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Middle
East
Directions

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

THE MIDDLE EAST DIRECTIONS PROGRAMME

EXITING WAR ECONOMY DYNAMICS: WHAT FUTURE FOR STABILISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION IN THE MENA?

Scientific Organisers:

Amr Adly | European University Institute

Luigi Narbone | European University Institute

Refectory

Badia Fiesolana, Via dei Roccettini, 9 - San Domenico di Fiesole

 @medirections

19 - 20 NOVEMBER 2018

■ INTRODUCTION

In addition to the well-known security dimension, years of military strife and state collapse in the Middle East and North Africa have created new economic realities on the ground that are likely to persist in post-conflict phases. They will shape how ongoing conflicts are to end and how “normal life” might resume afterwards. The conference will explore how to work through war economy dynamics in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and neighbouring countries, and it will be structured in four thematic panels:

1. The dynamics of war economy, the realities that have been left on the ground, and the actual rules that govern economic transactions and the access to natural resources and infrastructure;
2. The political economy of reconstruction and how it may create losers and winners, and hence either contribute to peace building or to the creation of new grievances;
3. The impact of hydrocarbon revenues in oil-rich countries like Iraq and Libya, and whether they will ease reconstruction and reconciliation or conversely become an additional bone of contention between rival groups;
4. The role that market-oriented and profit-driven private sector actors might play in any future reconstruction (considering also the unlikelihood of massive inter-governmental inflows).

To conclude the conference, a roundtable of a selected group of international experts from the worlds of academics, practice and mass media will flesh out the main points highlighted during the four panels. The objective of this debate is to encourage connections, comparisons and other perspectives.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

■ DRAFT PROGRAMME

19 NOVEMBER

- 09.00 - 09.15 **Welcome and introduction**
Luigi Narbone | Director, MEDirections
Amr Adly | Research Fellow, MEDirections
- 09.15 - 10.15 **Opening lecture | From war economy to reconstruction: How do socio-economic, political and demographic realities created by years of civil conflict shape the pathways to reconstruction?**
Steven Heydemann | Ketchum Professor of Middle East Studies, Smith College
Discussant: Amr Adly | Research Fellow, MEDirections
- 10.15 - 10.45 Coffee break
Antirefettorio
- 10.45 - 12.45 **Panel One | Pathways from war economy in the MENA**
The debate on reconstruction in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has hitherto been based on the assumption that it can only follow some settlement on the ground. Either by the decisive victory of one of the parties or by successful peace arrangements, the end of violence has been seen as a primary sine-qua-non condition for an inherently post-conflict economic reconstruction. The main problem with such an approach, however, is that none of the MENA conflicts seem to be close to either scenario. Civil conflict is protracted and potentially recurrent. How will current war economies in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya shape the processes of reconstruction and stabilisation?
Mansour Rageh | Chief Economist, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies
Claudia Gazzini | International Crisis Group
Zaid Al-Ali | Affiliation tbc
Chair: Georges Fahmi | Research Fellow, MEDirections
- 12.45 - 13.45 Lunch
Sala Giuseppe Buonsanti
- 13.45 - 15.45 **Panel Two | Who gets what? Losers versus winners**
The realities created on the ground by years of revolutionary strife and civil conflict will affect reconstruction and recovery efforts. On the other hand, reconstruction is a political economic process that has clear direct and indirect distributional repercussions. Communities, constituencies, regions and parties are bound to benefit (or to lose) from these processes in widely different ways. How can economic reconstruction assist in ending ongoing conflicts and contributing to stabilisation, reconciliation and inclusion? What kind of policies and actions at the international, national and local levels can encourage economic interests to converge in the presence of strongly divergent geopolitical interests?

Eric Lob | Assistant Professor, University of Florida
Achim Wennmann | Senior Researcher, Graduate Institute Geneva
Joseph Daher | Professor, University of Lausanne
Chair: Agnès Favier | Research Fellow, MEDirections

15.45 - 16.15
Coffee break
Antirefettorio

16.15 - 18.15
Panel Three | Political Contexts for Reconstruction
While a lack of funds may prove to be a great material constraint on reconstruction and conflict-ending, it is by no means the only one. The absence of a clearly defined political process on the national level can undermine reconstruction efforts even in the seeming presence of economic resources. Oil revenues that were critical in the very unification of the two countries in earlier episodes seem to be an additional factor hindering the process in the current context. How can such a spiral be broken? And is there a role to play for regional and international actors, economic as well as political, in this regard?
Victor Gervais | Senior Researcher, Emirates Diplomatic Academy
Adeel Malik | Islamic Centre Lecturer in the Economies of Muslim Societies, University of Oxford
Anne Hagood | Programme Analyst, United Nations Development Programme
Tarek Osman | Senior Political Counsellor for the Arab World, European Bank for Reconstruction & Development
Chair: Virginie Collombier | Scientific Coordinator, MEDirections

18.15 - 19.00
Drinks reception

19.30
Dinner (by invitation only)
Riflessi Restaurant, Hotel Athenaeum

20 NOVEMBER

09.00 - 09.15
Introduction
Amr Adly | Research Fellow, MEDirections

09.15 - 11.15
Panel Four | What role for the private sector in post-conflict reconstruction?
The Marshall plan was the world's single most successful reconstruction process that happened after the Second World War through massive public inflows of capital from the US. However, for the MENA, this intergovernmental model seems to have run out of steam in recent decades. The bet is now placed on private investment and credit in the hope that it does the job either through

luring in foreign investors or through financial markets extending equity or credit. Is there evidence that this has worked before? Could private investors replace international political commitment to reconstruction and re-stabilisation as in cases like Angola or Sri Lanka? What is the likelihood of such a model working in the MENA?

Ziad Dawood | Economist, Bloomberg

Robert Mogielnicki | Senior Analyst, SIWA Group

Christina Lin | Center for Global Peace and Conflict Studies (CGPACS),
University of California, Irvine

Youssef Bershay | Investment Banker

Chair: Luigi Narbone | Director, MEDirections

11.15 - 11.45

Coffee break
Antirefettorio

11.45 - 13.45

Roundtable

Chair: Luigi Narbone | Director, MEDirections

13.45 - 14.45

Lunch
Sala Rossa

14.45 - 16.45

Roundtable continued

16.45 - 17.15

Coffee break
Antirefettorio

17.15 - 18.00

General discussion and wrap up

Chair: Amr Adly | Research Fellow, MEDirections