BRITISH COUNCIL

HAMMAMET CONFERENCE

HAMMAMET CONFERENCE 2012

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE: RESPONDING TO RAPID CHANGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

ST ANTONY'S COLLEGE

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ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We are a Royal Charter charity, established as the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations.

Our 7,000 staff in more than 100 countries work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year through English, arts, education and society programmes.

We earn over 75 per cent of our annual turnover of nearly £700 million from services which customers pay for, education and development contracts we bid for, and from partnerships. A UK government grant provides the remaining 25 per cent. We match every £1 of core public funding with over £3 earned in pursuit of our charitable purpose.

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Hammamet Conference 2012

1. FOREWORD

It was a great privilege to jointly host the inaugural Hammamet Conference in Tunisia and bring together so many leading figures from across the UK and North Africa for three days of discussion and debate.

Mohsen Marzouk

Lord Lothian

The significance of an event like the Hammamet Conference should not be underestimated. Just two years earlier, such an initiative, predicated on open and honest expression of views would not have been possible. It was therefore fitting that Tunisia, a crucible of change in the region, played host to the gathering and helped symbolise the new beginnings we see taking shape in North Africa.

Dialogue must never be taken for granted or considered a soft option. It is in the shadows of its absence that misunderstanding takes root and relationships break down. Talking, sharing and challenging each other is what shines light on previously unseen common ground and allows for constructive friendships to be built.

That is why the success of the conference must lie at the feet of the exceptional participants whose enthusiasm and energy invigorated discussions around topics as critical to our collective futures as youth unemployment, political engagement, the rule of law, security and development, as well as the role of civil society, culture and the media.

The Hammamet participants came from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and the UK. While all these countries face their own unique challenges, a real appetite existed to learn from each other's experience and work together on common issues.

The British Council has a long history of creating greater understanding and building trust between people across the world and this was evident in the connections made throughout the two days. Many of these relationships and networks have continued beyond the event and we are delighted to see projects and initiatives taking shape as a result. These are just some of the tangible results of dialogue and we will report on these, and develop them further, at the next Hammamet Conference.

We would like to thank our generous sponsors, Tunisair and WYGU, and our academic partner, the Middle East Centre at St Antony's College, University of Oxford, with special thanks to Rory McCarthy for writing this report.

The Hammamet Conference provides a vital space for openness and engagement between leaders from the UK and North Africa which paves the way for new friendships and initiatives both now and in the future. We are thrilled with the success of the first conference and we look forward to continuing this important conversation and building on these firm foundations for the next event in 2013.

MOHSEN MARZOUK
CO-CHAIR, HAMMAMET CONFERENCE 2012

SECRETARY-GENERAL, ARAB DEMOCRACY FOUNDATION

LORD LOTHIAN PC QC
CO-CHAIR, HAMMAMET CONFERENCE 2012

CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL STRATEGY FORUM

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The British Council's Hammamet Conference brought together more than 70 leaders and opinion-formers from the UK and North Africa at a time of profound change and new challenges.

The meeting, held in November 2012, marked the launch of an international conference series designed to build greater understanding and trust between senior leaders in our societies. In two days of intense and stimulating discussion, experiences and ideas were exchanged and new policy suggestions were made to help all of the participating countries confront and overcome the challenges they face.

The conference opened with an analysis and discussion of the new **context** brought to the Middle East and North Africa by the remarkable uprisings of 2011. Political change has brought great hope of future prosperity and political freedoms to which leaders must now respond. The polling results, presented by Gallup, on popular perceptions in the participating countries demonstrated to delegates both the depth of economic difficulties in the region and the weight of high expectations. A clear consensus existed in the room about the need to build a new, constructive and more equitable relationship between North Africa and the UK.

The workshop sessions considered some of the important societal challenges each country faces. Considering the development of participation and **civil society**, the conversation explored what role young activists could play in North Africa and what lessons they could learn from the UK experience. The importance of engaging the young men and women most responsible for the 2011 uprisings was highlighted by the group.

In the second workshop, the role of social media and **citizen journalism**, which mobilised demonstrators across the Arab world became the focus of discussion. Discussion included ethical codes for journalists, a problem just as immediate in the UK as in North Africa, and the need for an inclusive dialogue even where internet access is limited.

Emerging from discussion was a feeling that new demands on **leadership** have been set and the difficult question of managing high expectations is a critical challenge during this transitional phase in North Africa. It was acknowledged that leaders must work hard to understand the changed dynamics of power and the demand for accountability from a technologically literate population.

For many people questions to do with the rule of law and **economic growth** remain the most pressing. Unemployment in North Africa remains an urgent concern and there were detailed discussions on how to develop a law-based system of rule whilst also promoting economic development.

Other workshops considered the role of **art** and culture in shaping all of the participating societies and explored the relationship between development and **security**. Attention throughout the conference was focused on **young people** and the conference looked in detail at how education could be re-thought to provide better skills for life.

Finally, participants were brought together in plenary to draw out concrete actions that could be initiated to make proposals a reality in the areas of civil society, new media, leadership and economic growth.

The conference opened new perspectives and enabled fresh thinking on the shared challenges facing leaders in North Africa and the UK. The British Council is now working closely with a number of the participants to build on the specific proposals that arose from the discussions to explore how some of these ideas could be brought to life and ensure a lasting impact from the first Hammamet Conference.

At La Kasbah, Tunis, the seat of government

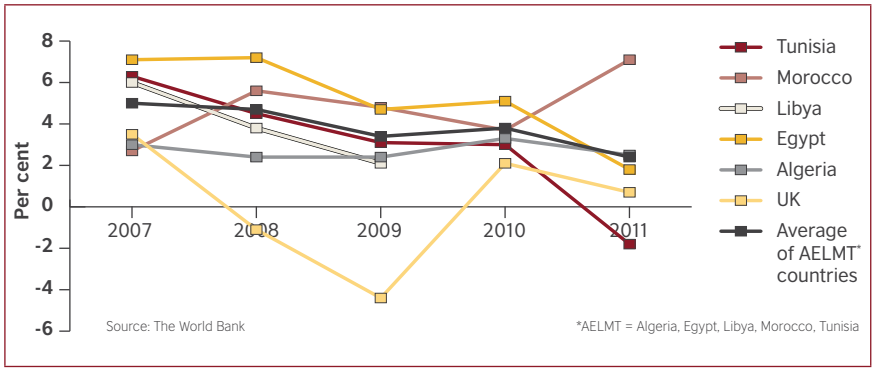
3. THE ARAB UPRISINGS: A NEW CONTEXT

The Arab uprisings of 2011 marked the greatest change in the Middle East and North Africa for decades. A new generation stood up against repressive regimes to demand dignity and political freedoms.

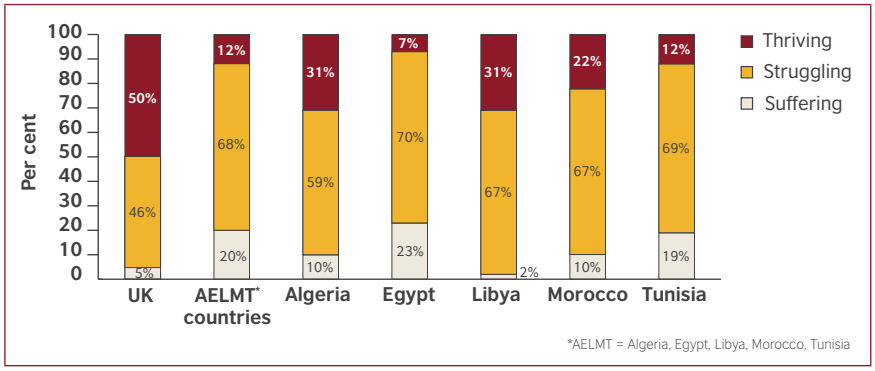
Now these societies and their leaders are confronting fresh challenges. There are freedoms to reinforce, youth skills to build, and huge economic expectations to meet. These are not unique problems: many of these intergenerational challenges are also facing societies in the West.

Consider the new North African context. Worldwide polling research by Gallup offers some insightful perspectives and reminds us that traditional economic measures can give only a limited perspective of progress. Economic growth in North Africa was consistent: at least 2 per cent a year, with Morocco's GDP growing as fast as 7 per cent in 2011 (see graph 1). However, perceptions of wellbeing lag far behind because this growth did not trickle down.

Graph 1: Consistent GDP growth in North Africa



Graph 2: Wellbeing across the region in 2012



The majority of people in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt feel they are struggling to get by (see graph 2).

But their belief that life will improve in the coming five years, known as the 'hope gap', is particularly high. Expectations are enormous.

Meeting these expectations is now a huge challenge for leaders in politics, business and civil society. Failure to deliver improvement could spark further political and economic turbulence (see graph 3).

Thus the challenges are urgent: polling shows significant numbers in nations that have witnessed uprisings still lack money for food and adequate shelter (see graphs 4a and b). Jobs are scarce and young people face many obstacles to finding work. Many believe that attaining a job requires connections in high places, not least because perceptions of corruption in business and government are widespread. Most would prefer to work for their government than in the private sector, but governments cannot supply sufficient jobs to address the demands of the rapid growth in the labour force (see graph 5 on page 9).

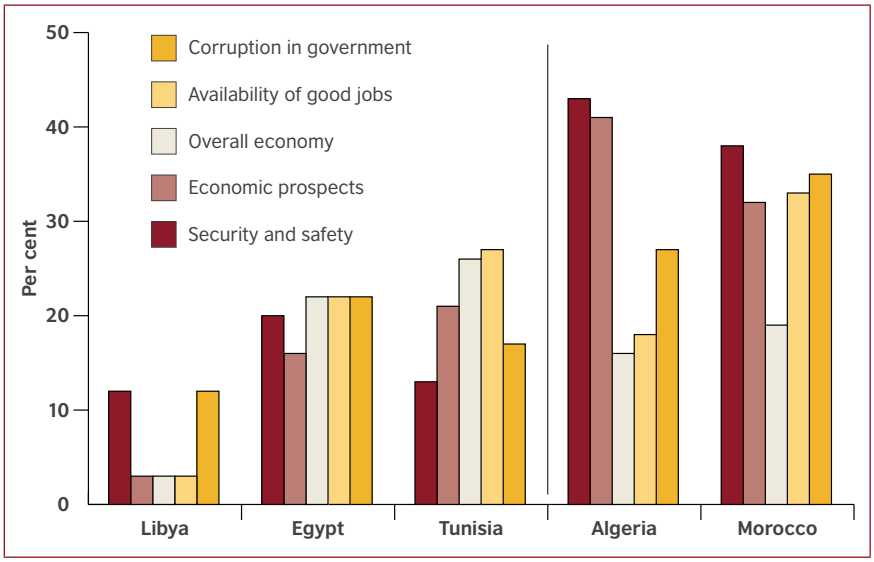
After the revolts, how can societies bring about change? Confidence in elections has risen since the uprisings, sometimes dramatically.

In Egypt, for example, it is now as high as in Scandinavian countries. Confidence in elections is higher in countries that have experienced uprisings than in those that have not. Yet while people may be more likely to seek redress through elections than through protests, they now have significantly higher expectations of improved economic prospects, security and employment.

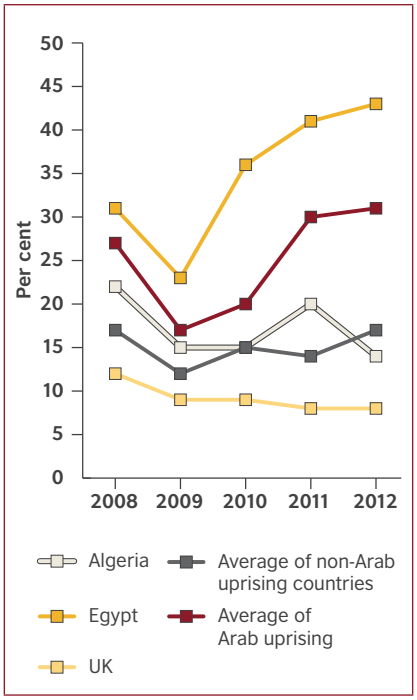
In discussions at the conference, priority areas quickly became apparent. Employment is at the top of the list. The youth bulge defines the demographics of the region: up to half the population is under the age of 25. That means the labour force is rapidly expanding.

The Middle East and North Africa region must create 100 million new jobs within a decade to keep up with this demand for work. Such an achievement will involve changing mindsets and creating new opportunities, especially for women. It also requires a focus on education, particularly ensuring access to education is broad enough, that it prepares young people for the job market and that it empowers them to determine their own future. Job growth is often stymied by corruption. One challenge is to establish the rule of law to weed out corrupt practices whatever their source.

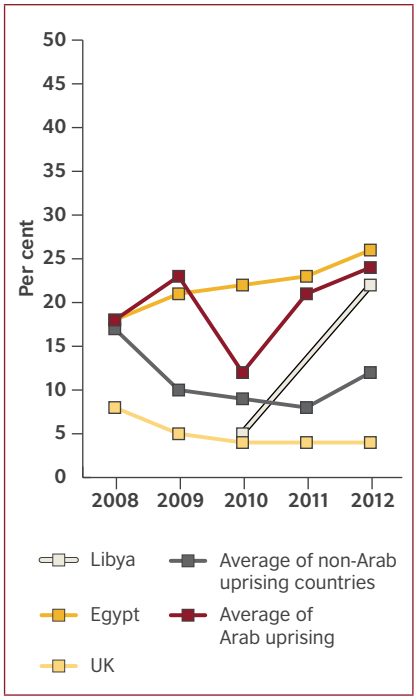
Graph 3: Recent protests – As a result of the recent protests and revolts in the Arab World, the following percentage think these will get worse.



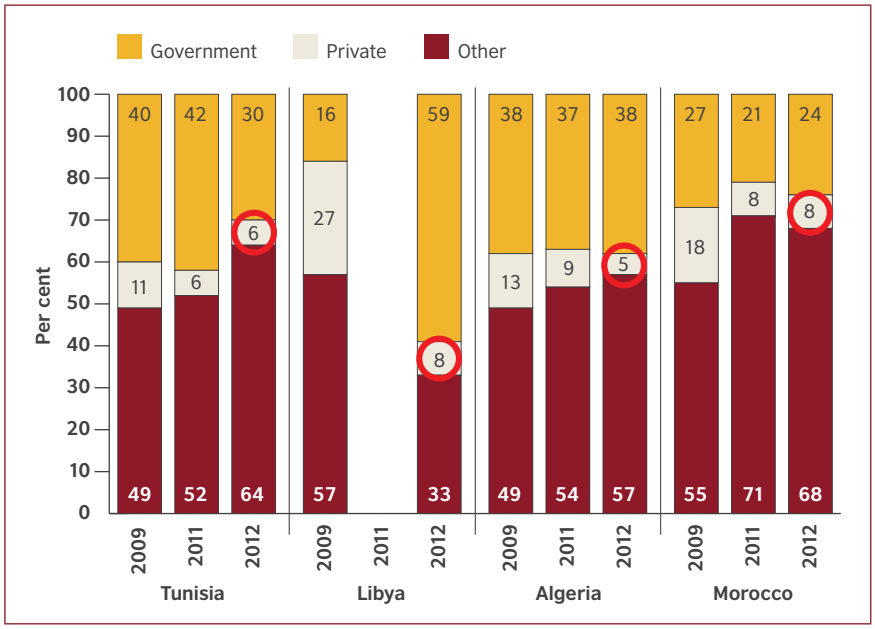
Graph 4a: Access to basics – Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?



Graph 4b: Access to basics – Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to provide adequate shelter or housing for you and your family?



Graph 5: Work preference – assuming the pay and work conditions were similar, in general where would you prefer to work?



New democratic institutions must be built to consolidate the gains of the uprisings, but locally grown structures are seen as a priority by those in the region and are much preferred over prescriptive models from outside.

Another demand is for a new, more equitable relationship with the West, built through dialogue and political, cultural and economic co-operation. The art of dialogue, between different societies and within our own, was emphasised.

Societies must understand each other better and respect each other's different outlooks and starting points for discussion. Within societies, it is no longer acceptable for leaders to merely inform society of their decisions: they must talk to their people and listen to what they say. This has profound implications for the development of tomorrow's leaders. Throughout this process high expectations need careful managing. No one doubts the cost of failing to answer these pressing challenges.

Abou Yaareb Marzouki, Minister Adviser for the Head of Government, Tunisia gave the keynote address

4. THE CONFERENCE SESSIONS

CIVIL SOCIETY: THE EMERGENCE OF THE 'SUPER CITIZEN'

Much is now expected from citizen participation, particularly during North Africa's transition to democracy.

Civil society is usually seen as operating in the ground between the individual and the state. But activists are trying to find their way forward: should they advocate on behalf of constituencies or should they step in to provide services where they are lacking?

The scope of possibility in the region is broad and experiences in the UK, where civil society is more developed, may be able to offer ideas and inspiration. Often in the past, civil society organisations in North Africa have been co-opted by authoritarian regimes. The dramatic change in political context has produced an entirely new environment and mobilised a generation of young people to demand accountability and rights. There is a vital role for these young people to play as new leaders in their society pressing for reform and offering imaginative solutions to complex problems. Post-uprising states must engage those who were behind the grassroots demonstrations and not exclude them from the transformation they spearheaded. Much depends on the scope of law that allows civil society groups to exist.

Civil society organisations can bring groups together at moments of civil conflict and there have been significant inter-faith efforts in Egypt between Muslims and Coptic Christians. The challenge is to explore how this might be formalised, for example by building on the South African experience of truth and reconciliation.

Civil society can also present evidence and facts for government. It can hold government and elected officials responsible for their actions.

Here there are already good North African examples to follow. In Tunisia, for example, a web-based project al-Bawsala (**www.albawsala.com**) is creating a more transparent democracy by monitoring elected parliamentarians, holding them to account and revealing their voting records.

One primary challenge that became apparent from the discussions was the question of what happened to new civil society groups at the moment a society turned into a democracy. Often the most networked groups, the ones most responsible for political change, subsequently opted out of the political process. Too often they felt alienated from and unrepresented by the formal power structures. They saw only that the traditional political elite remained in control. This could pose significant problems for the future, particularly if newly emerging groups feel dislocated from the political structures.

Political parties ought to be able to bridge this gap, to reach out to the young generation behind the uprisings and harness their energy and respond to their grievances. However, party structures are often too underdeveloped to meet this challenge and perhaps there is room for work here. After all, constructive democratic opposition is critical to any political system. It institutionalises and legitimises dissent and this is particularly important in North African countries that for too long have lived without a political system that allowed a vibrant, critical opposition.

In order to address these challenges, proposals for action included the development of a network of young civil society 'doers' in each country, with the possibility of using the British Council as a meeting space to enable them to co-ordinate future joint action; as well as a project to support the development of civil society leaders including work shadowing, mentoring and exchanges of leaders from different countries.

MEDIA: CITIZEN JOURNALISTS AS FUTURE GUARDIANS OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST?

Blogging and social media played an important role in the Arab uprisings.

Citizen journalists were brave enough to film the first demonstrations in Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia in December 2010 and to share the footage online. Soon it was picked up by al-Jazeera and broadcast across the Middle East, inspiring others to stand up and challenge dictatorial regimes.

Activists found important outlets of expression through social media. In Egypt, for example, many turned to the Facebook page We Are All Khaled Said (in English: **www.facebook.com/elshaheeed.co.uk**). In Tunisia, some of the most influential voices during the uprising came from the joint blog Nawaat de Tunisie (**www.nawaat.org**).

Social media was mobilised by young people in the uprisings and online journalism continues to flourish across North Africa. There has been a significant relaxation of once strict regulation over the media landscape, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt, which has produced a flood of new private television channels and newspapers. This press freedom is vital and to be welcomed, but in some cases it has revealed a lack of professional standards in the media. This has raised genuine concerns about trust and integrity. Similarly there is a sense that citizen journalists need an ethical code of conduct to use their new freedoms wisely. However, any such code needs to encourage high-quality journalism without constraining these newly won freedoms. Likewise, we should ensure governments do not suffocate the press with heavy restrictions, especially in new online media. This is an important debate under discussion in the UK and which needs to be considered in North Africa too.

Social media focuses on the immediate and in that sense it seems to work best at times of social stress. But what happens to the citizen journalist once the moment of stress passes and once the long, slow process of building a true democracy begins?

How should education respond to the growing importance of social media? Could there be training for citizen journalists to encourage critical faculties and to persuade them to work within accepted codes of practice? Do we need to teach young people how to use social media responsibly? If technology is so important to the new political and social reality then perhaps education ought to be developing new rules of engagement based on respect, responsibility and trust.

It is also important to remember that internet penetration is far less widespread in North Africa than in the UK. Tunisia has greater internet access than most in the region, but still only a third of the country is online. Across the entire Arab region just 22 million people, a tenth of the population, are on Facebook, out of

a billion worldwide active Facebook users. Mobile phone penetration is higher and might offer new possibilities. However, it's important to remember that not everyone is able to participate in this new democracy of technology and it is necessary to be careful to remain as inclusive as possible.

Among proposals for action was the need to help young people better analyse, interpret and critique sources of media across a variety of forms, but particularly from online and social sources. Young people need to be able to navigate this complex environment of text, images and sound, to evaluate media messages, and to express themselves effectively using the variety of media tools and technologies at their disposal. There is a need for those involved to find ways to recognise bias, spin and misinformation that affect the reliability of news coverage and better understand how media shapes our cultures. This could develop critical thinking faculties of young people in both the UK and North Africa to better understand the motives of those who post information online.

LEADERSHIP: DOES TOO MUCH HOPE CONSIGN POLITICS TO FAIL?

The weight of popular expectation has never been greater in the post-uprising societies of North Africa.

People have demonstrated for change and have toppled the regimes that held their societies back, but now the demand for results is pressing. Leaders are under pressure to solve the economic crisis, to provide much-needed jobs, to draft constitutions that secure freedoms, to increase transparency and to offer a new vision for the future. Leaders may want to manage expectations but they must also be attentive to society's concerns and understand them in order to prioritise reforms. Populations have seen the power of protest – it brought down regimes across North Africa. However, protests are being used again this time against new governments who have offered hopes of change but who are struggling to deliver concrete achievements, especially on the economic front. This should serve as a warning to future leaders of the need to address popular pressure and to respond to grievances with effective policies.

The collapse of the old regimes left a political vacuum. Will leaders with capability, experience and ethics come to the fore? Or will less capable but more populist figures step into this vacuum? New leaders must understand that the dynamics of power, both in North Africa and in the UK, are shifting. Leaders no longer need to be strong to be heard. They need to be clever, successful and honest because populations will hold them accountable. Technology is democratising public discourse but it is still important to find better ways to help young people contribute to decision-making and to increase their political participation. Parliaments must talk to their societies, offering realistic and honest predictions for the pace of change and pragmatic

decision-making. If the gap between political leaders and the general population widens again then societies risk new waves of civil unrest. Leaders must also learn to face the challenge of polarised debates and use dialogue to construct a negotiated consensus.

Leaders will be tempted to focus on short-term political needs at the expense of longer-term objectives. But we all agree just how important education reform will be in tackling the unemployment crisis and in shaping a more prosperous future. Can education policy be de-politicised so that long-term reform plans can develop even as political leadership changes? Can leaders be encouraged to speak honestly to the electorate at times of great upheaval and to work for broad, long-term social change beyond immediate political concerns?

The UK's own political system is currently experiencing some long-term challenges, with declining voter turnout, falling party membership and an increasing disenfranchisement of young people from formal politics. The student protests and riots in some UK cities in 2010 and 2011 have also contributed to a sense that some young people are now very disconnected from the political system and lack a strong connection to the established social norms and values of their society.

North African nations are facing similar transitions to new democratic systems. Can they overcome previous disagreements and rivalries and begin to exchange competencies and experiences? They now share so many challenges that there is strength in co-operation, from increasing much-needed intra-regional trade flows to exchanging ideas and solutions.

Two main areas emerged from the discussions as ways in which the UK and North Africa could mutually support each other in tackling these challenges. The first was in relation to political education of the general population – particularly young people – to enable them to better engage with formal politics and use it as a tool to hold leaders to account. The second was a need for increased connections and possibly a new form of exchange programme between politicians and young policy professionals in the UK and North Africa. This would enable mutual learning and experience sharing as leaders in all of the countries struggle to meet high popular expectations and ensure that formal politics is regarded as the key means of achieving political change and social progress.

Martin Davidson CMG, Chief Executive of the British Council, and Lord Lothian PC QC, Co-Chair, Hammamet Conference

ECONOMIC GROWTH: WHAT ROLE FOR THE RULE OF LAW?

The rule of law matters: it is central to economic growth and stability and a cornerstone of successful development. It needs to be based on a set of values that are believed in by a wide range of the population.

But this is not mere idealism. Businesses make constant risk assessments when choosing where to invest and corruption acts as a tax on their business.

At a time when there is so much competition for so little capital, the absence of the rule of law represents a significant cost. Striking evidence shows that the lack of the rule of law can be economically damaging. For example, a decade ago the overall cost of domestic violence to the UK was put at £23 billion, a warning that inspired new reform efforts.

However, there are particular difficulties in the North African context. First, the informal economy is a key challenge. In many societies in the region informal business, from the sale of gasoline to DVDs, makes up as much as half the overall economy, sometimes more. Imposing the immediate rule of law would reduce production and put even more people out of work. How should countries in the region move to a law-based system? Who will pay for it?

Second, corruption is entrenched. Under the former regime in Tunisia, for example, bribes became a way of doing business. Since the uprising, tacit rules on corruption have become unpredictable. Too often young people perceive their politicians and business people profiting from corruption and going unpunished. This creates a culture where honesty and integrity go unrewarded. It is important to recognise that Western firms and politicians too should be held to account for corrupt practices wherever they operate: the problem is global and requires shared responsibility. How can societies evolve into a corruption-free system? How can mindsets be changed and trust rebuilt? How can democracy and the rule of law be established in a way that is not impossibly impractical?

Development should not mean merely economic growth. After all, under the former regime in Tunisia there was economic growth. The country was praised as a model of economic reform, and yet the appearance of stability hid a deep underlying inequality that erupted in a popular uprising. The old paradigm needs to be changed to a model of development that includes capacity building for leaders and institutions and that can change behaviours across society.

Developing the rule of law will be an iterative, long-term process relying on skilled leadership and a regulatory framework that spurs development. Civil society has a role to play here. Sometimes the remedies can begin with the relatively straightforward: for example, many countries in the region lack sound bankruptcy laws. Governments need to make it easier for entrepreneurs to start companies by allowing them a way to fail safely.

Elsewhere in Africa there has been particular success in supporting female entrepreneurs who are more likely to drive economic growth. Inevitably Western financial assistance is needed, but Western companies investing in the region must also be made to keep to anti-bribery laws. Accountability and the rule of law are for all; there is no exemption for wealthy foreign investors.

ART AND AGENCY: SHOULD CULTURE ASPIRE TO CHANGE THE WORLD?

Creativity lay at the heart of the Arab uprisings, a non-violent challenge to authoritarian regimes. New freedoms were won and cultural taboos were challenged. What role can art and culture play in forging new societies in the region?

Art and culture can create discussion and act as valuable tools for reconciliation where politics sometimes falters. Occasionally art has acted as an agent of diplomacy. Think of the ground-breaking visit of the New York Philharmonic to North Korea in 2008, which was the first significant US cultural visit to North Korea in half a century and which offered a channel for dialogue. Art and culture can also communicate complex ideas and drive economic development.

In North Africa today art is playing a non-violent, political role too. Dictators fear art: in Tunisia the rapper Hamada Ben Amor, known as El Général, was jailed at the start of the uprising for putting into his lyrics the anger and frustration of his generation. The uprisings inspired a wave of political graffiti across the region, particularly in Cairo where street art spread across concrete security walls. Political writing can also be an art form.
A wave of new writing has emerged in recent years from young people in North Africa and the Middle East.

Revolutionary street art in Libya

Think of recent works by Rana Jawad on Libya or Samar Yazbek on Syria or the English-language compilation Beirut 39 (**www.hayfestival.com/beirut39**), which showcased the work of dozens of young Arab authors. In the new political context governments should learn to see art as no longer a threat but instead a positive, creative force that enriches society and changes mentalities. The creative industries are also, of course, worth money to the economy.

Art should not be over-professionalised: space should be allowed for everyone to express his or her creative ideas.

Art can tackle polarising political debates in these new societies and help to express fresh opinions that might otherwise be obscured.

Important projects that might offer models for others already exist, like the El Sawy Culturewheel (**www.culturewheel.com**) in the heart of Cairo, which for the past decade has staged exhibitions, seminars, workshops and awareness campaigns.

However, there is a need to support arts education and creativity in the school curriculum to build a strong creative industry. Clear career pathways for art would help create a vibrant industry. Societies that have been bound by censorship in the past have to allow a new debate on sometimes contentious topics but without resorting to the suffocating, state-led control on forms of expression.

There are challenges: some in the West point out that certain forms of music can trap minority communities in violent language that glorifies crime, or become exploited by powerful multinational companies. But when used wisely, art and culture can act powerfully as a force of positive change and can instil concepts of citizenship and democracy in society.

DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY: WHICH COMES FIRST?

Development and security are both fundamental to citizens' wellbeing – but which comes first?

Is security a vital first step for development or can such a view legitimise a restriction on freedoms which actually holds back economic and social development? How can new governments and civil society groups adopt a cycle of improving security, developing a business climate, job creation and improved wellbeing, which feeds back into greater security?

Security is a pre-requisite for development – as is demonstrated by research such as the World Development Report 2011 complied by the World Bank. However, total security and stability can never be guaranteed and are not required to achieve economic progress and job creation. In addition, development does not necessarily follow security. This is because states, however secure, do not always build good governance processes and inclusive societies, which foster the conditions for growth.

North African countries all have unique experiences of security over the past few decades. In the 1990s for example, Algeria experienced a lack of development due to its significant period of upheaval and instability, whilst Libya's recent civil war has created perhaps the most challenging current security environment in the region today. In North Africa at the moment the greatest threats to security actually arise from pressures from the Sahel region in the south and this affects all of the North African countries. It has arisen from a problem of a lack of economic development in the area, but is now manifesting itself in states that are unable to effectively maintain the rule of law, which itself is now holding back further development and leading to the growth of extremism and a growing informal economy. This has most powerfully been demonstrated since the conference with the recent terrorist attack at the In Amenas gas facility in Algeria.

Over the past few decades, the emergence of new, powerful non-state actors, such as international terrorist organisations have, eroded the capacity of states to secure their societies. This has made individual and collective security harder to achieve.

It has also led to an ongoing debate about the best way to achieve social wellbeing between those who place stability and security as a pre-eminent issue, vital to improving the economy and ensuring decent living standards, and those who see this as an excuse for a lack of political reform and individual liberties. During the Egyptian revolution, for example, young people were told by the regime not to protest as this would undermine security and protestors were labelled as terrorists.

This is not new in a region where those who fought for independence from colonial powers were frequently cited as terrorists. This debate continues to be played out in societies across North Africa, especially as new constitutions are developed and new security and political norms are established. They also echo in the UK, where at a time of concern about global terrorism, discussions of issues such as compulsory ID cards and internet monitoring have highlighted the tension between security and liberty.

In many ways the response from all countries, especially the West to the September 11 attacks diverted global political attention away from development and onto security. In the long run this has been counterproductive as without development, a growing number of young people who feel excluded from society will inevitably look to more radical and extreme ideologies.

Some Western policies also directly promote instability in North Africa. The Common Agricultural Policy, for example, makes agriculture in North Africa less competitive and therefore removes a potential source of jobs and growth from the region, creating unemployment and leading to the disenfranchisement of young people. On the positive side, the EU is making a major contribution to supporting development in the region, such as supporting civil society development in Libya and has a major commitment to supporting development and stability in the region. However, the UK and wider EU need to be more aware of the impact of domestic policy on the economic prospects and security of North Africa.

Diagram 1: Security and development – a positive or a negative cycle

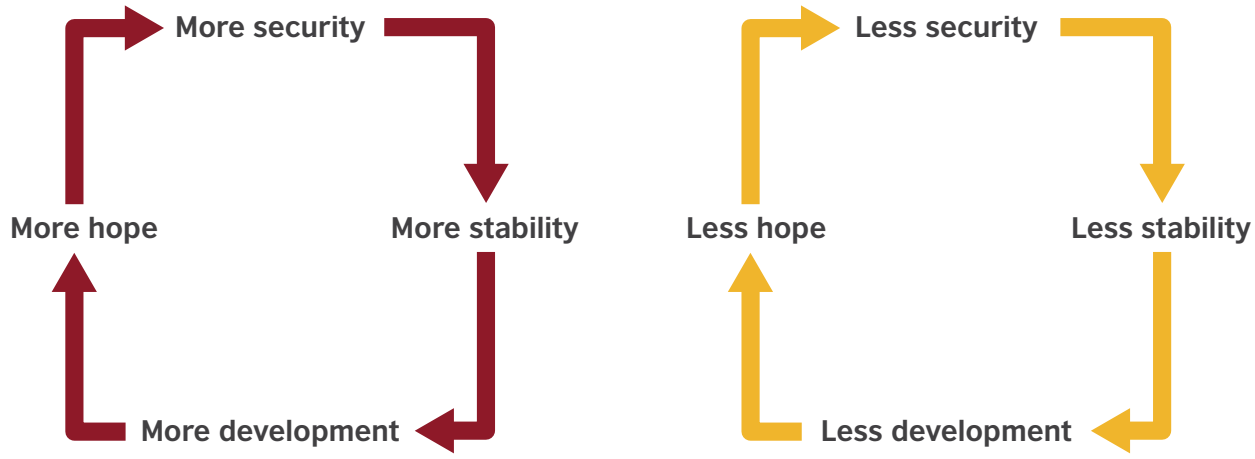
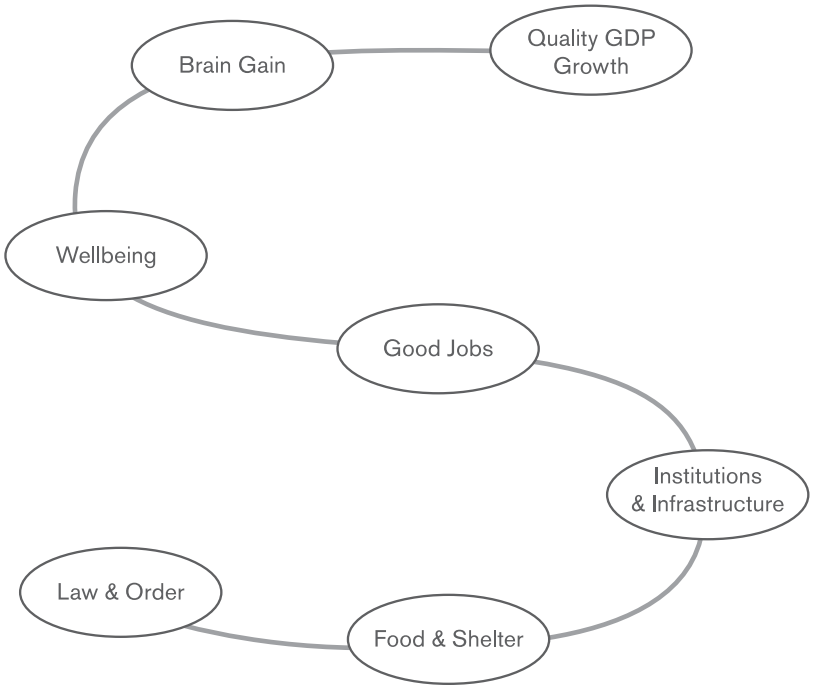


Diagram 2: The Gallup world path



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Macroeconomic Path

A leadership model for successful societies

GENERATION NEXT: SKILLS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Although growing numbers of young people are enjoying higher and further education, are they being trained for the world of work or are they being over-educated and under-employed?

This is a problem shared by both the UK and North Africa. Graduate unemployment can often be higher than regular unemployment and it can have striking political consequences. The frustration among young unemployed Arab graduates was one factor behind the 2011 uprisings.

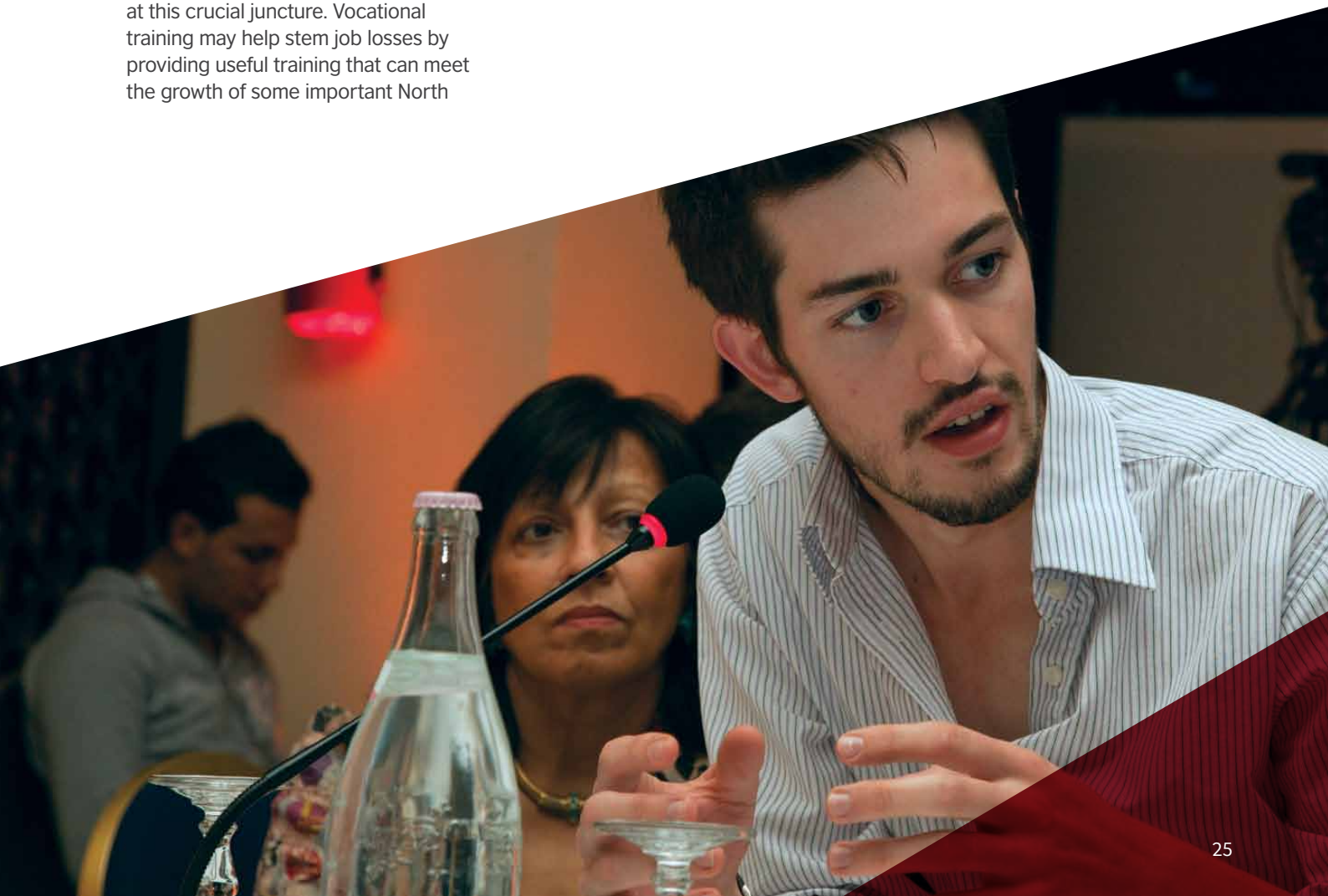
In the West, this concern over education is already provoking changes. A fresh debate has begun about the possibility of returning to respected apprenticeship programmes. Employers are warning that they often struggle to find graduate recruits with the right skills, particularly the ability to interact with others, present ideas in public, manage self-discipline and build self-confidence. Some British accountancy firms are now taking on school leavers and educating these new recruits with the appropriate skills for the workplace. In the UK, organisations like the Young Foundation (**www.youngfoundation.org**) are rethinking education, encouraging team work and interdisciplinary projects, and offering young people what they call 'grit' – life skills and self-discipline. In India, a number of finishing schools have emerged where companies pay a training centre to find and educate recruits on their behalf in return for guaranteed jobs at the end of the course. These ideas might offer inspiration for projects in North Africa. Other models of learning are emerging, moving away from the idea of a university as a physical campus and turning towards learning online.

In North Africa there is a broad consensus that university education has too often failed graduates and here too the value and relevance of higher education is facing increasing scrutiny. Knowledge is acquired by rote learning, not through critical inquiry. University degrees seem to offer little relevance to contemporary life or to the job market and do not give young people the confidence to communicate and to think independently. Youth unemployment in North Africa is higher than in any other region of the world.

Overall unemployment in Tunisia in 2011 was 19 per cent, but among young people it was as high as 42 per cent. The number of unemployed Tunisian graduates has tripled in the past 20 years and their plight has become so serious they have formed their own union to articulate their grievances. Egypt has 43 universities, public and private, but they are not connected to the labour market in any meaningful way and here too youth unemployment is high. The education system ought to provide students with not simply a degree but a realistic chance of finding work. One solution

is to focus on areas where there are world shortages of skills, notably in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Engineering companies in the UK are starting to warn that they cannot find enough suitably qualified graduates; this could be an opportunity for North Africa.

At the same time, another challenge for North Africa will be to retain intelligent, skilled young people who want to move abroad in the search for work. When they leave they take with them the skills and knowledge their own societies so badly need at this crucial juncture. Vocational training may help stem job losses by providing useful training that can meet the growth of some important North African industries like agriculture and manufacturing. More adaptive and flexible programmes might better target the young in rural areas, which are too often overlooked. There are many opportunities for the UK here to assist, not just by suggesting models of alternative education but also by offering English-language training, such as that provided by the British Council. Fluency in English is increasingly recognised within North Africa as a necessary skill for a new, aspirational generation.



5. CONCLUSION: A SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The conference explored the challenges and priorities facing our societies in North Africa and the UK. Some of these challenges are shared, in other cases there are different experiences and contexts.

Participants were able to draw on what they had seen and learnt to offer each other ideas and models for change. Concrete actions emerged from discussions which could make some of the proposals a reality.

Civil society: there is a need to build up credibility and trust in civil society, particularly in North Africa in the wake of the uprisings. New civil society actors have emerged but they often need support, advice and strong partnerships to find their way in future. Can a network of civil society actors be developed in our countries who communicate through a shared meeting space either in the real world or online? Can effective training be offered to build up the leadership capacity of our civil society actors? What of those people who are not active in civil society: How can their concerns be heard and what mechanisms can be used to draw them into a more inclusive dialogue?

Media: The importance of earning trust and credibility through new forms of media was noted. Could a code of ethics for social media be developed to encourage groups to work together to normalise good behaviour? Can education be used to develop critical thinking skills among young people so they can actively assess and react to what they see online? Is it possible to speak to those, particularly in North Africa, who do not yet have internet access? Can other channels, from mobile phones to television, be used to engage with them and to represent their ideas?

Technological advances could help here: extending battery life for mobile phones would have unexpected knock-on impacts in poorer communities.

Leadership: It is necessary to develop the skills of our political leaders and policy professionals and help people hold them to account. How can political parties in the UK and North Africa come together to share ideas and advice? Can young politicians from our different communities meet together and learn from each other in an exchange programme or through long-lasting dialogue? How can a political culture be developed that values research and evidence in the policy making process, and what role can think tanks, research institutes and other non-state bodies play in this? UK politicians might be able to help advise on writing clear political manifestos and developing effective outreach; young North Africans might help on questions of youth engagement and popular mobilisation. What advice can be offered on promoting high-quality citizenship education that might cover subjects like basic politics, media awareness and economics? How can better data be provided on our populations and their concerns that might inform political decision-making? There are models to learn from, which could be developed further. In Tunisia, British Council Global Changemakers established an independent telephone line that receives thousands of calls from people wanting to understand and participate in the new political process. How could this be replicated or made more widely accessible to provide access to political information to people in other societies undergoing social and political change?

Economic growth: what economic solutions can be suggested to diversify North African economies and tackle the pressing concern of unemployment? What legislation can usefully encourage the rule of law while not suppressing economic growth? Key steps might include drawing up bankruptcy laws to help entrepreneurs, formalising the informal sector to bring a more efficient economy, levying a minimal base of tax to pay for public services, especially education, and being forceful in the fight against corruption. Pro bono work by law students can ingrain a sense of work ethic as well as producing practical outcomes. Microfinance can often help develop economies, as long as projects are sustainable over time. A regional trading bloc in North Africa would help bridge the two sides of the Mediterranean for economic development. Building a more equitable and fruitful economic partnership between the UK and North Africa would encourage progress.

6. CONFERENCE PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

ST ANTONY'S COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The Middle East Centre, St Antony's College is the centre for the interdisciplinary study of the modern Middle East at the University of Oxford. Centre Fellows teach and conduct research in the humanities and social sciences with direct reference to the Arab world, Iran, Israel and Turkey, with particular emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Middle East Centre has provided expert advice and support with the development of the conference and is our partner for dissemination of the conference outcomes.

الخطوط التونسية
TUNISAIR

Société Tunisienne de l'Air or Tunisair is the flag carrier airline of Tunisia. Established in 1948 as a small airline operating to European cities among others, Tunisair now provides an extensive network to more than 55 destinations and its headquarters is in the city of Tunis. From the airline's hub at Tunis-Carthage International Airport, Tunisair provides scheduled service to over 25 countries, destinations include; Turkey, Italy, Serbia, France, Lebanon, Senegal, Egypt and Morocco. Tunisair is a member of the Arab Air Carriers Organisation and is a popular choice for business travellers flying to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates from North Africa.

WYGU.com

WYGU is the social network for a careers reality check, providing cutting edge and targeted guidance, development and mentoring. We're an investment-ready and freemium-based service that launched last year, and we believe that a vast majority of people receive prehistoric guidance at schools and college, and as a result, many are in accidental careers. The cost in social and financial terms of such poorly informed decisions should no longer be left to chance or choice. Our ground-breaking profiling engine lists users top careers by percentage match more accurately than ever before, helping them decide, confirm or rethink their career and course choices. Combining guidance, mentoring, and networking, can you afford not to try it?

The Youth and Employability session was supported by WYGU.

Revolutionary street art in Libya

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About the author
Rory McCarthy is a former Middle East correspondent of The Guardian and is now researching a DPhil at the University of Oxford on political Islam in contemporary Tunisia.

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