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!" (عـيش ! حرـيـة ! عدـالة اجتماعـية !) 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 gained power, while the influence of the former states have diminished.

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 literally imploded, 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.

In addition, public roundtable discussions, workshops and conferences are organised during which academics, journalists and politicians will discuss controversial questions regarding development and stability in the MENA region.

Selected events organised by the project


Perspectives for a renewed partnership between Europe and the MENA, 10 October 2017, Berlin


A new social contract for the Middle East and North Africa, 05-06 December 2016, Bonn

Our neighbour Algeria, 28 June 2016, Bonn

German and French foreign and development policy in North Africa, 23-24 June 2016, Schloss Genshagen

Morocco: from “Arab Spring” to democratic governance? 23 June 2016, Bonn

Stabilisation and development for Libya, 16 March 2016, Berlin

Water as a weapon of ‘IS’, 02 March 2016, Bonn

How can the Arab Spring be saved? 11 December 2015, Berlin

How can development policy contribute to mitigating the migration crisis? 03 December 2015, Bonn

Advancing an international Energiewende: lessons from North Africa, 29 June 2015, Potsdam

Changing water politics in the Nile basin, 17 June 2015, Bonn
Publications


Zintl, T. (2018): When will we see the emancipation of Arab trade unions? Bonn: DIE (Current Column 30 April 2018)


Loewe, M. et al. (2016): A new social contract for the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Bonn: DIE (Current Column, 05 December 2016)

mit Ägypten zu überdenken, Bonn: DIE (Current Column, 17 March 2016)

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


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


Furness, M. / A. Houdret (2015): Was zur Entschärfung der syrischen Flüchtlingskrise getan werden sollte – und was nicht, Bonn: DIE (Current Column, 08 September 2015)


Trautner, B. (2015): *Wer auf Assad zugeht stärkt den IS*, ZEIT online, 06 April 2015


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


Vidican, G. et al. (2013): *Achieving inclusive competitiveness in the emerging solar energy sector in Morocco*, Bonn: DIE (Studies 79)


The team (not including associate researchers)

Markus Loewe (project leader)
markus.loewe@die-gdi.de
*Fields of expertise:* Social policy, inclusive growth, business development, investment climate, demographic development
Egypt, Jordan, Palestinian Territories

Amirah El-Haddad
Amirah.el-haddad@die-gdi.de
*Fields of expertise:* Economic and industrial policy, private sector promotion
Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan

Mark Furness
mark.furness@die-gdi.de
*Fields of expertise:* EU Mediterranean policy, fragile states, factors for state collapse and rebuilding legitimate state entities
Libya, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories

Annabelle Houdret
annabelle.houdret@die-gdi.de
*Fields of expertise:* Governance, water management, conflicts over natural resources, climate change, environmental policies
Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

Bernhard Trautner
bernhard.trautner@die-gdi.de
*Fields of expertise:* Political systems, influence of global and regional powers, factors for state collapse and rebuilding
Syria, Iraq, Iran, Arabian Peninsula

Tina Zintl
tina.zintl@die-gdi.de
*Fields of expertise:* Employment and labour market policy, international migration
Syria, Jordan, Yemen
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.

Contact

German Development Institute /
Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)
Tulpenfeld 6,
D-53113 Bonn, Germany
Phone +49 (0)228 94927-0,
Fax +49 (0)228 94927-130
DIE@die-gdi.de
www.die-gdi.de

For the MENA projekt:

Markus Loewe
German Development Institute /
Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)
Tulpenfeld 6,
D-53113 Bonn
Telefon +49 (0)228 94927-154,
Fax +49 (0)228 94927-130
markus.loewe@die-gdi.de
www.die-gdi.de/mena/