

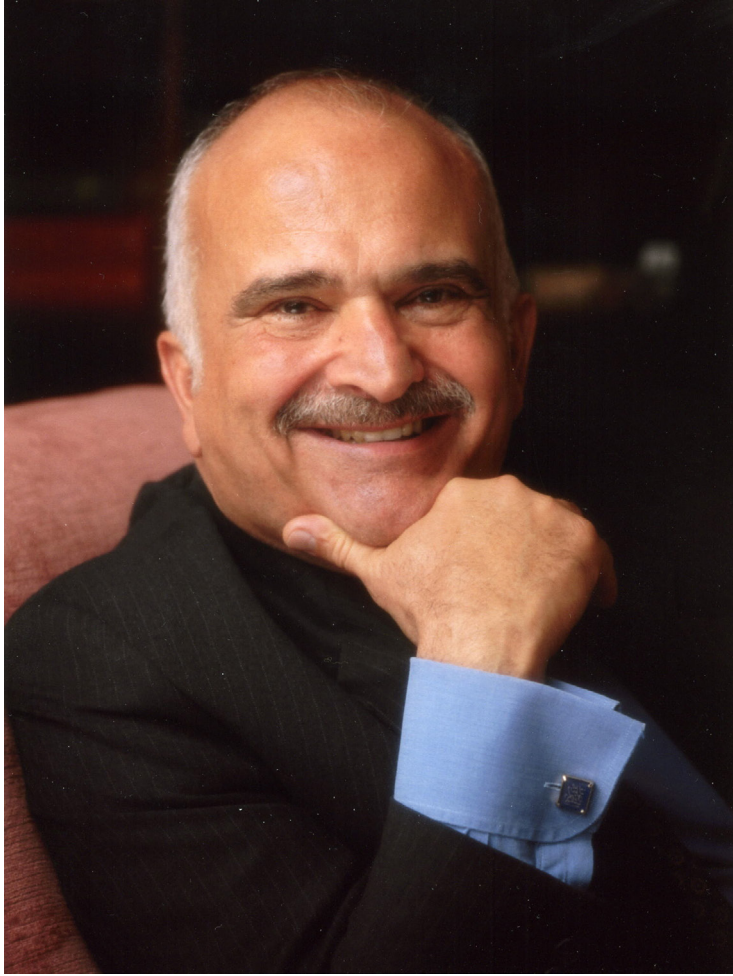


Building Resilience Amid Chaos

*HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal's vision
for a new regional architecture in West Asia and North Africa*



"Knowledge from the region, action for the region"



HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal

Chairman, West Asia - North Africa Institute

His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal is a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and is the brother of His late Majesty King Hussein and the uncle of HM King Abdullah II of Jordan, serving as Jordan's Crown Prince from 1965 until 1999.

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The West Asia - North Africa (WANA) Institute is a non-profit policy think tank based in Amman, Jordan.

Operating under the chairmanship of His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal, the Institute works to promote a transition to evidence-based policy and programming to combat the development and humanitarian challenges facing West Asia and North Africa.

The WANA Institute aspires to be a trusted source of knowledge, evidence and opinion, and to provide a forum for open debate for leading researchers and policy makers in the region.

We undertake research, host conferences and conduct training workshops in the areas of social justice, green economy and human security. We believe these three areas represent both the most pressing issues facing our region and the greatest opportunity for our work to create vital impact.

Building Resilience Amidst Chaos

*A new regional architecture for a sustainable human environment in
West Asia and North Africa*

“In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity”

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

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Introduction

The people of the West Asia-North Africa (WANA) region face an unprecedented set of interconnected challenges. These include water scarcity, energy shortages, protracted conflict, and exceptional human displacement. These issues transcend national borders by their very nature. In the absence of a regional framework for responding to these events, chronic development problems have been aggravated. The consequences for social cohesion, equitable resource sharing and human dignity are clear, leaving the region's people at a complex crossroads of resource and institutional deficits, incomplete transitions and fracturing polarisation.

This situation amounts to nothing short of a chaos that is rocking the region at its foundation. However this state of affairs presents, not only challenges, but also opportunities. Resilience is the capacity of individuals, peoples, organisations and states to endure and evolve in response to shocks, be they exogenous, internal, environmental, economic or social.¹ It is about harnessing the region's carrying capacity, and shifting the way policy-makers think about crises, stresses and shocks. Resilience is the toolbox that WANA needs to confront socio-economic stagnation, violent extremism, climate change and ecological decline.

Coping with unpredicted change is a daunting task, imbued with challenge. Zero change equates to stagnation, while at the same time, too much change without corresponding adaptation and innovation, can destroy social and ecological systems. It is this latter type of destruction that the WANA region is facing today. Unregulated and unbounded change has resulted in quick fixes and containment strategies, with a view to building stable institutions and societies over the long term. While the intention is sound, the results have not accrued because stability can be rigid and inflexible; it is not resilience.

Today, WANA as a socio-ecological system is not sufficiently resilient to seize the opportunities embedded in every crisis. As such, it risks becoming a victim, rather than a champion, of change. We need states, societies and institutions that expect change, rather than shield from it. We must enable people and institutions to capitalise on unexpected events: a new architecture that is designed to wage peace and further a security agenda in which humans are the referent objects of security. Only then will the region strengthen as a whole, overcome identity fragmentation and bolster social cohesion.

This paper constitutes a first step in crafting an inclusive regional strategy for resilience building, one that initiates from within the region. It discusses why WANA is both vulnerable and sensitive to an array of social, ecological, and economic stresses. It then articulates three pillars of resilience, and proposes a strategy towards achieving regional resilience structured around eight actionable policy recommendations. The rationale is to transform how policy-makers think about challenges and crises, by demonstrating that while quick fixes earn short-term political gains and may delay crises, the long-term costs are higher and the problems are prone to recidivism. Such tactics must be replaced with a holistic and long-term approach to resilience that focuses on all dimensions of the human environment. This approach will take more time and involve more resources – both political and financial – but its outcome will be

¹ F Moberg and S H Simonsen, 'What is resilience? An Introduction to social-ecological research', *Stockholm Resilience*

more sustainable. At the centre of the approach is a recognition that the WANA region has an inherent potential that can be harnessed for the benefit of its people, rather than a privileged few, if only an inclusive regional architecture is adopted.

1. The State of WANA and the War Against Humanity

The 'Arab Awakenings'² epitomise an opportunity missed when the winds of change were blowing in WANA. The self-immolation of a young man in December 2010 sparked demonstrations and riots that forced then-President Ben Ali from power. This unleashed a series of popular uprisings and new hope in people across the region. Analysts, policy-makers, scholars, civil society, commercial enterprises, and the wider global public were quick to recommend democratisation, liberalised markets and fundamental freedoms, and then waited with bated breath. But an important point was missed: political liberties in the form of elections do not feed empty stomachs, create opportunity or erase sectarian divides. The uprisings exposed a lack of social cohesion and deep identity fragmentation in the region. They also demonstrated how lack of a capacity to deal with change spawns calamity and suppression, rather than growth and sustainable development.

This raises the important distinction between sensitivity and vulnerability. Sensitivity is the degree to which a system is affected by internal or external stress. For instance, the 2008 financial crisis that burst the US housing bubble, instantly affected the global economy. This was due to increased economic sensitivity caused by globalisation. Vulnerability, on the other hand, is the degree to which a system is unable to withstand internal or external stress. Sensitivity is not necessarily bad, but when combined with a vulnerable state system, the consequences are particularly unforgiving.

WANA's sensitivity and vulnerability has been gradually intensified by a history of fragmentation, colonisation, and divide and conquer politics.³ Yet it is not constructive to blame a century of weak governance and policy-making on colonial legacies. Leaders must champion regional outcomes by employing inclusive policies based on human dignity to further the construction of a common Arab identity. For the past 60 years, the region has been caught up in conflict. In this decade alone, there have been at least six major conflicts, many of which persist today.⁴ Libya has been in turmoil since 2011, and is on the verge of complete state failure.⁵ The Syrian conflict has been transformed from intra-state to internationalised, and is emerging as this century's worst international failure.⁶ Yemen is once again the battleground of a proxy war,

² M Muasher, *The Second Arab Awakening and the Battle for Pluralism* (2014), Yale University Press.

³ D Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, (2009), New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

⁴ UCDP, 'Uppsala Conflict Database Program' <<http://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/>> at 20 November 2015.

⁵ Apart from having two competing governments, one is seated in Tubruq and was elected in June 2014 and the other in Tripoli and was formed by former GNC members, Libya faces several challenges. A vast proliferation of small arms, smuggling of narcotics, and human trafficking are some of the security threats. Moreover, social cohesion has been replaced by tribal and clan structures, due to almost non-existing state institutions and the widespread corruption. In addition, the national army, which has sided with the Tubruq government, relies on support of rebel groups and lacks capacities to claim monopoly on violence. See K Mezran, 'Libya in Transition: From *Jamahiriyya* to *Jumhuriyya*?' in F Gerger (ed), *The New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in the Arab World* (2014) 309; UCDP, 'Uppsala Conflict Database Program' <<http://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/>> at 20 November 2015.

⁶ Since 2011, 250,000 people have been killed, half of all Syrians have been displaced – an estimated 2 million only in 2015 – 3/4 Syrians live in poverty, and the Syrian economy has contracted by approximately 40 percent. The refugee crisis is unprecedented. This situation facilitates the growth of terrorism, and with an estimated 1200 rebel groups, negotiations cannot possibly include everyone. An increased foreign involvement by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Turkey and Western-led coalitions, has further exacerbated the situation and prospects for peace. See UNOCHA, <<http://www.unocha.org/syria>> at December 2016; A Lund, 'The Non-State Militant Landscape in Syria', (2013), CTC

but this time, Egypt has sided with Saudi Arabia against Iran.⁷ Egypt is waging its own ‘war on terror’ in the Sinai, where the insurgency has led to almost every-day armed confrontations.⁸ Iraq has lost effective control over its northern territories, the security situation is poor with a looming threat from Daesh, and the weak façade democracy risks failure.⁹ Then there is the Israel-Palestine conflict, a solution to which seems even further away than it did in 1948.¹⁰ While the global trend of fewer conflicts is reason for optimism,¹¹ it is misrepresentative of WANA – the statistical outlier where conflicts abound.

In the midst of this unrest, violent extremism and terrorism have emerged as new threats to lives, social cohesion and identity. The security policies that emerged following the events of 11 September 2001 show a deep failure to understand causal logic¹² and have contributed more to the growth of terrorism than its demise. Certainly, if bombs were a way to peace, WANA would be the most peaceful region on earth.¹³ Solutions must focus on equal opportunity, participatory governance, social injustice¹⁴ and, in the words of Ian Buruma, “giving young men with a death wish a reason to live.”¹⁵

But armed conflict and violent extremism are not the only, nor the most virulent, challenges facing WANA. Groundwater contamination, desertification, droughts, floods and fresh water scarcity are among the imminent implications of climate change. The 2007-2010 drought is an often-overlooked factor in the Syrian civil war. The ensuing crop failure led to mass migration of

Sentinel, vol. 6(8), 23; UCDP, ‘Uppsala Conflict Database Program’ <<http://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/>> at 20 November 2015.

⁷ Yemen is a war-torn country, where Egypt was engaged in a proxy war in the 1960s against Saudi Arabia. Since 2011, the conflict in Yemen has claimed close to 10,000 deaths, mainly civilians. Yemen has effectively become a battleground for Sunni-Shia sectarian divide. The ensuing and persistent poverty manifest in the fact that 22 million out of Yemen’s 26 million people are food insecure. Yemen has moreover been a staging ground for al-Qaeda operations. See UCDP, ‘Uppsala Conflict Database Program’ <<http://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/>> at 20 November 2015.

⁸ The situation is a consequence of years of repression and exclusion. O Ashour, ‘Sinai’s Stubborn Insurgency: Why Egypt Can’t Win’, (2015-11-08) *Foreign Policy*, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/egypt/2015-11-08/sinai-stubborn-insurgency?cid=soc-tw-rdr>> at 16 December 2015.

⁹ Iraq is also a war-torn country, starting in the 1980s with a protracted armed conflict with Iran, the 1990-1 invasion of Kuwait and Gulf War, and the US/UK invasion in 2003. Saddam Hussein’s policies of exclusion and violent human rights abuses as spawned a situation of animosity, terrorism and poverty. Tribal structures seem to be the only institution left intact after dissolving the Iraqi national army effectively gave rise to Daesh. See UCDP, ‘Uppsala Conflict Database Program’ <<http://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/>> at 20 November 2015.

¹⁰ The humanitarian situation, recent al-Aqsa break-ins by extreme Israeli settlers, violent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security personnel, the extrajudicial killings of suspected Palestinian assailants, punitive house demolitions, an aggressive settlement expansion, are part of the Israeli oppression of Palestinian life. But there are also intra-Palestinian issues, such as the Hamas-Fatah split, the intra-Fatah conflict, the succession of Abbas, Palestinian corruption, a parliament that has not convened since 2006, and a foreign aid dependent Palestinian Authority. UNOCHA <<https://www.ochaopt.org/>> at 16 December 2015. See UCDP, ‘Uppsala Conflict Database Program’ <<http://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/>> at 20 November 2015.

¹¹ Above, n 4.

¹² Aerial bombings of Daesh have been going on for over a year. Still, the terrorist organization has continued to successfully attack civilians. Following the attack in Paris on 13 November 2015, French President Hollande and British PM Cameron vowed to intensify the aerial campaign, and the UNSC adopted resolution 2249 in support of such actions. If aerial campaigns failed to solve this problem for over a decade, it is flawed logic to think renewed aerial campaigns will solve it now. See Al-Jazeera, ‘Hollande: France to step up fight against ISIL’, (2015-11-23) <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/hollande-blair-france-step-fight-isil-paris-attacks-151123034745436.html>> at 23 November 2015; UNSC, ‘Security Council Unequivocally Condemns ISIL Terrorist Attacks, Unanimously Adopting Text that Determines Extremist Group Poses Unprecedented Threat’, (2015-11-20) <<http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12132.doc.htm>> at 23 November 2015.

¹³ S Swan, ‘If bombing the Middle East was the way to peace, it would be the most peaceful place on Earth’, (2015-12-03) <<http://www.democraticaudit.com/?p=17956>> at 4 December 2015.

¹⁴ T Bjørge (ed), *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, reality and ways forward*, (2005) Oxon: Routledge; M Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*, (2003) Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

¹⁵ I Buruma, ‘Why Abdelhamid Abaaoud Wanted to Die’, (2015-11-18) *Foreign Policy*. <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/18/the-draw-of-the-death-cult/>> at 19 November 2015.

some 250,000 farmers to urban centres, fuelling social tensions across rural-urban fault lines and pushing up to 3 million Syrians into extreme poverty.¹⁶ The potential does not end here; in Iran, natural bodies of fresh water are drying up, and as a result, 45 million people are at risk of forced migration.¹⁷ By contrast, rising sea levels threaten up to 40 million people in the Nile delta. The ensuing saltwater encroachment will destroy livelihoods, by rendering the soil uncultivable.¹⁸ Groundwater over-exploitation has also led to saltwater encroachment in Israel and Gaza. Experts say that aquifer salination will be irreversible by 2020; as Gaza relies entirely on groundwater for its fresh water supply, this part of the region will become unliveable.¹⁹ Similar issues threaten Iraq and Yemen, where poor agricultural practices continue to drive water and food insecurity.

The interconnection between civil strife and environmental stress finds no better locus than the region's refugee crisis. Jordan, the world's third most water-scarce country, is sheltering more than a million refugees; the demand for fresh water and food has increased beyond what can possibly be supplied. In Iraq, home to both a growing displaced population and several hundred thousand Syrian refugees, environmental pressures regularly spill over into unrest. This summer, a major heat wave coupled with electricity shortages (attributed to corruption), drove people into the streets, forcing Prime Minister al-Abadi to sack all three Vice Presidents.²⁰

The makeup of the region's economies constitutes yet another challenge. WANA is highly sensitive to global market shocks. While this is not unique, the lack of institutional capacity and social cohesion to deal with economic stresses manifest in vulnerability. Deep inequality aggravates the situation; in 2013, Qatar's GDP per capita stood at USD 93,714 compared to Yemen's meagre USD 1,473.²¹ Economists argue that the way forward is elaborated regional economic integration; intra-regional investments to foster economic growth and development by bridging the gap between domestic savings and need for investments. Such a redistribution of wealth could significantly reduce poverty, and provide a gateway to economic growth for both rich and poor countries, decreasing their vulnerability to economic stress. Another vulnerability relates to employment and entrepreneurial opportunity. Despite high secondary and tertiary education rates in many Arab states, youth unemployment sits at 22 percent for men, and as high as 40 percent for women.²² A review of where Arab countries sit on the Ease of

¹⁶ C.P Kelley et al, 'Climate change in the Fertile Crescent and implications of the recent Syrian drought', (2015) 112(11) *PNAS*, pp. 3241; IRIN News, 'SYRIA: Drought pushing millions into poverty', (2010-09-09), <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/90442/syria-drought-pushing-millions-into-poverty>> at 31 October 2015

¹⁷ A Karami, 'Iran Becoming Uninhabitable, Says Former Agricultural Minister', (2013-07-09) *Al-Monitor*, <<http://iranpulse.al-monitor.com/index.php/2013/07/2353/iran-becoming-uninhabitable-says-former-agriculture-minister/>> at 14 November 2015

¹⁸ Estimates vary between some 5 million up to over 40 million people. See IPCC *The Regional Impacts of Climate Change: An Assessment of Vulnerabilities* (1997); C McGrath, 'Nile Delta disappearing beneath the sea', *Al-Jazeera*, <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/01/nile-delta-disappearing-beneath-sea-201412913194844294.html>> at 16 November 2015.

¹⁹ See a UNSCO special report from 2012, cited in IRIN News, 'OPT: Gaza's water could be undrinkable by 2016', (2012-08-30) <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/96209/opt-gaza-s-water-could-be-undrinkable-by-2016>> at 16 December 2015.

²⁰ This was accompanied by major reshuffles in the cabinet. See I Al-Marashi, 'Endless battle: Fighting systemic corruption in Iraq', (2015-08-11) *Al-Jazeera*, <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/08/endless-battle-fighting-systemic-corruption-iraq-150811084000991.html>> at 8 November 2015

²¹ The World Bank, <<http://www.worldbank.org/>> at 16 December 2015.

²² L Mottaghi, "The Problem of Unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa Explained in One Chart" (2014-8-24), The World Bank, <<http://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/problem-unemployment-middle-east-and-north-africa-explained-three-charts>> at 20 December 2015.

Doing Business Index illustrates how entrepreneurialism is held back by difficulty in obtaining credit, enforcing contracts, and accessing training and skills development.²³

The root source of this economic vulnerability is the lack of diversification that stems from rentierism. The majority of the states in the region are dependent on either oil rents or foreign aid rents. The danger of relying on this Ricardian model of comparative advantages is clear; if the sector where the country enjoys a comparative advantage fails, it has little to fall back on. A recent report from the IMF suggests that Saudi Arabia could be bankrupt by 2020 if low prices on crude oil persist.²⁴ Diversification is the only tool of resilience for these and other oil-producing states in the Gulf.

The threat of a third world war has been frequently discussed in media, policy, and security circles of late. In one sense, World War III is already raging in WANA. But it is not a war between nation-states, nor against terror. It is a war against humanity; the battleground is ideological, and the weapons are values. Only by focusing on human dignity and enabling people to live their lives with self-respect, will stable countries and peaceful regions evolve. If peace is our ideology, then equality, dignity, dialogue and justice must be our weapons. This war against humanity implies more than a threat of armed violence. We have also made an enemy out of the environment. The threat of WMDs pales compared to water scarcity or the implications of climate change. These shared issues transcend the boundaries of nation-states and must be approached through a regional framework. Planet earth can be a formidable enemy or a patron of humanity; the choice is ours.

²³ Doing Business, 'Doing Business 2016: Measuring Regulatory Quality and Efficiency', (2015-10-27) *World Bank Group*, <<http://www.doingbusiness.org/reports/global-reports/doing-business-2016>> at 16 December 2015.

²⁴ IMF, 'Regional Economic Outlook: Middle East and Central Asia', (2015) <<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/reo/2015/mcd/eng/mreo1015.htm>> at 16 December 2015.

2. Resilience: How to Embrace Change as an Inevitable Positive

Examining and understanding threats through the perspective of resilience exposes the opportunities presented by crises and different types of stress. Adaptation and change are intricate phenomena, and nature has proven itself more adept than humans. The Arabian camel, or dromedary, has evolved to withstand the desert climate. Its legs elevate the body, distancing it from the sand's heat; long, bushy eyelashes and a third transparent eyelid protect its eyes from sand, and specially designed nostrils can close, shielding its respiratory system and preventing dehydration. With adequate foliage, camels can live for up to 10 months without water.²⁵ The camel has adapted to the environment in which it lives. It has built capacities and capabilities; it is resilient.

2.1 Conceptualising Resilience

According to the Stockholm Resilience Centre, resilience is the capacity of a system to adapt to change and grow stronger from crises and different types of stress.²⁶ This suggests that crises are a prerequisite for development, and that resilience can only grow over time. Evolution is nature's approach to resilience; and while it is possible for societies to build resilience faster, to do so we must work with the socio-ecological system. Instructively, the camel has adapted to its environment in ways that do not harm the ecological balance. It is axiomatic that resilience of one part of the system should not come at the expense of another; policy-makers have to employ a holistic approach, both spatially and disciplinarily. This is why a regional strategy as opposed to national interests must be articulated; regional capacity is the only way to overcome the crises affecting individual nation-states, whether this is realised or not.

Nassim Taleb's concept of antifragility provides a useful lens to think about building resilience in the WANA region. For Taleb, the opposite of fragile is not, contrary to the first instinct, stable; it is antifragile. A glass, for example, may be stable if left untouched; but will break when exposed to shocks like sudden heat or being dropped from a height. A society is antifragile if, when it is exposed to shocks, stress or a crisis, it becomes stronger, rather than breaking.²⁷ Resilience, is thus about learning to become antifragile.

The antifragility concept implies that attempts to predict or prevent crises are futile and unhelpful. These unexpected crises, shocks, change and challenges are 'black swan'²⁸ events; they have high impact and are unpredictable. Building resilience must start by identifying which black swans can profoundly damage a system, and which domains are vulnerable to them.²⁹ For example, countries must understand their thresholds of climate change or poverty, and how

²⁵ *Britannica Academic*, s. v. "camel" (2015) <<http://academic.eb.com/>> at 10 November 2015.

²⁶ F Moberg and S H Simonsen, 'What is resilience? An Introduction to social-ecological research', *Stockholm Resilience Centre*, <<http://www.stockholmresilience.org/>> at 16 December 2015.

²⁷ N Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*, (2012) New York: Random House.

²⁸ The metaphor is derived from the discovery of black swans in Australia in 1697, before which Europeans believed that only white swans existed, and thus came as a surprise. The point is that one cannot rule out the possibility of a black swan simply on the basis that none has yet been sighted. It alludes to the logical fallacy of induction, and to retrospective logical conclusions in general, about events that are impossible to predict but *post hoc* seem perfectly rational-logical, given that the data to predict them existed *propter hoc*.

²⁹ N Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, (2007) New York: Random House and Penguin.

breaching such thresholds will impact WANA as a whole. It is not a question of determining when shocks will occur or how to prevent them; the goal is to build a system that can take them in its stride.

Stable systems, somewhat paradoxically, are more vulnerable to crises than antifragile ones. This is because the former tries to predict and prevent a crisis while the latter expects them and plans accordingly. The camel does not try to predict the next heat wave; it just deals with it in the way it has evolved to do. As it repeats this process, it becomes increasingly resilient. Likewise, eco-social systems need crises to develop, adapt and grow; they feed off disorder to develop, and by doing so they build resilience.³⁰ Through this lens, the Arab Awakenings might be understood as an example of a black swan event. They were unpredicted and had profound consequences on the region. This particular black swan also exposed both the fragility of WANA states and the robustness of its people.

A key concept in resilience is carrying capacity. While the concept has been extended to the social domain, it is principally an ecological idea. Put simply, the carrying capacity of the planet is the ratio of human beings to natural resource-use; how many lives can the planet sustain? Following Malthusian logic, if the global population was to enjoy the ecological standards of North Americans, three earths would be required to satisfy aggregate material demand using prevailing technology.³¹ Resilience is about augmenting carrying capacity in ways that do not deplete the planet's resources and do not require more than 1.0 planet earths. Innovation will be key, but only when distributive policies are guided by an ethic of human dignity and equality.

Another central principle in applied resilience thinking is diversity and redundancy. Planting multiple crops serves as an insurance against a single crop's failure. It is not the most efficient approach for economic growth, but it does build resilience. Likewise, maintaining multiple options is the most effective means of responding to crises and dealing with uncertainty. Another principle is high connectivity that, while generating high sensitivity, enables a system to recover faster. In crises, an inability to cooperate across institutions, governmental bodies, levels of society and national boundaries is highly associated with failure. This is akin to the principle of polycentric governance, where the failure of one governing body cannot mean a complete system breakdown.³²

The people of WANA can share the camel's resilience. They are extremely durable, and bear enormous unexploited potential. If they do not have to put up with beatings, humiliation and starvation, and are able to develop, WANA and its people can become resilient. They will augment their carrying capacity and thereby their ability to deal with climate change, water scarcity, conflict and economic stress through innovation.

2.2 Three Pillars of Resilience

A tentative operationalisation of resilience consists of three pillars that must be built in WANA: the economy, society, and the environment. These pillars form a system, which henceforth will be referred to as the human environment. Because all three pillars are interdependent, a holistic

³⁰ N Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*, (2012) New York: Random House.

³¹ D Meadows, J Randers and D Meadows, *The Limits to Growth; The 30 Year Update* (2004) White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing, 122.

³² S H Simonsen et al, 'Applying resilience thinking: Seven principles for building resilience in social-ecological systems', *Stockholm Resilience Centre*, <<http://www.stockholmresilience.org/>> at 16 December 2015.

approach is required. Moreover, building resilience must logically transcend national boundaries and be understood as a systematic approach. Focus on single issues is not constructive when challenges are mutually constitutive; moreover, resilience always involves building the capacity of a system as a whole.

To understand and build the carrying capacity of the human environment, one must first understand and accept the premise of cohabitation. The involuntariness of our existence among others with whom we did not, and perhaps would not, choose to cohabit, should not detract from our responsibilities to their wellbeing and dignity.³³ This premise applies to all three pillars of resilience. Denial of responsibility towards these others will build stability, but at the expense of their anti-fragility, ultimately causing fragility. Building resilience thus requires an ethical code of conduct based on the premise of cohabitation.

2.2.1 Economic resilience

WANA is the region with the lowest level of intra-regional trade in the world. Economic resilience entails the creation of incentive structures to increase intra-regional trade. This could be part of a new regional architecture, in which economic integration is looked upon as something inherently positive. A perception change is needed, where the well-being of a neighbour is crucial for one's own.

This does not mean that economic diversification is not necessary. With persistently low oil prices, oil rents will not generate the vast amount of capital that the oil producing Gulf countries are used to. Moreover, as campaigns to divest from fossil fuels have been remarkably successful, and so far USD2.6 trillion has been divested,³⁴ there is a strong incentive to diversify. Subsequently, the record surpluses that were observed before the fall in oil price constitute an opportunity. If invested in the region's poor areas, not only would that further economic integration and diversify oil economies, it would also help stitch a social fabric that holds the region together.

WANA's high levels of sovereign debt are equally problematic and increasingly pose a threat to human security. One alternative is to better engage Islamic banking systems, which discourage high debt levels, in addition to promoting value-added economic activity.

While a culture of inclusive institutions to incentivise and entitle people to govern their lives, economic resilience is also needed.³⁵ Indeed, with a large population of unemployed youth, there is enormous unexploited potential for growth. Equally, political liberties remain a peripheral issue as long as basic human needs are not met. The economic vulnerabilities in WANA therefore contribute to its abundance of unrest and conflict. This again demonstrates the interconnected nature of resilience, and that building capacities as one pillar affects but also necessitates the other pillars.

³³ J Butler, 'Precarious Life, Vulnerability and the Ethics of Cohabitation' (2012), *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 26 (2), p. 137.

³⁴ D Carrington and E Howard, 'Institutions worth \$2.6 trillion have now pulled investments out of fossil fuels', (2015-09-22), *The Guardian*, <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/22/leonardo-dicaprio-joins-26tn-fossil-fuel-divestment-movement>> at 15 November 2015; Fossil Free, <<http://gofossilfree.org/>> at 15 November 2015.

³⁵ R Inglehart and C Welzel, 'The Role of Ordinary People in Democratization', (2008) 19(1), *Journal of Democracy*, 126, 129

2.2.2 Social resilience

The Syrian conflict revealed an identity fragmentation that had been present in WANA for centuries. The idea of a region with a coherent identity was as uninformed and far from the truth as the myth of a European identity. The construction of identity fluctuates over time, but always occurs in relation to an 'other'.³⁶ But different identities are not the issue, particularly if we accept the principle of cohabitation. The problem is that identity fragmentation has been further exacerbated by an escalating animosity, driven by an array of inequalities across ethnic, national, sectarian and religious lines, as well as social status and class. Relative deprivation leads to a perceived divergence of interest, which is at the core of all social conflict.³⁷ This has essentially led to a lack of social cohesion that can only be solved by accepting cohabitation and advancing a human identity.

In this context, it is imperative for both social and economic resilience that the hardships presented by the refugee crisis are perceived and acted on as opportunities. Jordan, for instance, has struggled to develop an industrial sector. Large-scale investments here will create job opportunities for both Jordanians and refugees, and move labour from a water-inefficient and overaged agricultural sector to something that builds resilience. Such a shift will also increase tax revenues and produce sustainable economic growth. This type of thinking in crisis is the epitome of resilience building; a perceptive change that allow us to think of change as both inevitable and inherently positive.

This is moreover why WANA cannot afford to think of refugees as a burden. UNHCR estimated that as of 2003, refugees remain displaced in a host country for an average of 17 years.³⁸ If they are going to cohabit the host country, we must think of them not as hordes but as humans. It is imperative to further a regional citizenry, where a person can be a Syrian, an Arab, an Ismaili, a father, a West Asian, and above all an equal, at the same time without friction. There cannot be a denial of the plethora of identities in WANA, nor can a single identity be the equivalent of exclusion. Social resilience is about leaving historic, ethnic, economic, religious, sectarian, and national differences aside in favour of standing together as humans.

However, we must first address the social injustices and inequalities that exist in WANA. There is no acceptable explanation as to why a six-year-old child in Yemen will not have the same opportunities as a six-year-old child in Qatar. Social resilience is built on equality in education, opportunity, healthcare and citizenship. Indeed, a large contingent of underprivileged and overexploited guest workers in the Gulf countries undermines social cohesion by fuelling an antagonising idea of otherness. Moreover, access to justice is key to social resilience. The Sustainable Development Goal on justice addresses this issue in a theoretical framework, but it must be implemented without prejudice in the entire region. Women's legal empowerment is likewise crucial; WANA cannot afford to alienate half of its population from both social and professional life.

³⁶ A Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (1991) Cambridge: Polity Press; D Smith, 'The Problem of Essentialism' in D Smith and I Skjelsbaek (eds), *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, (2001) Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc., p. 32

³⁷ D G Pruitt and S H Kim, *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*, (2004) New York: McGraw-Hill.

³⁸ This is an increase from 1993, when the estimate was 9 years. There is no known estimate as of today, which means that an average of 17 years might be an understatement. See UNHCR, 'Protracted Refugee Situations', Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Standing Committee, 30th Meeting, UN Doc. EC/54/SC/CRP.14, (2014-06-10), p. 2.

2.2.3 Environmental resilience

To build resilience in the human environment, the social and the economic must forge with the environmental. With the latest report from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), science has now had its say: human activity accounts almost exclusively for the climate change recorded since 1950.³⁹ Anthropogenic impact is akin to a black swan event for the environment, and as such, we as human beings must desist from being the main ecological stressor. The consequences of doing nothing are catastrophic; in the 'business as usual' scenario, the region will see temperatures of between 55-60 degrees every summer.⁴⁰ In 2015, over a hundred people died as a consequence of Egypt's 47degree heat wave,⁴¹ while in Iraq, heat drove street protests and ultimately a reshuffle in the government.

The region must challenge the tragedy of the commons and build environmental resilience through home-grown perspectives on sustainability and natural resource management. In a situation where the average person in the West Bank gets 100 m³ of water per year, against the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation of 1000 m³ per year, but the majority of the existing water resources are used in largely inefficient agriculture, it should be unsurprising that nature strikes back. In Jordan, about 60 percent of water resources are used by agriculture; even worse, most of it feeds crops that are water-intense. Clearly, policy can have a significant impact on turning the tables to build environmental resilience.

Energy is another issue, and not only for electricity cuts and rentier subsidies. Fossil fuels are the principal energy source in WANA, and the most significant factor in anthropogenic climate change. We must shift our energy supply. Sweden's vision to become the first fossil free country in the world⁴² places even more pressure on oil-reliant economies to diversify, and creates incentives for WANA states to shift their energy consumption to renewable sources. In this regard, the desert is a resource that WANA has not exploited to full potential. Our solar energy potential is enormous; the amount of energy contained in one hour of sunshine on earth is enough to meet the global energy demand for one year.⁴³

These are problems that cannot be bribed away or bought, nor can they be fought with guns or WMDs. Environmental resilience is the only response, and for that we need policies, regulations, investments and political will to work across national boundaries. It is no longer useful to protect the water resources that do exist in WANA while a few exploit them for their own benefit. There needs to be a regional regime that promotes cooperation on water-related issues aimed at achieving sustainable water usage.

Almost five years ago, after a long Arab winter, we witnessed the first Arab spring. But anthropogenic climate change seems to have made Mother Nature determined to show us her summer. A nuclear deal with Iran, chemical weapons in Syria, or a Peninsula Shield Force are not indicative of the main threats, nor of the principal solutions. An Arab summer with

³⁹ IPCC, 'Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report', (2014) *Contribution of WG I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, <<http://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/>> at 16 December 2015.

⁴⁰ J.S Pal and E.A.B. Eltahir, 'Future temperature in southwest Asia projected to exceed a threshold for human adaptability', (2015) 10, *Nature Climate Change*, <doi:10.1038/nclimate2833> at 31 October 2015.

⁴¹ E Meerman, 'Middle East to become Unlivable as Temperatures Soar, Warns Study', (2015-10-29), *Egyptian Streets*, <<http://egyptianstreets.com/2015/10/29/middle-east-to-become-unlivable-as-temperatures-soar-warns-study/>> at 31 October 2015.

⁴² L Chow, 'Sweden to Become One of World's First Fossil Fuel-Free Nations', (2015-09-25), *EcoWatch*, <<http://ecowatch.com/2015/09/25/%E2%80%8Bsweden-fossil-fuel-free/>> at 15 November 2015.

⁴³ Climate Reality Project, <<https://www.climateactproject.org/>> at 16 December 2015.

uninhabitably high temperatures, draught, aquifer salination and floods will destroy the region before a nuclear winter will.

3. Towards a Regional Resilience Strategy

Within the framework of these pillars, the scope of work is vast and cannot be undertaken by any WANA nation alone; resilience is a regional endeavour and must be understood as part of a broader cooperation. Such a project will not come without challenges and political bottlenecks. The word supranational evokes fears of encroachment on national sovereignty and external interference among many. Bearing this in mind, eight pragmatic actions are proposed, each aimed at furthering regional cooperation and building resilience in a meaningful way. They are not quick fixes. But if WANA states can agree on one thing, it is that the region cannot wait.

- **A Conference for Regional Security and Cooperation in WANA**

The situation in WANA signifies a deep failure of modern multilateralism, which today consists of a litany of territorial policy lines that never converge on the critical issues. The result is confusion and contestation at a time when understanding one another is key. The inability to mobilise regional initiatives for cooperation on important issues is a destabilising force in WANA. Among these, the most contentious is if and how to cooperate on security. A forum to discuss these issues, leading to the creation of a regional body dedicated to security and cooperation, is imperative. A Conference for Security and Cooperation (CoSCo) in WANA could be a first step for perceived adversaries like Iran and Saudi Arabia to grow mutually beneficial relations – much like how the Communist Bloc and the West did in the 1970s.⁴⁴

But a CoSCo in WANA would be more than this. Emulating the Helsinki process (which led to the creation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE), it would seek to create an overarching regional framework for social cohesion and resilience; a building block for a new regional architecture and a platform from which regional policies could be launched. While substantial obstacles exist, this is not unrealistic. If France and Germany could be brought together in 1945 and transform their relations from archrivals to the closest of allies, why can Iran and Saudi Arabia not do the same? Why could relations with Israel not be transformed too? What speaks for this is the fact that leaders in the region have historically demonstrated the highest levels of pragmatism. When faced with new challenges and threats, ideological differences shift quickly.

In time, a CoSCo might constitute a framework for a regional treaty organization. This is not a new idea, but previous attempts have either failed, included too few members of the region, or both.⁴⁵ We must learn from such mistakes. A West Asia-North Africa Treaty Organization

⁴⁴ Even if the Helsinki Accords never attained treaty status and thus was never legally binding by international law, they altered the climate for dialogue and eased the tensions of the Cold War.

⁴⁵ The Middle East Treaty Organization (METO), established in the Baghdad Pact in 1955, later known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), was dissolved in 1979 and widely considered the least successful alliance of the Cold War. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is moving towards a joint military cooperation and has an established joint force that was used to quell the 2011 uprising in Bahrain. In 2013, the GCC announced the creation of a joint military command. In 2015, in the context of joint Egyptian and Saudi Arabian intervention in Yemen, there were Arab League discussions about an Arab joint force, but negotiations have been indefinitely suspended due to a request by Saudi Arabia. See Atlantic Council, 'Gulf Nations Announce Joint Military Command', (2013-12-12), <<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/gulf-nations-announce-joint-military-command>> at 3 December 2015; Al-Arabiya, 'Arab military chiefs draft joint force protocol', (2015-05-26), <<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/05/26/New-joint-Arab-military-force-plans-in-motion.html>> at 3 December 2015; Middle East Eye, 'Meeting on Arab joint force postponed indefinitely', (2015-08-

(WANATO) would not only serve military security purposes. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enabled both military and security cooperation and a subsequent process of economic and political cooperation. Together, this produced some 50-years of peace and stability in Europe.⁴⁶ A regional treaty organisation in WANA could further both human security — protecting its members from themselves as well as from unwarranted external intervention — as well as economic progress and political integration.

WANA is a living legacy that peace and security cannot be achieved through military means alone. At present, an estimated 1,200 armed opposition groups operate in Syria.⁴⁷ Saudi Arabia, Iran, the UK, the USA, Turkey and Russia are all key actors in this increasingly internationalised conflict. Following the Paris attacks of November 2015, France and a number of European countries have joined the campaign with full force.⁴⁸ As the death toll and human suffering continues to rise, it is increasingly clear that negotiation, not bombs, is the solution. The outcome of a CoSCo in WANA is a regional body that has the legitimacy, capacity and political will to facilitate such dialogue. Such a conference would build on the rationale of a common humanity. The alternative is that the last century of fighting and peace conferences has taught us nothing. Since 2011 alone, conflict and unrest has cost the region an estimated USD170 billion in foregone economic potential.⁴⁹ We cannot afford to remain adversaries; we must cooperate and wage peace. WANA's political leaders must be urged to put political differences aside and realise that security cooperation is an overruling national interest.

- **Implement the Arab Social Charter**

WANA's lack of social cohesion produces and reproduces identity fragmentation and animosity. It fuels sectarian, religious, ethnic and national divisions, as well as rural-urban, left-right, and rich-poor fault lines. This is why the Arab Thought Forum drafted an Arab Social Charter (ASC) in 2014. The Charter calls for the creation of the communities of freedom, equality, participation, justice, and rule of law. These concepts now need to be translated into action and policy implementations.

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This was certainly an achievement and arguably was the most inclusive process in the history of the UN. These goals do not come with a roadmap; they require that regions, countries and local communities work together to develop action plans. The ASC can serve as a regional roadmap to guide the implementation of the post-2015 agenda. It sets forth the notion of an informed and pluralistic regional citizenship, which is the first step towards inclusive politics

26), <<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/meeting-arab-joint-force-postponed-indefinitely-1054743930>> at 3 December 2015.

⁴⁶ This is true only to the extent that no member country has been involved in an inter-state armed conflict with another member country. Obviously, NATO played an active role in Afghanistan and Libya, and its members have been intervening militarily in a number of countries all over the world – the USA is the most notable example, but France and the UK also count. The notable exception in Europe is the Balkan Wars.

⁴⁷ A Lund, 'The Non-State Militant Landscape in Syria', (2013), *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 6(8), 23.

⁴⁸ Al-Jazeera, 'Hollande: France to step up fight against ISIL', (2015-11-23) <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/hollande-blair-france-step-fight-isil-paris-attacks-151123034745436.html>> at 23 November 2015; UNSC, 'Security Council Unequivocally Condemns ISIL Terrorist Attacks, Unanimously Adopting Text that Determines Extremist Group Poses Unprecedented Threat', (2015-11-20) <<http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12132.doc.htm>> at 23 November 2015.

⁴⁹ J Y Kim, remarks by World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim at the MENA Stakeholders Event, Lima, Peru, 10 October 2015. Transcription: <<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2015/10/10/world-bank-group-president-jim-yong-kim-mena-stakeholders-event>> at 5 December 2015.

and policy-making. This is good governance is needed to patch chronic identity fragmentation into social cohesion based on human dignity and Arab identity.

- **Commit to Legal Empowerment of the Poor and the SDG on Justice**

Building resilience involves empowering people to be part of the solution. The synergies that develop when people have the means and resources to adapt to change are more than crucial for social resilience; they are its fundament. The Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor (LEOP) asserted an unmistakable link between poverty, injustice, and legal exclusion. The states of WANA have a long tradition of codified law,⁵⁰ and following the Arab renaissance, Constitutions have been at the forefront of independence proclamation, anti-colonial sentiments, ideological confessions, and democratic façades for authoritarian governance.⁵¹ These Constitutions contain provisions for human rights, but without institutions that safeguard these rights or the tools for people to claim them, they are just words.

Lack of legal empowerment has kept the poor in poverty; it is what makes the poor fragile and a privileged elite stable. Equal access to justice, on the other hand, forges a common humanity, builds social resilience and creates an antifragile constituency. It is key to ending conflict, combating violent extremism, and supporting economic growth. A commitment to the SGD on justice and good governance must transcend all development goals, and be at the core of WANA state policies.

- **Institute a Regional Bank for Reconstruction and Development**

Myriad different banks and funds operate in WANA: the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) and the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF). These banks operate primarily on a bilateral basis and focus on ‘traditional’ sectors of the economy. They do not engage both the public and private sectors, nor is there a sufficient linkage between the policy scholarship on development and the way these funds operate. A regional investment bank mandated to finance development projects as well as initiatives to promote resilience, social cohesion and conflict avoidance, is missing, and to date there has been little initiative to contemplate one.

The benefits of a regional bank are many. They range from promoting investment driven growth, regional economic integration, small and medium-sized enterprises, and supporting inclusive economic institutions, to facilitating public-private partnerships and spearheading social and economic reforms. A specific task would be the uptake of universal zakat⁵² and channelling this into poverty reducing development projects. The potential of zakat in WANA is

⁵⁰ For instance, the Laws of Hammurabi were codified in modern day Iraq (c. 1750 BC), and older examples include the Code of Ur-Nammu (c. 2050 BC) and the Laws of Eshnunna (c. 1930 BC).

⁵¹ N Brown, *Constitutions in a Nonconstitutional World: Arab Basic Laws and the Prospects for Accountable Government*, (2002), Albany: State University of New York

⁵² Islam requires that Muslims pay 2.5 percent of their earnings above an established level of income in zakat, as a way to religiously ‘purify’ their earnings. Often conflated with alms (which in Islam is called sadaqah), a universal zakat fund could be the beginning of a regional citizenship. In the context of forced migration, if a Syrian refugee, for instance, is expected to remain in Jordan for an average of 17 years (according to the UNHCR), they have to be recognized as more than refugees. At the very least, they should be recognized by standards of a regional citizenship in WANA.

great, and entails several billion USD in funds,⁵³ but it has not been utilised in a constructive fashion. Zakat is often associated with low transparency and high corruption. Moreover, funds have predominately been used to alleviate the acute needs of the poor instead of empowering them to grow out of poverty. Only if it is funnelled through a central institution can long-term poverty reduction be supported, contributing to a more even distribution of income and bolstering social cohesion through a sense of belonging.

A regional bank could also act as a linking agent, channelling the foreign reserves accumulated by oil-exporting Gulf States into development projects in resource-scarce and conflict-affected countries to raise economic activity and create jobs. This would accrue mutually beneficial outcomes on all sides. The resource-poor labour-abundant countries in WANA need to make legal and structural changes to attract foreign investment in order to counter unemployment, increase growth, and develop value-added sectors such as manufacturing. At the same time, resource-rich labour-scarce countries need to diversify their economies and search for new and more sustainable opportunities. The persistent trend of low oil prices provides an incentive for OPEC-countries to do this. But the biggest attraction is not a regional bank's enormous potential; it is the symbolism it would invoke. The solution to WANAs resilience must evolve from the region itself to galvanise the political will necessary for needed policy changes to take hold and sustain. The Bank concept is a practical elaboration that the region has the capacity to resolve its own economic challenges, resources simply need to be better tapped and managed.

- **Implement the Arab Economic Charter**

In 2015, the Arab Thought Forum drafted an Arab Economic Charter (AEC) to complement the ASC. It asserts that to achieve prosperity and growth, WANA states must acknowledge the interdependence of their economies and the need to function as a regional entity. The underlying premise is that economic ties and diversity in all WANA states are prerequisites for the future resilience of the region. Low levels of intra-regional trade should thereby be fundamentally questioned and the intra-regional investment opportunities carefully mapped. This will involve an uncomfortable process of dismantling territorialism and replacing it with a human focused and integrated paradigm. However, the path to economic growth and prosperity has always been uncomfortable, and it begins with an implementation of the AEC.

An important obstacle that the AEC identifies is the structural factors that effectively exclude more than half of the population from the workforce. This is the women and youth of WANA: the region's enormous untapped economic potential. WANA states might consider emulating Scandinavia's 1960-70s experiment of introducing social policies such as free childcare, which enabled and empowered women to join the workforce and contribute to their national economies. It is no coincidence that Scandinavia now ranks among the world's leaders in freedom, equality, development and rule of law, as well as enjoying widely held prosperity. As with the ASC, the AEC can serve as a guide towards sound, constructive and resilient socio-economic policies.

⁵³ J Bremer and N Wahby, 'Zakat and Economic Justice: Emerging International Models and their Relevance for Egypt', (2013) *The American University of Cairo*, <<http://dar.aucegypt.edu/handle/10526/4297>> at 2 December 2015.

- **Draft an Arab Green Charter**

WANA's environmental challenges require urgent and comprehensive policy action. There are already innovations to negotiate these challenges, but they require 'green governance'; policies guided by environmental awareness. Ramallah, for instance, receives more rainfall than London, and yet the average Londoner enjoys 150 litres of water/day while the Palestinian West Banker struggles to receive half of this. This is the outcome of man-made policies, showcasing how environmental good governance can turn water scarcity into water sustainability. An Arab Green Charter (AGC) might be the mechanism for WANA states to develop a set of principles for green governance and environmental rights.

Governance is about making decisions; an AGC would help transform Arab governance into green governance by articulating a rationale for good environmental policy-making. Such a charter would be a guiding beacon in the non-linear world of climate change. It could help build resilient institutions and robust policies that allow for sudden changes. Crucially, it would construct a framework for sustainable policy practises, initiated from within the region. As such, it would use, develop and further local knowledge and help accommodate local interests in a way international policies cannot. If WANA is to become truly resilient, it will have to embark on a joint social- and ecological journey, during which an AGC would be the map.

- **Revive the Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy Cooperation**

WANA states face the conflicting challenges of achieving electricity and energy security, without compromise climate security. Coupled with the finite nature of the Gulf states' fossil fuel reserves, identifying alternative energy sources is crucial for WANA's environmental resilience and economic growth. The orientalist idea of WANA is a land of desert. Indeed, deserts make up the majority of land in the region and desertification is an issue in its own right. However, the desert also provides immense unexploited opportunities. The energy potential for renewable solar power far outweighs that of burning fossil fuels; estimates are that solar power can meet WANA's demands by around 100-fold.⁵⁴ There is thus no need to look for an alternative energy source; it is found in our most abundant endowment: sunshine.

In 2003, the Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy Cooperation (TREC) was a project in the making, inspired by the DESERTEC Concept of 'Clean Power from Deserts'. It did not receive the political attention it deserved. The idea was to tap into Europe and WANA's combined renewable energy sources. Using solar energy from the desert, TREC had the potential to provide enough clean energy for both Europe and WANA, and thus move these regions away from fossil fuel-dependency and towards climate security.⁵⁵ Moreover, solar power plants could deliver the energy needed for desalination at low cost, significantly reducing the consequences of fresh-water scarcity. An increased and cheap energy supply also provides incentives for industrialisation and growth of the manufacturing sector.

Following the attention given to climate issues and the momentum gained by the adoption of the SDGs and COP21, the potential for TREC should be re-evaluated and revived. There may never be a better time to attract the necessary investment for solar panels and a power transfer

⁵⁴ G Knies, U Möller and M Straub (eds), 'Clean Power from Deserts: The DESERTEC Concept for Energy, Water and Climate Security', (2007), *Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy Cooperation*, 56.

⁵⁵ *ibid*, 56.

infrastructure. Certainly, the cost of solar power is lower than power from fossil fuels with current technology and at present production costs. Moreover, as an effective deep decarbonisation pathway, it can unquestionably deliver on those investments. It is projects such as these that a regional bank might empower. With the relative incentives and financial structures in place, the only element lacking is political will. If the region is to take climate change seriously – and as one of the most disproportionately affected regions, it should – then reviving a TREC initiative is a fundamental opportunity for Gulf countries to diversify their economies, a viable alternative to fossil fuels, and an investment in the future.

- **Establish a Regional Council for Water Management Cooperation**

Water scarcity is perhaps the most imminent challenge in WANA today. The region has always featured a sizeable arid landmass, but it seems that the most arid lands lie in the matter between our ears: an absence of will, thought and constructive ideas. This is why a regional council for Water Management Cooperation (WMC) must be part of a new WANA architecture. Such a council would not only work to sustain what little shared water resources remain and facilitate a solution-oriented dialogue between parties; it would also promote regional cooperation and conflict resolution. The Blue Peace Initiative is an example of how water management cooperation can bring non-aligned parties together.

Another purpose of a regional council for WMC would be to secure fair and sustainable access to WANA's transboundary water resources. Virtually all water resources are shared in the region, examples ranging from the Nile and Jordan River basins, to the Euphrates and Tigris. Groundwater reserves are also shared, making it of equal importance that a regional council for WMC includes groundwater preservation. Under the patronage of the USA, the Johnstone Plan was developed as a framework for WMC between Israel and Jordan. Even if the plan did not deliver on all its objectives or lead to a comprehensive water-sharing agreement, it did leave its footprint: water cooperation was a central tenet of the peace plan between Israel and Jordan in the 1990s. It is also indicative that a regional council for WMC is realistic, and might even be desirable, between rivals. In short, cooperating on shared issues can serve a higher purpose; a tool to wage peace in a region otherwise plagued by conflict.

Conclusion

Resilience is complex but imperative for the formation of a new humanitarian order that places human dignity and security before economic growth and political power. This strategy presents a case for a perceptive change among policy-makers to resilience thinking and an imperative to embrace challenge as something inherently positive. Our region has the combination of natural and human resource wealth that, properly deployed, can create modern pluralist societies in which violent extremism and terrorism have no place. Building resilience and antifragility does not mean every possible surprise must be anticipated. Rather, it entails learning how to be surprised in a constructive way. Somewhat paradoxically, human security is much better catered by embracing chaos than by promoting stability.

The region must be structured around a new architecture, starting with a conference on security and cooperation, which would redefine human security as the principal national imperative. A stable Palestine that lives in economic and political proximity to Israel is also necessary, because Israel is part of the region and cannot be disregarded. Similarly, Jerusalem must be shared in some way between the Abrahamic faiths, probably internationalised. If in time, Iran, Iraq, the Levant, the Gulf States and the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt and North Africa were to be included in an expanded treaty organisation based on common security, its control of maritime passages would assume central geopolitical importance in terms of oil security. Meanwhile, the additional potential for equitable socio-economic development, and the stability this engenders, would increase exponentially and be assured over the long term. Above all, we must end the war on humanity by waging peace and befriending the planet. The human environment is a system where the ecological and the social converge. We must increase our understanding of which parts of the system are vulnerable and to what, as well as which institutions and social practices enhance the capacity of the human environment to deal with unexpected events in ways that make the system increasingly resilient.

The eight actions proposed could serve as the beginning of a regional resilience strategy. With a little political will and a lot of effort, they might also constitute the foundation of a new regional architecture, where human security is the national interest, and transboundary cooperation is widely preferred before conflict and ideological differences. The recommendation to hold a conference on security and cooperation in the spirit of the Helsinki accord would be crucial for such a strategy's long-term success. If implemented, the strategy makes the relative gain of waging war less than that of cooperation; the irrationality of conflict will come to the fore.

La Rochefoucauld wrote that wind can both extinguish a lit candle and energise a fire. One might think of crises as wind, and building regional resilience as harnessing its power. When the winds of change attempt to extinguish the fire that is the life in WANA, the people must join together to channel it. The WANA region has the potential to prosper, let us make 2016 be the year that the seeds of change find fertile soil.

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