

Autumn School

Natural Resources and Geopolitics in the MENA: Disruptions, Transformations and Pathways

 @medirections

23 - 25 October 2019

Sala del Capitolo - Badia Fiesolana, Via dei Roccettini 9 - San Domenico di Fiesole (Fiesole, Florence)

Scientific Organisers:

Luigi Narbone | European University Institute

Fiona Barsoum | European University Institute

Introduction

Natural resources have historically played a prominent role in the economies, political economy and international relations of MENA countries. They are also central to the trade and investment strategies of the region's local and multinational companies. How do geopolitical trends interact with local dynamics to affect how natural resources are exploited and managed? What role will natural resources play in stabilising the region in the future? What challenges do natural resources present to decision-makers, security establishments, the private sector and broader society?

The MEDirections Autumn School will provide stakeholders, policy-makers, practitioners and academics with a detailed overview of geopolitical trends that will affect the value, consumption, allocation and protection of natural resources over the coming years. In addition, participants will analyse in-depth case studies that explore the impact of these dynamics at the local level. The programme will balance theory with practice, culminating in a scenario-building exercise to strengthen strategic thinking and highlight the various ways the MENA region's natural resources sector could develop.

In particular, the programme will:

- Provide a forum for participants to explore the interaction between macro and micro trends, and their impact on natural resources management, taking into account geopolitics, governance, energy transition and connectivity;
- Analyse different future scenarios;
- Discuss new mechanisms for positive engagement with different stakeholders.

The Autumn School will address these strategic issues by building on practitioners' experience, as well as on significant academic analysis and field-based research. Instructors are reputable academics and experts from leading institutions, including current and former practitioners.

Programme

22 October **MEDirections Annual Conference | Keynote Lecture (optional)**

17.00 - 18.30 **Geopolitics and the future of energy and natural resources**
Speaker: **Andris Piebalgs** | Adviser to the President of Latvia and former Commissioner for Energy (Barroso I) and for Development (Barroso II); part-time Professor, Florence School of Regulation, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute

This event will take place in the Theatre

23 October **MEDirections Autumn School**

08.30 - 09.00 **Institutional welcome and training objectives**
Brigid Laffan | Director, Robert Schuman Centre
Luigi Narbone | Director, Middle East Directions Programme
Fiona Barsoum | Research Associate, Middle East Directions Programme

09.00 - 10.00 **Keynote conversation | The geopolitics of natural resources in the MENA region and beyond**

Natural resources are at the heart of environmental, (geo)political, social and economic dynamics shaping the MENA region. How do these factors interact and what does this mean for those seeking to understand the region's future? The keynote lecture will frame the issues to be discussed during the Autumn School, posing key questions and opening up axes of analysis to be pursued in subsequent sessions such as innovative resource governance, scenarios for regional conflict and cooperation and energy transition.

Speakers:

Hani Sabra | Alef Advisory
Luigi Narbone | MEDirections

10.00 - 10.45 **Open discussion**

10.45 - 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 - 11.45 **Experience from the field | The (geo)politics of water resource management: Complex choices and contested processes in the Nile Basin**

Given its scarcity in the MENA region and rising demand across economies and populations, water has tended to be viewed as a potential source of tension and conflict. In recent years the Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia has been viewed as one such potential challenge area. However, there are ways in which emerging challenges can help forge new levels of cooperation and collective action over shared resources. This session looks at the conditions under which such policies could be successful, and asks what instruments could help create greater moves to cooperation, rather than conflict.

Speaker: **Alan Nicol** | International Water Management Institute

11.45 - 12.30 **Open discussion**

12.30 - 13.30 Lunch
Sala Rossa

13.30 - 14.15 **Future vision | Energy connectivity: a method for stabilisation and development?**

The East Med gas discoveries have created new geopolitical and commercial dynamics in the region. How will gas diplomacy play out? Will the new producing countries embrace the material benefits of cooperation or will the political deadlock persist? What role could the EU, Member States and private companies play in shaping the Med Gas framework?

Speaker: **Cyril Widdershoven** | Verocy

14.15 - 15.00 **Open discussion**

15.00 - 15.30 Coffee break

15.30 - 17.30 **Group practice session**

24 October

09.15 - 10.00 **Contextual lecture | MENA in context: external actors and the race for resources**

What role are external actors playing in the energy sector in the MENA region? How does the broader foreign policy of certain actors impact the sector? This session will focus on the perceived shift in the balance of power in the region following US “withdrawal”, and the main pillars of cooperation and interdependency between the MENA region, China, India, Russia and the EU.

Speaker: **Carole Nakhle** | Crystol Energy

10.00 - 10.45 **Open discussion**

10.45 - 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 - 11.45 **Experience from the field | Interacting with local communities: from resistance to cooperation**

Companies operating in the natural resources sector in the MENA region have frequently faced resistance from local populations. Demands for employment or environmental justice often intersect with wider demands of the central government such as for more investment, transparency and local development. What types of actors are capable of mediating such disputes and how? What novel forms of natural resources governance could facilitate production and development?

Speaker: **Charfeddine Yakoubi** | Tunisian Coalition for Transparency in Energy and Mining

11.45 - 12.30 **Open discussion**

12.30 - 13.30 Lunch
Sala Rossa

13.30 - 14.15 **Future vision | The politics of energy transition**

Transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy has been conceived as a positive and necessary transformation to “clean” energy, which offers both economic and environmental benefits. However, the focus on the technical aspects of this transition, as well as its benefits, tends to obscure configurations of state power being (re)created in the implementation of large renewable energy projects. How can donors and private sector actors understand the political impact of renewable energy projects?

Speaker: **Gökçe Günel** | Rice University

14.15 - 15.00 **Open discussion**

15.00 - 15.30 Coffee break

15.30 - 18.00 **Group practice session**

25 October

09.00 - 10.30 **Group practice session**

10.30 - 10.45 Coffee break

10.45 - 12.15 **Group practice presentations and discussion**

12.15 - 13.00 **Conclusions**

Speakers

Fiona Barsoum	MEDirections, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute
Gökçe Günel	Rice University
Brigid Laffan	Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute
Carole Nakhle	Crystal Energy
Luigi Narbone	MEDirections, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute
Alan Nicol	International Water Management Institute
Andris Piebalgs	Latvian Presidency; Florence School of Regulation, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute
Hani Sabra	Alef Advisory
Cyril Widdershoven	Verocy
Charfeddine Yakoubi	Tunisian Coalition for Transparency in Energy and Mining