoreligious conflicts be muted, and an acceptance or even celebration of ethnoreligious diversity be promoted?

If the roots of division and conflict are sometimes ancient and atavistic, the solutions surely lie in enlightened political-economic policies. There is little doubt that economically prosperous societies, in which

all ethnoreligious communities enjoy a 'piece of the pie', are less vulnerable to violence of all kinds than economically unstable and radically unequal ones. For example, might the kind of affirmative-action policies that spread prosperity to the indigenous majority of Malaysia – without disenfranchising or dispossessing the comparatively privileged Chinese minority – be used to boost the standing of the Shi'a majority in a post-transition Bahrain, or the marginalised and frustrated Akhdam minority of Yemen?

Politically, a consociational model, acknowledging and seeking to fairly represent plural ethnoreligious communities, eventually collapsed in Lebanon. But perhaps it holds some promise in a post-Assad Syria. Alternatively, consideration could be given to restricting or banning political organisation along sectarian lines – at least long enough for cross-cutting parties and movements to gain a foothold. Enlightened individual leadership is also vital. One yearns for the emergence of Arab Gandhis or Mandelas, so far in notably short supply.

The role of the international community, including the G20 nations and the United Nations, could be significant in encouraging accommodation, promoting economic stability, discouraging the ethnoreligious 'capture' of state institutions, and preventing or suppressing violent conflicts. Lastly, the cases of the dogs that don't bark – countries in which ethnoreligious divisions have, so far, not determined transitional outcomes, as in Tunisia – might be studied for the lessons they may hold for others.

No clear prediction is possible and no magic solution is available. But neither is ethnoreligious conflict predetermined and inevitable. ■

■ **Toubou tribesmen meet with a truce committee from the Libyan army in the Libyan desert city of Kufra on 1 March 2012. Despite an army-brokered truce, tensions still simmer in Kufra**

The women's revolution struggles in quick sands

Although women played a huge part in the 2011 uprisings, they have been unable to convert that influence into significant roles in the post-revolution Arab world

■ **Gameela Ismail shouts at policemen preventing her and other demonstrators from approaching the Kuwaiti Embassy in Cairo, during a protest on 11 April 2010 against the deportation of Egyptian nationals from Kuwait**

By **Gameela Ismail**, Egyptian politician and TV host

In most of the post-revolution Arab countries, women have not yet achieved what they deserve. Instead, they are experiencing further marginalisation, violence, exclusion and manipulation. This is how most observers currently evaluate women's status in the region. Based on traditional measures of gender equality and empowerment – the number of parliamentary seats and governmental posts they secure – there has been a total defeat of Arab women.

Egyptian and Arab women struggled for decades to topple dictatorships and contributed effectively to the outbreak of the 2011 revolutions, standing side by side with men on the front lines, with hundreds of women martyred. During the transitional periods of the past few months, women have continued to have an impact – as activists, politicians, journalists and doctors. Yet, despite this influential presence, women were unable to meet high expectations and obtain proper representation in parliament or government posts.

Over the 16-month transitional period in Egypt in 2011-12, women were absent from the 'traditional' political scene. Most advisory committees and councils formed by the military rule were dominated by men, including the first constitutional review committee, which comprised eight men. Despite the promises made at the time, no woman was considered for the post of 'Governor' in the two reshuffles that occurred before and after President Mohamed Mursi took office. Transitional governments included very few women in ministers' posts. So too does the current government.

Despite the huge female voter turnout in the first post-revolution general elections in November 2011,

only a small number of women stood as candidates and even fewer were elected. The number of seats won by women in the People's Assembly, Egypt's lower house of parliament, was as low as 2 per cent. All winning female candidates were elected by the proportional list electoral system and 6 per cent secured seats in the Shura Council, Egypt's upper house of parliament. This weak result emerged despite the fact that the electoral law has been amended to stipulate the requirement of one female candidate in each party list. In addition, after the cancellation of the 'quota' system, which was adopted in the 2010 elections under the old regime, at least 64 women were guaranteed seats in the parliament.

Women also continue to be under-represented in other important fora. The constitutional drafting assembly, for example, which was formed in the spring of 2012, is only 6 per cent female, despite the calls and promises to increase this percentage. In the judicial system, women stayed away from taking positions in the criminal courts or the Prosecutor General's office.

Human rights threats

There have also been grave concerns about women's rights and personal status laws. Both the Egyptian and Western press have run stories about MPs and constitution drafters who want to cancel or amend some legal provisions in order to limit or abolish women's rights, including laws regulating divorce, khula (women's right to seek divorce), female genital mutilation (FGM), visitation rights and child custody.

These concerns appear to have subsided, thanks to immediate opposition to such ideas and calls for the protection of existing pro-women legislation. There were also calls for additional provisions in the new constitution to guarantee basic human rights, of which women's rights and non-discrimination are an integral part. The most serious threat to the principles of citizenship and gender equality after the revolution was the attempt to insert the phrase 'according to Islamic Sharia' into Article 36 of the draft constitution – an attempt that brought Egyptian civil society together, both men and women, to prevent any manipulation of this article which could theoretically deny women their fundamental rights.

Civil forces, parties, movements and women's alliances made huge efforts to exert pressure to change the proposed article – culminating in protests on 4 October 2012 at the presidential palace. Their efforts succeeded. No other real threat emerged over the past 20 months and no decision breaching women's rights was made by any public or private institution, before or after the election of Mohammed Mursi.

A new morale

This is not to say that players within the current regime are displaying gender equality credentials, or indeed that society as a whole is now overwhelmingly showing respect to women. Instead, we seek to shed light on the new strength and determination of Egyptian women. The revolution has created a new morale that has helped women to react in a unified manner against marginalisation, suppression and oppression.

We – women's groups, analysts, academics and media people – have not yet realised that in Egypt, and maybe in the entire Arab world, there are new generations of women with high spirits and great self-confidence who can courageously and proactively stand up for their rights with renewed inspiration. We have also not grasped that measuring women's success purely through representation in parliaments and governments is superficial. This approach focuses on 'formalities', overlooking the efforts made and benefits gained by those women who failed to reach such positions.

This superficiality was clearly exposed in the aftermath of the Egyptian presidential election. Following the election, those in power decided that women in the presidential team (three women so far) and government must wear the Islamic outfit (hijab), contrary to former President Mubarak's regime, which had done the opposite. Perhaps even more indicative of the precarious state of women's rights, even at the highest levels of power, was the fact that one of the three female presidential advisers, a physician, reportedly made statements regarding FGM but later withdrew them under pressure.

At the parliamentary level, certain MPs with a political Islamic background, both men and women, have expressed their desire to introduce laws that are restrictive and harmful to women's rights; laws that rely on deviated interpretation of some 'Sharia' provisions, such as allowing the marriage of girls aged nine and before puberty.

While we are panicked by such statements and have resorted to raising the alarm in the media and with international organisations, there is light at the end of the tunnel. For the first time in Egypt's history, thousands of young women are invading public, political and social arenas – authorities, parties, organisations, mosques, churches, universities and trade unions – to promote awareness and eradicate political, social, economic, sexual, family and ethical oppression and abuse.

Continuing the struggle

But we cannot expect society to change its attitude towards women and respect their rights in just a few months. What we can look to are promising stories of women who are bravely struggling to catch up with the political game and defy the old mind-set of a society that still has a long way to go.

At the revolutionary level, women continued their struggle during the months following the revolution and over the transitional period, through establishing movements and groups that stood courageously against

the military rule and called for its termination. They also valiantly defended the revolutionary demands.

Mona Seif, a female Egyptian activist, and her colleagues established and ran a movement against military trials of civilians, called 'No to Military Trials'. Samira Ibrahim and others set up 'No to Virginity Examinations' after several female activists were subjected to such examinations by military officers. Lobna Darwish, Salma Said and Hanan Abdalla founded and directed the Mosereen Movement to document violations committed by the military during the transitional period and produce video documentaries and street shows.

Mona Mina and her colleagues created the Tahrir Doctors Society to provide protection for doctors during the demonstrations, as well as the Doctors without Rights Society to defend the rights of Egyptian doctors. Basma El Husseiny and others established Al-Fan Maidan (Art is a Square), which brought art to Egyptian streets on the first Saturday of each month. Heba el Sewidi, Sanaa Youssef and others ran two movements that offered and funded medical treatment for the victims of the revolution. Other groups were formed to help prisoners' and martyrs' families.

At the political level, several movements and groups were established to measure President Mursi's performance (e.g. 'Mursi meter'). Dr Azza Kamel and others started the Foada Watch campaign to monitor and evaluate the President's policies towards women. They also launched a 'women's parliament' to prepare women for parliament. Mary Danial, Rasha Azab, Sally Toma and others created 'We are All Mina Danial', which commemorates the death of Mina Danial, the young Coptic man who lost his life at the hands of the army in Maspero. Other women participated in the establishment of the Shabab Maspero Movement to defend the rights of Copts.

Female representatives from women, rights and political groups established the Egyptian Women Movement in September 2012 in the presence of Dr Nawal El Saadawi, a leading Egyptian feminist, to co-ordinate efforts to support women in the face of traditional regimes. The increased use of physical violence by the authorities against activists has produced young heroines, like Hend Nafie, Farida al Heithi, Ghada Kamal and Azza Helal.

At the societal level, many movements were created, including Girls' Revolution, Stop Abuser and Cut out Your Hand, which witnessed the birth of new activists such as Nadia Adel, Nirvana Sami, Ghadir Ahmed, Sherine Sabet and others.

In conclusion, the state, with its traditional political scene and posts, tends to ignore women. At the same time, however, such measures and fora have become increasingly out of kilter with women's interests and areas of focus. Accordingly, they cannot be used as an indicator of women's progress after the revolution. There have been other forms of success, in terms of bravery and imagination.

In Egypt, we are witnessing a generation that is steadily and quietly pushing women's agendas forward; a generation of free girls whose energies exploded along with our revolution and who dream of a strong Egypt where men and women enjoy equal rights and citizenship. A generation that struggles to change the culture and discourse of women's groups by placing citizenship rights ahead of women's rights. A generation that could create new space in the political scene, away from parliaments or governmental posts (at least for now) before changing mindsets and demonstrating how effective women can be in such posts. These are changes that will require sacrifice and dedication for many years to come: a revolution that women are carrying forward amid the quick sands of conservative political Islam and the social mores of the region at large. ■

In Egypt, we are witnessing a generation that is steadily and quietly pushing women's agendas forward

Ensuring opportunities for women

Much is at stake following the uprisings and women face huge challenges in their bid to translate activism into political influence

By **Isobel Coleman**, Council on Foreign Relations Senior Fellow and Director of the Civil Society, Markets and Democracy Initiative; and Director of the Women and Foreign Policy Program

As the uprisings of the Arab Spring give way to the hard tasks of reconstruction and state-building, women's rights remain a divisive issue. Women have certainly played a prominent role in their countries' transitions. In Egypt, activists such as Esra Abdel Fattah and journalists including Shahira Amin have steered the public dialogue about what the uprisings mean and helped broadcast events around the world. In Yemen, Tawakkol Karman emerged as

of countries' broader commitment to pluralism. How women fare will be an important marker of whether religious and ethnic minority groups can expect equal citizenship under the new systems and whether freedom of speech and religion will be respected.

If the uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen yield more democratic governments, women's rights will certainly benefit. But transforming dictatorships into more just systems is never simple. The situation for women in the Arab world is further complicated by deep-seated patriarchal attitudes and the rise of powerful Islamist groups that resist certain rights for women on religious grounds.

But, as the Arab transitions have underscored, Islamists are not monolithic. Today, there is an energetic debate underway in the transitioning Arab states about the appropriate relationship between government and religion. Women's rights are one of the central elements of that debate.

Opposing positions

The new constitutions taking shape across the region will undoubtedly be an important battleground and Islamist groups are staking out different positions. In Tunisia, the Islamist Ennahda party, the largest political party in parliament, declared early on its intention that Sharia will not be a source of law in the new constitution. Ennahda is explicitly seeking to hold the political centre and rebuff the pull of more conservative Islamist elements that seek an overtly Islamist constitution. With its strong history of secularism and relatively well-educated population, Tunisia has long been an outlier in the region, particularly with respect to women's rights, where it has led the way in expanding legal protections.

In contrast, women's rights have a more precarious future in the new Egypt, where the first constitutional assembly was dissolved because it did not reflect the diversity of Egyptian society.

With the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party and the even more conservative Salafist party, Al Nour, holding more than 70 per cent of the seats in Egypt's parliament, there will be strong pressure to give a more central role to Sharia in the new constitution.

Some leading Islamists have spoken out against women's political participation, claiming that Sharia precludes a woman from being the head of state; on the same grounds, Salafists reluctantly ran female candidates in the parliamentary elections and used pictures of flowers instead of campaign photographs when required to have women on their party lists. Egypt's family laws are also in Islamist crosshairs. Even liberal parties have expressed displeasure with the family laws which were reformed during Mubarak's time for women's benefit.

Those reforms, which gave women the right to a no-fault divorce and stronger access to child custody, are derisively called 'Suzanne's laws' after the former

Majdah al-Fallah (right), candidate for the Justice and Construction Party, the political arm of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, talks to a local woman during her election campaign in Tripoli, July 2012

an iconic protest leader, providing critical momentum to the broader uprising against Ali Abdullah Saleh. In Libya, demonstrations by female relatives of prisoners outside the infamous Abu Salim prison sparked the uprising there. In Tunisia and across the region, women marched in the streets, camped out in squares and managed the distribution of food and supplies.

But as events have shown, women cannot take for granted that their activism will translate into political influence or legal gains in the emerging systems. Elections across the region have brought to power Islamists who hold conservative notions of women's role in society. Other entrenched power brokers like the military in Egypt and tribal leaders in Libya and Yemen have also excluded women from decision-making positions during this time of transition.

Much is at stake in ensuring women's rights in the reconstituted Arab states. In many ways, the protection of women's rights is a critical bellwether

Women cannot take for granted that their activism will translate into political influence or legal gains

first lady and are widely seen as illegitimate due to their association with the previous regime. The rollback of these laws would be a blow to Egypt's women's rights activists who campaigned vigorously for their passage.

Libya is struggling with similar issues. One of the first statements by the National Transitional Council (NTC) after Muammar Gaddafi was killed was to declare that Libya would be an "Islamic state" and that restrictions on polygamy would be removed to conform to Sharia. Secularists and Islamists are now vying for influence in Libya and their competition will inevitably spill over into the writing of the constitution.

Effective quotas

These debates over Islam and the role of women in society are taking place against a backdrop of significant demographic changes in the region. The reality is that in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, women are more educated and having fewer children than earlier generations. In Tunisia and Libya, women make up the majority of college graduates, and in Egypt they make up almost half. As a result, women – and men – have a greater awareness of women's potential.

Women's rights are not only a social and legal issue, but also an important economic consideration. Governments will have to decide how they want to utilise the productive capacity of half of their population. Emerging Arab governments have several tools to draw on to enhance opportunities for women in business, politics and education. When used effectively, quotas can accelerate women's inclusion in public office, a process that might otherwise take generations.

In Tunisia, a quota requiring political parties to use a 'zippered' list alternating male and female candidates resulted in women winning 23 per cent of

seats in parliament. Libya is using a zippered list for a portion of seats, which could result in women winning as much as 20 per cent of parliament. Conversely, under Egypt's weaker quota that required parties to include one woman on their list, women ended up with fewer than 2 per cent of the seats.

Civil society organisations that advocate women's rights have an important role to play in ensuring opportunities for women. Yet in Egypt, women's groups – particularly those with foreign funding – are regarded with suspicion; Libya has outlawed foreign financing for non-governmental organisations. This is a significant blow to the women's rights movement specifically, but also to civil society more broadly.

Where foreign funding is allowed, it is crucial that NGOs reach out to a diverse group of women. Focusing training and outreach on secular women alone ignores the many women who would prefer to advocate for their rights through an Islamic framework. Programmes training women to use religious knowledge to expand their rights have achieved positive results across the Muslim world.

Finally, media can be a powerful driver of cultural change. From soap operas that challenge cultural norms, to political talk shows led by hard-hitting female anchors, to films that delve into sensitive social subjects like female genital mutilation and domestic violence, there are opportunities to stimulate debate, challenge stereotypes and portray women in diverse and modern roles.

Ensuring opportunities for women will depend not only on the legal framework established by new constitutions, but on media and civil society groups that will work with women and men at the grassroots level to encourage female training, leadership, private sector involvement and public participation. ■

Women's rights are not only a social and legal issue, but also an important economic consideration

Nuclear-free?

Has the first step been taken towards a Middle East free of nuclear weapons?

By James Kearney, Peace and Security Programmes Manager, United Nations Association – UK

So often, timing is everything to the success of international diplomacy. Attempts to convene a conference in 2013 to discuss the establishment of a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle East, at a time when the region is still laden with turmoil in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, therefore may be seen as foolhardy, or at best, risky.

The concept itself is neither new nor unprecedented. Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) are an approach to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms regionally, while consolidating multilateral efforts towards international security. The Middle East Zone, proposed initially by Egypt and Iran at the UN General Assembly in 1974, gained international support in 1995, when agreement to promote the Zone became a condition that secured Arab support for indefinite extension to the Non-Proliferation

Treaty (NPT) – the core mechanism for discussions pertaining to international non-proliferation.

Yet it was only at the NPT Review Conference of 2010 that states agreed to efforts to convene a conference in 2012 on the "establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the states of the region, and with the full support and engagement of the nuclear-weapon states".

Starting the process

On 14 October 2011 a host country – Finland – and a facilitator, Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, were chosen to initiate the process. Years from now, this development may be remembered as a turning point – the point at which key international and regional parties began a concerted process to eradicate nuclear weapons, and the potential to create them, in one of the most volatile regions on the planet.

Or it may be remembered as another vague juncture when further diplomatic complication was added to a region where tangible steps towards peace are usually sideways.

At the heart of this conundrum are Iran and Israel, the latter regarded as the only nuclear weapon state in the region (although Israel has never openly declared this), the former seen as a state secretly trying to develop nuclear weapons technology, although this has been consistently refuted by Iranian authorities.

Although Ambassador Laajava has been openly positive about the chances of the Zone conference occurring, on 24 November 2012 the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon intimated that the conference should now occur in 2013, but substantial political and practical challenges still remain.

Israel will demand that any discussion of its nuclear weapons capability must involve discussion of the greater regional security question, but also

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A concerted Arab voice is being heard proposing the Zone, and has become stronger out of collective condemnation of the Syrian regime in 2012

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be preconditioned on an absence of discussion on the Palestinian Occupied Territories. Iran will seek assurances that initial discussions will not be focused on scrutinising its uranium enrichment or on opening up its facilities – Parchin or elsewhere – in the short-term to more intrusive International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) inspections.

At some point, however, a leap of faith will be required by either or both parties in order to establish a modicum of trust. Indeed it is unrealistic, perhaps even dangerous, to see the proposed conference as anything more than an initial trust-building exercise – an important first step in its own right.

Concerted voice

What will help build support is the interaction of key states in the region. Indeed, reassuringly, some of the most vocal proponents of the Zone of late have not been established regional players – Saudi Arabia and Egypt for example – but instead the likes of Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. In many ways a concerted Arab voice is being heard proposing the Zone, and if anything, has become stronger because of a unity crystallised out of collective condemnation of the Syrian regime in 2012. It is also no secret that the Gulf States have a more developed fear of Iran than they do of Israel.

Additionally, power balances, or at least the perception of these, will have to be addressed by Laajava. Israel has always tied the discussion of its nuclear weapons to its wider regional security concerns. This must be decoupled if any movement is to be made. Conventionally, Israel has the clear advantage over any states or group of states in the region, American support aside, and its most pressing security threats come from inside its borders. If the greater security question argument is accepted, there will be little room for any negotiation.

Iran will continue to press for Israel to declare its nuclear weapons, sign the NPT and set out a map towards that country's nuclear disarmament, while stating its right, under NPT article IV, to "develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes" by enriching uranium domestically. However, its role in obfuscating IAEA inspections, carried out under NPT Article III, must be addressed, and commitments to openness should be sought as a measure of good faith in the administration's intentions.

IAEA reports in 2012 continue to raise concern about Iran's unwillingness to provide unfettered access, or adopt an Additional Protocol facilitating comprehensive inspection to all sites within the country. With Western officials still calling on

It is no secret that the Gulf States have a more developed fear of Iran than they do of Israel

Iran to stop attempting to develop highly enriched uranium, close the infrastructure that facilitates this and export its uranium to be enriched elsewhere – the so-called stop, shut and ship process – it is difficult to see a starting point for negotiations.

Defining the parameters
Politics aside, several steps will have to be taken before the proposed conference can take place. Ambassador Laajava will have to define quickly the parameters of the Zone: will the Zone include,

for example, North African states or Turkey? Will the focus be purely on nuclear weapons or also on the capacity to create them? How will compliance be ensured, and what role will the UN, IAEA and international community play in this?

These are just a few of the many initial dilemmas that will beset Jaakko Laajava and his team, and the question of whether, or how far, the MENWFZ should be integrated into an overall Middle East Peace Process hangs most ominously of all above proceedings.

Yet, perhaps with just the right balance of coercion and incentives, movement towards the 2013 conference may just be a little more substantial than many are predicting. Inclusiveness, open dialogue, the involvement of the international community and the allowance of some scope for movement and concession by the main parties involved could begin a process, no matter how seemingly insignificant, of trust-building, and prepare the ground for future negotiations. ■

The Responsibility to Protect in a time of uncertainty

As protesting publics across the Arab world demand a fundamental renegotiation of the relationship between the people and the state, the international community must play its part in ensuring a new social contract

By **Rachel Gerber**, Program Officer in the Stanley Foundation's Policy and Outreach Department, is responsible for human protection programming

Nothing short of a "new social contract" was the end to which the United Nations Secretary General encouraged Yemen's national dialogue conference at the launch of its formal preparatory process in July 2012.

Laden with both symbolic meaning and practical challenges, no language better captures the driving objective of the wider Arab Spring, with protesting publics across the Middle East and North Africa demanding a fundamental renegotiation of the relationship between the people and the state.

This focus on resetting the social contract is the common thread that runs through transition and resistance across the region, and that ties these unfolding dynamics so tightly to the political principle known as the 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P).

R2P is an explicit commitment to the logic of social contract – that the right to rule comes with responsibilities, and that a state's most basic function is to ensure the physical safety of populations within its borders against genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing. More ambitiously, R2P offers the international community as a guarantor of this obligation of governance, promising to assist the state to fulfil its responsibility to protect and ensure collective action when states fall short.

These responsibilities are concurrent and continuous – and are as critical to Arab Spring countries transitioning to a new order as to those still battling with the old.

New states, new challenges
R2P encourages all regimes, new and old, to develop the capacity to protect populations from atrocity violence. Arab Spring crackdowns have proven a vivid reminder that protection capacity is not met with arms and soldiers to defend against external threats. To build it, states must proactively configure their core institutions (security, justice, political and economic) to mitigate atrocity risks and provide a solid buffer between the people and elites who may find their interests best served through mass violence.

For societies emerging from the Arab Spring, challenges are rife and success has been mixed. In Tunisia, broad consensus drives a continuing effort to overhaul the full spectrum of state institutions. Yet, two institutions vital to managing atrocity risk, the police and justice sector, still bide on the margins of this process. Yemen steadily passes the goalposts of its negotiated transition, but struggles to ensure that national dialogue strives for more than a reshuffling of power interests among vested elites.

For these regimes, and others under stress in the region, R2P insists that the international community remains closely engaged in transitional efforts and provides appropriate assistance to help them build the capacity to guarantee their populations against atrocity violence.

With the region's strategic interests and geopolitical tripwires, international attention is a given. R2P's challenge (and imperative) is to ensure that atrocity-prevention focused objectives remain a central focus in balancing the complex issues, interests and actors vested in the Arab Spring's ultimate outcome.

To this end, many international actors remain engaged across the region. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya has shepherded an encouraging election and focused closely on key elements of security and justice sector reform to diffuse atrocity flashpoints: demobilising brigades that still supplement local police forces, training justice officials to process backlogged cases of sub-Saharan Africans falsely accused of mercenary support for the former regime, and so on.

Yet many important capacity deficits remain outside UN purview. For R2P to prove successful in Libya, these deficits – particularly resource management – must also attract support, with external oil interests kept secondary to effective state management and equitable systems of revenue distribution.

Protecting those under siege
Beyond assistance, state failure and escalating atrocities continue to demand collective action to protect populations under siege, while less immediate but serious threats bubble below the surface. Geopolitics and strategic posturing have frustrated all efforts to facilitate a political settlement in Syria, as Lebanon straddles a particularly shaky precipice awaiting its fate. Swift and effective crackdowns in cases like Bahrain have exacerbated the root causes of protest, while highlighting a worrisome openness to violent means.

As a political principle, R2P has never been blind to the realities of power politics and strategic interest; its obligations persist in spite of them. The degree to which state and international actors continue to strive for protection against these obstacles will come to define not only what R2P means for the Arab Spring, but also what the Arab Spring will ultimately mean for R2P.

Many will measure this relationship with the final outcome of the Syrian crisis, debating whether the fallout from the Libya campaign and the Syria stalemate will stymie any future explicit invocation of R2P in connection with the use of force.

Its true mark, however, will lie in a much wider range of policies toward a region in flux – those that go to the very essence of the 'social contract' and secure the most elemental aspirations that drive the Arab Spring. ■

■ **A Jordanian soldier helps newly arrived Syrian refugees after they crossed the border from Syria into Jordan, near the town of Ramtha, September 2012. During the previous month, more than 100,000 people fled the war-torn country to seek refuge in neighbouring states**

> **As a political principle, R2P has never been blind to the realities of power politics and strategic interest**

Clearing the way for the future

As the countries of North Africa and the Middle East emerge from the shadow of authoritarianism, some of them must now contend with debilitating legacies, including the threat to local communities of landmines

By **John Kilkenny**, Country Director with the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) in Iraq, with more than 10 years of experience managing humanitarian and development programmes in the Middle East

Refugees fleeing the violence in Syria to seek a safe haven in the Kurdistan region of Iraq reported having to pay guides to help them safely cross the minefields that still mark the border between the two countries. Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch reported Syrian military forces laying new landmines near its borders with Lebanon and Turkey, close to routes used by civilians fleeing violence in the country.

Whatever the supposed military efficacy of landmines may originally have been, from protecting a military post to defending a national border, the

Human Rights Watch reported Syrian military forces laying new landmines near its borders with Lebanon and Turkey

Libya, Bahrain and Syria, can take up the cause of protecting the most vulnerable groups in their populations who often live in the more marginal areas affected by landmines. The legal commitments and timelines to destroy stockpiles and complete the clearance of landmine-contaminated land provide a pledge to the safety and future development of the most vulnerable people in affected countries: a finite problem that can be solved. Acceding to the treaty further opens the way for countries to seek international assistance in the process of clearance and victim assistance, building coalitions of countries with a shared commitment to the safety and development of their people.

The Landmine Monitor that annually tracks progress towards the eradication of landmines reports that 70 to 85 per cent of landmine victims are still civilians, making their impact a clear violation of humanitarian law on the grounds of disproportionate and indiscriminate impact. The human cost is not just that to the individual killed or maimed, but to their families and their livelihoods.

Landmines also impede a country's development in a whole manner of ways, from endangering the movement and return of refugees or displaced persons, to denying access to potentially productive land and other resources. The need to provide assistance to those injured also imposes an additional burden on frequently overstretched healthcare systems.

Concerted commitment

The challenge of addressing the problem of landmines is one that requires a concerted commitment from a range of actors, including governments, the United Nations, civil society and even commercial organisations. The initial call came from civil society groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which formed the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) that went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

The international NGO the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), a founding member of the campaign and co-laureate of the peace prize, has been implementing a humanitarian mine action programme in northern Iraq since 1992 and since then has seen the dramatic benefits that mine action can bring both in terms of reducing casualties and unlocking development potential. This experience

use of landmines has now been discredited due to their lingering menace beyond any conflict and indiscriminate impact on civilian populations. Beyond these national military objectives landmines have also served authoritarian regimes as a tool of internal repression, such as their use during the 1980s by Saddam Hussein's regime to purge Kurdish villages in the north of Iraq.

The potential for countries to demonstrate their commitment to protect their citizens in a time of uncertainty could not be clearer than in the case of removing the scourge posed by antipersonnel landmines, by means of the 1997 International Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty that provides the framework for commitment to be translated into action by states. As the Arab Spring looks to bear fruit, those states not yet party to the treaty, including

provides an illustration of what can be achieved in other countries across the region once they begin to address the problem. The time could not be better to deliver a reconstruction dividend to countries and peoples that have passed through the political upheavals of the Arab Spring. On the other side lies the challenge to remove once and for all a deadly legacy of authoritarian regimes.

For those countries with high levels of contamination of landmines, and indeed other explosive remnants of war, including the equally iniquitous use of cluster munitions, the task is far from a simple or quick one. Experience has shown that commitment and resources must be sustained over time and local capacity developed to address the problem. A comprehensive approach to mine action includes: information gathering and survey to determine the scale of the problem and priorities; mine risk education to support at-risk populations prior to clearance; victim assistance (in the form of immediate medical needs, prosthetics and physical and vocational rehabilitation); and the marking and clearance of affected land.

Building futures

MAG's experience in Iraqi Kurdistan has shown the value of integrating different clearance techniques into the process to improve efficiency and effectiveness, often utilising manual demining, the most labour intensive form of clearance, with the use of mine detecting dogs and mechanical

assets according to the risk profile of the particular minefield. Increasingly the task has moved on from saving lives to building futures, as villages have been re-established, houses built, crops planted and animal herds expanded as more safe grazing becomes available. The potential to support infrastructure development has also become increasingly important, with specific projects to enable bridges to be built, dams constructed and telecommunications and power facilities installed.

Alongside all these developments has been an increasing awareness and capacity development in the government authorities themselves to take on the responsibility for meeting their obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty. MAG has gone from leading the sector in the country to supporting the regional mine action authorities to achieve the objectives they now own themselves. International assistance continues to play a role, but increasing domestic resources are now being devoted to the task.

The path is a clear one: a commitment to addressing the problem of landmines can play an important role in the process of reconstruction and improving the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its people. What more fundamental responsibility can the state hold than the protection of the lives and livelihoods of its own citizens? The removal of the danger posed by landmines, more frequently laid by governments, is a tangible commitment to realising the value and potential of its most important resource: its people. ■

What more fundamental responsibility can the state hold than the protection of the lives and livelihoods of its own citizens?

■ Boy scouts march through the centre of Libyan capital Tripoli during the 2012 International Day for Mine Awareness

Lessons from Iraq

Managing the impact of occupation in Iraq has not been an easy task – and remains an ongoing challenge

By **Emma Sky,** former Political Advisor to the Commanding General of Multi National Forces Iraq and Senior Fellow, Yale

Experts have argued that the Arab world has not moved towards democracy due to a number of factors, including the structure of the economy which makes the government autonomous from society as it is dependent on external 'rent' (e.g. oil) rather than taxpayer's money; and the building up of security forces to protect the regime and to crush domestic opposition.

The changes sweeping across the Middle East are bringing new leaders to power and new opportunities to reshape the governance structures in these countries. Attention is rightly focused on the economic challenges facing the region. However, there also needs to be greater thought and debate on the nature of the security sector in these societies. In order to transition to more inclusive and representative forms of governance, a paradigm shift is required in the relationship between citizens and security forces – and the support the security forces receive from the international community. If this does not occur,

A paradigm shift is required in the relationship between citizens and security forces

there is a real risk that the new regimes will replicate the patterns of those they replaced. The vast majority of US support to the region is via security assistance, building up the capacity of local security forces to counter terrorism. However, it is this very capacity that can be used by regimes against their domestic opposition and to silence demands for reform.

It is instructive to look at the experience of Iraq following the fall of the regime in 2003. It is unlikely that Saddam Hussein's regime would have fallen without international intervention, and yet in spite of – or because of – that intervention, Iraq has had a bloody and tragic transition.

The Coalition Provisional Authority was established to manage the transition period and to maintain law and order after the fall of the regime. As a foreign occupying power, it always suffered from a lack of credibility and inadequate capacity.

Security forces

Since 2003, considerable US – and Iraqi – resources were invested in developing the Iraqi security forces. The US initially conceived of Iraq's new security forces within a liberal democratic model of governance, under civilian control, ensuring a complete break with Iraq's past in which the military had either interfered in politics, or had become the tool of the Baath party. However, there were differing visions between the US and Iraqis – and between different factions of Iraqis – concerning the future of the Iraqi security forces and consensus was never reached on the shape the security sector should take.

The task of building up the Iraqi security forces in Iraq after the 2003 invasion was made all the more complicated by a number of factors. Firstly, the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority dissolved the existing military and security forces.

While Saddam Hussein's intelligence apparatus had been largely reviled, the Iraqi Army, in contrast, had been generally perceived as a symbol of the Iraqi nation with a distinguished history. Secondly, Iraq, which had once boasted the greatest military in the region, was subjected to the ignominy and humiliation of having its military rebuilt under direct US supervision. Thirdly, in the security vacuum following the fall of the regime, mass looting took place, creating an atmosphere of lawlessness and damaging most of the Iraqi Army barracks and infrastructure. Fourthly, members of militias who had fought against the State of Iraq, and on the side of Iran during the

Iran/Iraq war were incorporated into the new Iraqi military. And fifthly, the Kurds insisted on maintaining separate Kurdish forces to protect their region.

The establishment of new Iraqi security forces under such circumstances, and in such a manner, impacted both the legitimacy of the forces in the eyes of segments of the population (who viewed them as tools of the US and Iran), and the loyalty of those forces (some of whom retained allegiance to political parties in the absence of a legitimate state).

Marginalisation

The 'elite bargain' put in place by the US-led Coalition excluded key constituents. The excluded groups refused to accept their marginalisation and turned against the Coalition, as well as the new elites who had been put in power and who they did not regard as legitimate. The Coalition tended to conceptualise the violence as being caused by non-legitimate extremists battling against legitimate government.

This conceptualisation led the Coalition to focus its main effort on building up the capacity of 'government', particularly its military forces, and helping it to crush its opposition through force, rather than on brokering political consensus among the competing groups or helping to build up the institutions or the processes to manage conflict and competition.

Initially those security forces were conceived as small, with the new army focused on protecting the country from external aggression and the police responsible for internal security. However, with the deterioration of the security situation, the US rapidly increased recruitment into the Iraqi security forces, so as to enable the withdrawal of US forces. The Iraqi Army, which under the Constitution was not to be used in internal affairs, was trained and equipped as a 'counter-insurgency' force, with the police, which received far less support, put under its control. Today, nearly one million Iraqis are under arms.

Despite the improvement in the security situation, a political agreement still has to be reached among Iraqi elites on the nature of the state; the powers of central government versus regional government; how Iraq's oil wealth should be developed; how Iraq's internal boundaries should be agreed; and foreign policy orientation. Given the differing views of the threats facing the country, there is no agreed national security strategy, nor agreement on leadership of the security portfolios.

Despite the provisions in the Constitution, the security forces do not operate under civilian oversight within an agreed security architecture; there is no legal framework for special forces; and the parliament has not approved senior military appointments. The development of such security capacity under the sole control of the Prime Minister has arguably made it more difficult to reach a political settlement – and is pushing the country back towards authoritarian rule. ■

■ Previous page: British Army troops face a crowd of protesting former Iraqi soldiers in Basra, January 2004. Since then, developing Iraq's new security forces has proved a major challenge for the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority

Imperatives of security reform

Lessons are being learned from Iraq about rebuilding security and justice institutions, particularly in countries such as Syria, where there has been violent conflict

By **Matthew T. Sherman**, **former US State Department official who served in Iraq between 2004-2007 and advised four separate Ministers of Interior**

The establishment of any new government after a violent conflict is perilous. This is especially true for the security sector, which warring factions may treat as a means to extend their political influence. International assistance to rebuild the security and justice sector institutions is often welcomed by a new government, particularly a transitional one, as it attempts to quickly empower its constituencies before the next election.

Yet it is in these early periods of a new country's existence, and the nexus of security sector development and the establishment of a democratic process, that the seeds of prolonged violence and political unrest can lie.

Policing, and the establishment of police forces, can be a much more complex task than that of the military

Security: military or police?

The security and justice sector encompasses the range of functions from military defence of the nation, to border security, to policing, to the penal system. Yet the focus of security sector reform is frequently on the armed forces, which represent the face of security to the international community. In Syria, as in Iraq, the temptation will be to focus on the demobilisation, and then reconstruction, of the armed forces, rather than the less visible police.

This would be as much a mistake in Syria as it was in Iraq. However, the police and other internal security forces are encountered more frequently by local populations. This distinction between perceptions of the military and the police is often lost on the international community, particularly in terms of resources dedicated to one force over the other.

Moreover, in many cases, the police are often not as closely followed or understood, particularly at the local level – nor does the international community view them as politically influential since they are usually made up of lower tiered officials. It is within this murky, but vast and influential, void that festering conflicts can be exploited by warring factions into civil wars.

Policing, and the establishment of police forces, can be a much more complex task than that of the military. It requires technical capabilities such as crime scene analysis to replace older, confession-based, styles of interrogation. It requires the building of trust between the police and the population; it is inherently a local function, manned by police forces who must arbitrate disputes in their own communities, while requiring central bureaucratic reform. It also necessitates the building of linkages between police, prosecutors and judges.

Training and time

Training and equipping an army can be done more quickly, and is often less complicated, than trying to create an accountable and effective police force. In Iraq, Coalition soldiers were partnered closely with the Iraqi army. This development was essential to the Iraqi army's development and relative success. However, it is more difficult to provide the numbers of foreign mentors to a police force. Police can be quickly empowered in very large numbers with a few weeks

of basic training and simple equipping. However, empowering a police force to conduct security operations does not guarantee conduct in those operations, or performance in regular policing tasks.

In Iraq, for several years the Coalition adopted a strategy premised primarily on the growth of police (and army) numbers. This was in part the result of a series of short-term strategies that aimed to address what could be done in six-month blocks, rather than what would take many times longer. However, factors such as the lack of reforms in the central Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the provinces that would have allowed better management and oversight of the police; a failure to build an holistic criminal justice system that linked police, prosecutors and courts; and the lack of legislative changes to reflect – and legalise – the evolving role and responsibilities of the Iraqi police, resulted in a chaotic situation in which elements of the police contributed to both the sectarian infighting and the general banditry which crippled much of the country.

Politics, sectarian influence and numbers

In the months following the 2003 military invasion of Iraq, the police was the only security force still intact following the dissolution of the Iraqi army and other security institutions. That the police force was the least effective security force in 2003 was both its salvation and its undoing. The international community did not view the police as a threat.

The Iraqi police had not been a dominant force under the Baathists and was commonly regarded as the lower rung of the security forces. Regime security had been the priority for Saddam's government, much as it currently is in Syria. Security in Iraq was delivered via a complex web of competing security and intelligence agencies that did not include the Iraqi police as a lead participant. Although highly disorganised, poorly trained and under-equipped, it was widely believed in the early days of the occupation that there was a desperate need for large numbers of forces – of any type – to counter the violent actions of insurgents.

To many Iraqis, growing numbers of police played an important role in the country's political struggle, be it balancing Shi'a militias in Basra or Najaf or representing the Sunni population in Fallujah or Samarra. Important in this dynamic, the police were (and are) reflective of local and national politics in ways that the Iraqi army is not, since they are locally recruited and serve within their communities, making them more susceptible to tribal and sectarian influence, and local corruption, and more attractive as a potential base of power for political actors.

The rapid succession of governments in Iraq (five governments were in power from 2003 to 2009), and the repeated political resets elections initiated, particularly from 2004 to 2007, caused mass disruptions beyond just the political class. They resulted in repeated purging of government officials,

particularly within the security forces. Organised forces quickly became instruments of power in societies experiencing violent political turmoil. This churn fuelled corruption among members, knowing they may be in power only for a few months, recognising that another election was only months away.

Over the course of several governments, the politics of influence and control of the police became increasingly zero-sum. All major Iraqi political parties contested for police leadership positions; and police forces were used by several sides in the conflict to meet partisan goals deep within the state and at the local level where less attention was placed by international forces, diplomatic personnel and training programmes. These goals were not only security-focused; by using the police as a jobs programme, parties were able to reward supporters with incomes.

Today, Iraq's MoI forces have ballooned to approximately 600,000 personnel, making them one of the largest security forces in the Middle East. The Iraqi police should not be viewed as one single entity since the missions and make-up of the various components now reach into virtually all corners of the country and many of its institutions.

For example, the local police most closely resemble the forces that existed during the former regime, while provincial police emergency battalions have become a higher-end but localised SWAT force that are akin to the Shabbabiyah in Syria today. These, along with a high-end police force directly under national control, border forces, oil police and other ministry security services all have varying degrees of MoI control and political influence.

Recommendations

Despite the demand for the quick re-establishment of security in Syria, the international community must act to mitigate political influence in policing and internal security by taking a measured and informed approach to who it helps empower; avoid the use of the security force as a jobs programme; resist treating the police as a 'security force' rather than a law enforcement organisation, and understand that the growth of an accountable and effective police force requires intensive action over a much longer period than the reconstruction of a military.

Respecting the new government's desire for sovereignty will be an important political issue with any planning effort. However, such respect should not diminish transparency measures nor eliminate the international community's ability to monitor closely how its resources are being used. In fact, it may even require the international community, at times as a source of leverage, to scale back its resources, particularly if they see resources being abused and undermining attempts at conflict resolution and peace building.

Conclusion

No matter what programmes and assistance are provided, they will impact the population and ripple through the deep state in ways that may be neither overlooked, nor understood, by the international community. But that does not change the fact that political progress should not be measured in terms of elections held, nor the number of security forces trained and equipped – more does not always mean better.

The unintended consequences of empowering one group over another, particularly as the political class and deep state are still in flux, can fan the flames of civil war. This distortion and disruption was what led to much of the violence in Iraq, particularly in 2003-2009. It was during this time that the MoI went from a predominantly Sunni force of 60,000 during the Baathist regime, to a vast Shi'a-led and operated security institution of approximately 600,000.

The lessons learned from that experience need to be clearly understood in order to avoid similar mistakes. This is particularly true given the events quickly unfolding in neighbouring Syria and any plans the international community may be developing to rebuild its security institutions. ■

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