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Deutsches Institut für
Entwicklungspolitik

German Development
Institute



Stability and development in North Africa and the Middle East

Research and policy advisory project of the
German Development Institute / Deutsches
Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)

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Background

A wave of protests was sparked in Tunisia in early 2011. It spread rapidly throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and became known as the Arab Spring. Demonstrators in many countries chanted "Bread! Freedom! Social justice!" (عيش ! حرية ! عدالة اجتماعية !) as they voiced their discontent at the lack of democracy and economic opportunities.

Much has changed since then – but unfortunately not always for the better. Tunisia has embarked on a difficult path to democracy. In other countries, the old rulers or the army have prevailed, and in some cases the authoritarian reins have been pulled more tightly than ever. Other countries find themselves in the midst of civil wars in which Islamist militants have been able to exploit power vacuums, while the influence of the former state is not welcomed either.

The main questions now for Germany and Europe are how should they deal with the new situation, and how can they best contribute to development and stability in the MENA region. The DIE is addressing these questions in a research and advisory project financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Research and policy questions

The Middle East and North Africa in global politics

The first component of the project explores why certain MENA countries have imploded politically, and the role and influence of global and regional powers in these events.

The question can also be turned around: what influence do the latest developments in the MENA region have on global political, economic and environmental trends? How should German and European development, foreign and security policy respond to these trends? How can these policies be better interlinked? And what can Germany and the EU achieve in countries where there is neither security, nor a functioning state, or any other legitimate partners for cooperation?

A new social contract

The second component of the project deals with countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Jordan. These states have not collapsed in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, but they have proven more fragile than many observers had expected. Is there a danger that they too could break down in the future? Which factors could provoke this? What can the governments in these countries do to guarantee long-term stability? The project explores the potential for a new social contract that would protect the countries' internal cohesion. Which institutions and actors would be best placed to overcome the very profound social polarisation in the majority of these countries? And what support can Germany and Europe offer to the ongoing economic, social, environmental and political reform processes?

Repositioning the MENA countries in the global economy

The project's third component examines the economic basis on which MENA countries can build their future development. How can they achieve broad-based and ecologically sustainable socio-economic welfare gains? What potential lies in promoting small business activities? How much can the use of renewable energy contribute to labour-intensive industrialisation? How can social systems be both expanded and made more equitable and sustainable? And how can today's expensive and not particularly sustainable food and energy subsidies be reduced?

Future cooperation with the MENA region

The project's fourth component explores courses of action that still exist for conventional development cooperation in the MENA region in the face of diminishing resources from western donor countries and growing contributions from new donor countries (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, China). German and European development policy may face new foreign policy challenges, such as the prospect that some countries in the region may not want Western aid any longer, preferring instead to secure more support from the Gulf states.

Project objectives

The project bases its advisory work for policy makers in Germany, Europe and the MENA region on its research results. The objectives are to:

- identify ways that German and European actors can contribute to stabilisation and development in the MENA region under changing regional and national conditions;
- advise the MENA state governments on how they can develop strategies for sustainable economic development and political transformation; and
- outline institutions and processes that will lead to a higher degree of stability and cooperation in the region.

Academic studies and papers, policy briefs, short position papers and press releases are to be produced as part of the project in order to provide publicly available information on the various issues. In addition, podium discussions, workshops and conferences will be organised during which academics, journalists and politicians will discuss controversial questions regarding development and stability in the MENA region.

Events

Can development policy contribute to the management of the migration crisis? 03 December 2016, DIE, Bonn

How can the ‚Arab Spring‘ be saved? 11 December 2015, Representation Office of North Rhine-Westphalia, Berlin

Water as a weapon of the ‚IS‘, 02 March 2016, DIE, Bonn

Morocco: from ‚Arab Spring‘ to democratic governance? 23 June 2016, DIE, Bonn

German-French foreign and development policy in North Africa, 23.-24 June 2016, Castle Genshagen near Berlin

Stabilisation and development for Libya, 16 March 2016, KfW, Berlin

Our neighbour Algeria, 28 June 2016, Institut Français, Bonn

A new social contract for the MENA, 05.-06 December 2016, DIE, Bonn

International co-operation for stability and development in the MENA region: Are Europeans solving current problems or creating future ones? Berlin, Spring 2017.

Publications

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The DIE

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