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

Publications


Loewe, Markus et al. (2016): An Italian researcher is tortured to death in Cairo – sombre cause to reconsider the way we work with Egypt, Bonn: German Development Institute (The Current Column, 17 March 2016)

Schraven, Benjamin et al. (2016): How can development policy help to tackle the causes of flight? Bonn: German Development Institute (Briefing Paper 2/2016)

Schäfer, Isabel (2016): Fostering a youth sensitive approach in the EU’s policies towards the South and East Mediterranean Countries: The case of Tunisia, in: Silvia Colombo (ed.), Youth activism in the South and East Mediterranean countries since the Arab uprisings, Rom, Barcelona: IAI/ IEMed, 60-74


Furness, Mark / Annabelle Houdret (2015): What should (and what should not) be done to ease the Syrian refugee crisis?, Bonn: German Development Institute (The Current Column, 08 September 2015)


Trautner, Bernhard (2015): The nuclear deal with Iran: adding fuel to the fire or ushering in peace in the Middle East? Bonn:
German Development Institute (The Current Column, 29 June 2015)

Trautner, Bernhard (2015): *Time for a paradigm shift in policy on Syria and the Middle East?*, Bonn: German Development Institute (The Current Column, 31 March 2015)

Trautner, Bernhard (2015): *Tackling the real reasons causing people to flee Syria*, Bonn: German Development Institute (The Current Column, 08 October 2015)


Reeg, Caroline / Markus Loewe (2014): *It’s not just the economy, stupid...* published on: *The Broker online* 1 October 2014


Vidican, Georgeta / Annabelle Houdret (2014): Energy and water for MENA: From risks to opportunities, Bonn: German Development Institute (The Current Column, 05 May 2014)


Houdret, Annabelle / Markus Loewe (2013): Two years on from the start of the “Arab Spring” and many key questions of interna-
tional cooperation remain unanswered, Bonn: German Development Institute (The Current Column, 16 October 2013)

Houdret, Annabelle / Mohamed Elloumi (2013): Arab Spring but bad harvests: why rural Tunisia matters for the success of the revolution, Bonn: German Development Institute (The Current Column, 22 July 2013)


Loewe, Markus et al. (2013): Which factors determine the upgrading of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)? The case of Egypt, Bonn: German Development Institute (Studies 76)


Vidican, Georgeta et al. (2013): Achieving inclusive competitiveness in the emerging solar energy sector in Morocco, Bonn: German Development Institute (Studies 79)


Al-Saleh, Yasser / Georgeta Vidican (2012): Innovation dynamics of sustainability journeys for hydrocarbon-rich countries, in: Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development 7 (2), 144-170


Breuer, Anita (2012): The role of social media in mobilizing political protest: Evidence from the Tunisian revolution, Bonn: German Development Institute (Discussion Paper 10/2012)


Samulewicz, Diana / Georgeta Vidican / Noor Ghazal Aswad (2012): Expanding women’s involvement in science, technology, and engineering career pathways: A case study for the UAE, in: Gender, Technology and Development 16 (2), 125-152


Vidican, Georgeta (2012): Building domestic capabilities in renewable energy, Bonn: German Development Institute (Studies 66)

Vidican, Georgeta et al. (2012): An empirical examination of the development of a solar innovation system in the United Arab Emirates, in: Journal of Energy and Sustainable Development 16 (2)

The Team (not including associate researchers)

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The DIE

The German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) is one of the leading think tanks for global development and international cooperation worldwide. It is located in the UN city of Bonn. DIE’s work is based on the interplay between research, policy advice and training. DIE is building bridges between theory and practice.

Research at DIE is theory-based, empirically driven and application-oriented. It provides the basis for the consulting activities of the Institute. DIE develops policy-relevant concepts, advises ministries, governments and international organisations, and refers to current policy issues.

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