Conference

# The Future of Governance and Development Policymaking in the Global South

## Perspectives from the Arab Region

2–3 November 2026

United Nations House – Beirut – Lebanon

About the Conference | Timetable | Participants and Abstracts | Session Chairs

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# About the Conference

Arab countries are facing mounting challenges imposed by rapid transformations at the international level, whose geopolitical, environmental, and technological impacts are placing ever-increasing pressure on development programmes and policies. Just as these transformations have raised questions about the future of development globally, they have also cast doubt on the state of development in Arab countries, and on the ability of the region's governments to respond effectively to growing challenges within still-fragile political and social environments.

Studies on development in the region indicate that the majority of Arab countries face major structural obstacles that are hindering their ability to enhance their scores on various development indicators and achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015. These obstacles are particularly evident in areas related to the eradication of poverty, reduction of inequality, combating hunger, and improvements in health and education metrics – key objectives the region seeks to achieve within the framework of sustainable development.

One key factor among these obstacles is climate vulnerability. The Arab region is facing an unprecedented rate of climate change, the effects of which are intensifying year after year, to the level of natural disasters in several countries of the region. In recent years, severe droughts have affected numerous countries, while floods and cyclones have further exacerbated the situation. The impacts of these phenomena are worsened by inadequate preparedness and insufficient policy responses and are further compounded by a serious decline in food security in some countries of the region – as well as the dangers posed by a worsening water supply crisis. The effects of climate change are also exacerbated by the increasing pressures exerted by global crises on the region's economies, which have not yet fully recovered from the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which has also contributed to this deterioration. All of this has been clearly reflected in social inequalities, whereby income and living standards are rapidly declining, poverty is spreading, and the middle class is facing marked setbacks in many countries.

Instability and persistent armed conflicts also stand out as major harmful factors, turning promises of development and good governance into unattainable goals amidst persistent crises of governance and escalating internal divisions. There can be no doubt of the difficulty of fostering development in unstable environments, as they make it extremely challenging to implement sound social protection policies, let alone execute impactful development programs capable of reaching all segments of society. Conflict-driven environments make states increasingly fragile, turning a dignified life into a distant dream, while marginalized groups suffer ever-compounding risks due to insecurity.

The poverty of such groups is growing in direct proportion to their sense of inequality in all its forms. These conditions are compounded by other institutional and structural factors, most notably an absence of the rule of law and of policies that uphold the values of justice and an equitable distribution of resources.

In this situation, concerns about the continued fragility of the state necessitate a rethinking of the development models that are suited to Arab societies that have suffered from civil wars and deep divisions. This question is particularly relevant to Palestine, which continues to suffer under the brutality of the Israeli apartheid regime, and whose fate remains subject to harsh policies that threaten the overall human security of its citizens, including environmental, food, health, and water security. This colonial system imposes a grim reality, deliberately undermining the fundamental underpinnings of human security and rendering sustainable development impossible.

The weakness of the current economic model is another key obstacle hindering development. The scarcity of resources, a structural factor, is exacerbated by the dominance of unsustainable patterns of administration and the persistence of practices of waste and corruption. These factors present their own challenges, weakening the impact of existing economic and social reforms, thus negatively impacting the effectiveness of public policies and constraining prospects for future growth and development.

As trust in governments declined, popular anger escalated, culminating in the uprisings of 2011 and 2019. The Arab world underwent an exceptional moment of change during which citizens expressed their aspirations for development and liberation through demands for social justice and democracy, recognizing that achieving these goals required a fundamental shift in the relationship between society and the state.

This experience, and the accompanying efforts to establish democracy, demonstrated that the challenges were far greater than they had first appeared, particularly in countries that had embarked on genuine paths of transition. Many of these countries regressed, while those that persisted continued to face immense pressures. Tunisia stands out as a pertinent example of these additional challenges, struggling with the difficulties of transitioning to democracy then eventually regressing with the failure of efforts to institutionalize it.

Part of the challenge lies in the gap between democracy and development. In this context, some point out that development is not a prerequisite for initiating a democratic transition. Conversely, sustaining a democratic experiment becomes extremely difficult in the absence of sustainable economic growth leading to genuine development, or without achieving adequate standard levels of education. From this perspective, education is the developmental factor most closely linked to democracy, and the most impactful in consolidating it.

Over the past two decades, this connection between the aspirations of Arab peoples and the growth and increasing severity of these challenges has given rise to a new Arab research agenda. This trend has placed increasing emphasis on the study of the state and its institutions, and on the evaluation of existing governance models, in search of formulas capable of fulfilling the promises of sustainable development. These research efforts have focused on fundamental issues, including strengthening human capital, building resilient institutions capable of adapting to crises, and developing mechanisms for planning and public policy-making that align with the principles of sustainable development. Much of this research has drawn inspiration from the conceptual framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, which pertains to strengthening the capacity of societies to achieve such development by promoting peace, ensuring access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. In this sense, these goals have redirected research attention toward critical issues related to public policies and their governance mechanisms.

The most pressing issues on the path to achieving social justice, first and foremost by combating poverty and reducing unemployment, necessitate a genuine economic transformation. Despite indicators suggesting that economic growth improved in the Arab region in general in recent years – reaching approximately 2.2% in 2024 after the downturn triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, then rising to around 3.8% the following year, with projections that it will hit reaching 4.3% in 2026 – there is still a need to move beyond traditional Arab economic structures, especially given the fragility of this improvement and the lack of guarantees that it will last. The international context continues to be characterized by uncertainty; reports from global economic institutions suggest that a global economic slowdown is possible, despite the relative post-COVID recovery of supply chains. Signs of such a slowdown had already begun to emerge in 2025, driven by US tariff policies and escalating

geopolitical tensions in various parts of the world. This has placed additional pressure on Arab economies and stymied their ability to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth.

The structural transformation that is needed would necessitate the adoption of new, more effective strategies. The wealthiest Arab countries remain heavily dependent on oil, while other Arab economies are also reliant on models primarily based on the export of raw materials and agricultural products. New strategies are therefore essential to achieving a genuine balance between economic growth objectives and the needs for environmental protection, in line with the principles of sustainable development.

In this context, some Arab models have made significant strides toward achieving the SDGs. Notable here are the approaches adopted by the Gulf states, which have demonstrated an ability to accelerate progress on development indicators; the past two decades have seen a marked improvement in education, health, and the quality of government services, as well as in terms of the environment and in developmental innovation, thanks to ambitious programmes that have benefited from these states' abundant financial resources.

However, the sustainability of these achievements remains questionable, as a continued, heavy reliance on oil-based economies leaves their development paths vulnerable to fluctuations in global energy prices. This makes clear the importance of a serious move toward economic diversification, as it is a prerequisite for enhancing sustainable development and reducing structural vulnerabilities in Arab economies.

There are several related issues, most notably concerning the building of institutions in the developing countries of the Global South, particularly those attempting to rebuild their societies and state systems after armed conflicts. This necessitates a critical examination of approaches to international cooperation, which face numerous challenges due to bias and the imposition of "prefabricated" agendas on the Global South, including with conditionalities that diminish the value and positive outcomes of this cooperation.

Despite widespread perceptions that foreign aid is essential to breaking the cycle of poverty and achieving sustainable development, doubts persist over the effectiveness of current approaches to international cooperation. In addition to the dependency and corruption it promotes, there are serious doubts about its effectiveness, as it is generally subject to the strategic interests of donor countries, which may come at the expense of the development priorities of recipient countries.

This problem is inseparable from efforts to address the current technological gap, especially in light of the rise of AI technologies, which many fear will exacerbate the technological marginalization of the world's most vulnerable, to the benefit of a limited number of wealthy, technology-producing countries. This will reinforce inequality in development and limit the opportunities for developing countries to catch up with global technological transformations.

These complex challenges add urgency to the adoption of a new approach and a forward-looking system of governance that transcends traditional Western perspectives and establishes a "Southern" vision that takes into account the specificities of local contexts in the Global South. In this regard, the academic and research community must play a pivotal role in formulating innovative and forward-looking strategies that respond to these challenges, drawing on the lessons learned from institutional frameworks that connect countries of the Global South, such as BRICS.

There are successful models in this context that reflect the diversity of international approaches to development in a multipolar world, which can be drawn upon to bring their economic and political provisions into closer alignment with the realities of the region. Research cooperation among developing countries must be strengthened to develop a shared academic agenda that addresses development issues through a critical and forward-looking perspective, and to launch a broad dialogue that includes experts and policymakers.

This is the basis for this conference, addressing the theme of "The Future of Governance and Development Policymaking in the Global South: Perspectives from the Arab Region". Jointly organized by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the conference invited researchers and others concerned with development and governance issues to present their contributions.

# Timetable

# Day One: Monday, 2 November 2026

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| **9:00 - 9:30** | Conference Registration |
| **9:30 - 10:00** | Opening Session<br>**Younes Abouyoub and Abdel-Fattah Mady** |
| **10:00 - 11:15** | Session One<br>Institutions and the Governance of Development Policies<br>**Chair: Younes Abouyoub**<br>**Arshad Mahmood, Muhammad Saleem:** Why Development Policies Fail at Implementation: Evidence from Arab Public Administrations<br>**Manzoor Khan Afridi:** Measuring Governance Resilience Instead of Governance Quality: A New Index for Arab Countries<br>**Hamed Ali, Faisal Al-Mansouri:** Governance and Natural Resource Rents: Evidence from the Middle East and North Africa |
| **11:15 - 11:30** | Break |
| **11:30 - 12:30** | Session Two<br>Governance and Resilience in Contexts of Conflict<br>**Chair: Tamer Qarmout**<br>**Marie Kortam:** Negotiated Governance in Contexts of Fragility: Lessons from Northwest Syria (2011–2024)<br>**Sabrine Abu Libdeh:** From Fragility to Resilience: Civil Society Governance and Self-Administration in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip |
| **12:30 - 12:45** | Break |

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| **12:45 - 13:45** | **Session Three**<br>**Knowledge and the Governance of Education Policies**<br>**Chair: Moosa Elayah**<br>**Mohamed Alaa Abdel Moneim:** Reform without Governance: Education Reform Trajectories in Egypt since 2017<br>**Hicham Barkia, Rachid Azzman, Taoufiq El Harrouti, Abderrahim El Ayadi, Jalal Alloug:** From the Promises of Decentralization to the Test of Participatory Governance: Territorial Stakeholders and Education Policy in Morocco |
| **13:45 - 14:00** | Break |
| **14:00 - 15:15** | **Session Four**<br>**Participation, Women and Representation**<br>**Chair: Jala EL Akoum**<br>**Latifa Al-Mansuori:** Global Discourse on Women's Empowerment and Its Influence on Government Policy Formulation in the State of Qatar: An Institutional Theory Perspective<br>**Rasha Katami:** Outcomes of the Royal Commission for Modernizing the Political System in Jordan from a Gender Perspective: An Analytical Study<br>**Mothana Al-Masri:** From Marginalization to Agency: The Bedul and the Renegotiation of Development and Heritage Management in Petra |
| **15:15 - 16:00** | Lunch Break |

# Day Two: Tuesday, 3 November 2026

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| **9:00 - 10:15** | **Session Five**<br>**Digital Transformation and AI Governance**<br>**Chair: Rami Zaatari**<br>**Ahmed Badran, Sara Badran:** Smart E-Governance and Sustainable Administrative Development Goals: A Critical Review of the Digital-Era Governance Thesis in Selected Arab Experiences<br>**Rached Hersi:** From External Compliance to Regulatory Sovereignty: The Impact of the EU AI Act on AI Governance in the Arab Region<br>**Reem Kurdieh:** Smart Ports between the Logic of Efficiency and Sustainable Development: A Comparative Case Study of the Ports of Tanger Med and Tartus |
| **10:15 - 10:30** | Break |
| **10:30 - 11:45** | **Session Six**<br>**Administrative Reform and Public Services**<br>**Chair: Nasser Yassin**<br>**Brahim El Morchid:** When Reforms Reproduce "Organized Irresponsibility": Towards a Corrective Approach to the Institutional System in Arab States<br>**Talal Elsaghir, Mariam Aljabaly, Arto Kallioniemi:** Intelligent Accountability and Trust-Based Leadership in Qatari Government Schools<br>**Saleh El-Sheikh, Mahmoud Hamad:** Development, Governance and Public Administration Reform in Egypt: The Experience of the New Administrative Capital |
| **11:45 -12:00** | Break |

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| **12:00 - 13:15** | **Session Seven**<br>**Security and Development Policies**<br>**Chair: Abdel-Fattah Mady**<br>**Louay Abdelfettah:** Economic Intelligence in the Arab World: Acquiring Strategic Knowledge in the Service of Development, Technological Progress and Power-Building<br>**Abdulla Alajami:** Algocracy in Arab Public Administration: Building a Smart State or Entrenching a Surveillance State?<br>**Mohamed El-Aoufi:** The Political Economy of Armament and Development: Theoretical Debates on the "Guns and Butter Trade-Off" in the Arab States of North Africa |
| **13:15 - 13:30** | Break |
| **13:30 - 14:45** | **Session Eight**<br>**State-Building and Reconstruction**<br>**Chair: Younes Abouyoub**<br>**Taieb Touili:** Knowledge Governance and the Malfunction of Development: A Sociological Study of the Approaches Guiding Employment Policy in Tunisia<br>**Noha Nadeem:** Local Governance in Post-Conflict Contexts: Toward a More Contextually Appropriate Approach to State-Building in Africa<br>**Yasmin Al-Khiwani:** Institutionalizing Customary Norms to Ensure Inclusive Services and Social Harmony in Post-Conflict Yemen |
| **14:45 - 15:00** | **Closing Session**<br>**Ihab Maharmeh and Abdou Moussa** |
| **15:00 - 16:00** | Lunch |

# Participants

# Abstracts



## Abderrahim El Ayadi

Head of the Division of School Life Organization, Extracurricular Activities and School and Vocational Guidance at the Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports, Kingdom of Morocco. His research addresses educational governance and education policy; decentralization and territorial governance; participatory governance and the involvement of local actors in public policymaking; school life organization; management within educational institutions and the integrated school improvement project; and questions of educational quality and reform in Morocco. He co-authored "Une étude qualitative sur la violence fondée sur le genre dans le milieu scolaire, région de Rabat-Salé-Kénitra, Maroc", published in *Études en sciences humaines et sociales* 3, no. 6 (December 2020). He holds a PhD in Educational Sciences from Mohammed V University of Rabat, Faculty of Education Sciences.

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## From the Promises of Decentralization to the Test of Participatory Governance: Territorial Stakeholders and Education Policy in Morocco

This paper examines how participatory governance is enacted in Moroccan schools amid promises of decentralization and expanding roles for territorial, civil society, and economic stakeholders in education policy. It explores how institutional recognition of participation translates into meaningful roles in designing, implementing, and monitoring integrated school improvement projects, treating schools as settings where national policy orientations are tested locally. The paper argues that stakeholders' presence within governance structures or invitations to meetings do not, by themselves, demonstrate meaningful participation; its depth depends on clear responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and opportunities to influence diagnosis, priority setting, action planning, monitoring, and accountability. The study adopts a multi-source documentary approach, combining analysis of nine constitutional, legislative, regulatory, and strategic documents with examination of 412 integrated school improvement projects covering all 82 provincial education directorates and three school levels. A brief verification questionnaire addressed to school principals supplements the documentary evidence. Coding frameworks distinguish stakeholder recognition, participatory depth, coordination, and monitoring mechanisms. The findings reveal a gap between strong formal institutionalization and limited enactment within schools. Stakeholders contribute little to diagnosis and action proposals, coordination and accountability mechanisms are frequently absent, and contributions focus primarily on support and services. The paper proposes an exploratory framework for gradations in the enactment of participatory governance to examine progression from presence and representation towards influence and responsibility. It concludes that evaluating educational decentralization requires examining the conditions for meaningful participation, opening a comparative debate on local governance in the Global South.



## Abdulla Alajami

University instructor and researcher at the University of Damascus, Syria and former lecturer at Grenoble École de Management, France. His research addresses public administration, governance, institutional leadership and artificial intelligence in public administration, as well as constitutional law and institutional ethics; it also extends to the relationship between leadership and innovation in organizations, the rebuilding of trust between state and society, and the evolution of patterns of power and administration in changing environments. He is the author of *The Arab Labour Market in Light of Artificial Intelligence: Employment Challenges and Future Prospects* (2024), adopted by the Arab Organization for Administrative Development of the League of Arab States and awarded the 2024 Arab Youth Award. He holds a doctorate in Management, Innovation and Leadership from Grenoble École de Management.

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## Algocracy in Arab Public Administration: Building a Smart State or Entrenching a Surveillance State?

This paper discusses the shift from administrative digitalization towards the deployment of algorithms and artificial intelligence at the core of public administration, and the emergence of a new mode of exercising power that can be described as "algocracy". It explores how this shift effected administrative decision-making, data governance and public service delivery, and its relationship with administrative transparency, examining the tension between the requirements of building a smart state and the risks of expanding state knowledge, classification and surveillance. It argues that algocracy represents not merely a technological development but a substantive reconfiguration of administrative power, particularly as some functions of discretion, classification and decision-making move to algorithmic systems. The paper compares the experiences of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt to identify similarities and differences in the legal and institutional frameworks governing the use of algorithms and artificial intelligence in public administration, while conceptualizing algocracy and analysing its relationship with administrative decision-making and algorithmic transparency. It concludes that algorithms do not themselves determine whether the state moves towards intelligence or surveillance; this depends on the legal and institutional environment governing their use. The comparison reveals variation among Arab experiences in balancing digital efficiency with transparency, accountability and data protection. The decisive criterion for distinguishing the smart state from the surveillance state is the capacity of law and institutions to constrain algorithmic power and ensure that automated decisions can be understood, explained, challenged, and subjected to accountability.



## Ahmed Badran

Associate Professor of Public Policy at Qatar University. His research addresses public policy, digital governance, public administration, digital government transformation, artificial intelligence in the public sector, and sustainable administrative development. His publications include "Artificial Intelligence between Government and Self-Regulation Policies: A Theoretical Approach", published in *Hikama* 4, no. 7 (November 2023). With Ashraf Mishrif, he co-edited *Shaping the Future of Development in the GCC: Artificial Intelligence Policies, Challenges and Opportunities* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025). He holds a PhD in Public Administration and Public Policy from the University of Exeter, United Kingdom.

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## Smart E-Governance and Sustainable Administrative Development Goals: A Critical Review of the Digital-Era Governance Thesis in Selected Arab Experiences

This paper examines the role of smart e-governance in advancing the goals of sustainable administrative development within Arab government bodies, amid accelerating digital transformation and the effects of artificial intelligence on the conduct of public affairs. It traces the conceptual development of digital governance and theoretically grounds the notion of the smart government as an advanced stage of digital government transformation. The paper argues that smart digital governance is not confined to the use of technology in delivering government services, but constitutes an institutional framework that strengthens transparency, accountability and citizen participation in public policymaking, and improves the quality of government services. It further holds that the deployment of artificial intelligence applications can develop the interaction between government and citizen and achieve higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness. The paper adopts an analytical approach combining analysis of the effect of smart governance applications on the development of government services with a study of a number of relevant Arab experiences, in order to examine their roles in improving government performance and identify the opportunities and challenges associated with their deployment. The paper concludes that smart e-governance is one of the foundations of sustainable administrative development, through improved design and delivery of public services and greater citizen participation in public affairs. It recommends securing political support for digital transformation programmes, developing the legislative frameworks governing electronic transactions and data protection, and redesigning government services and digital infrastructure, so as to ensure a successful transition to the smart governance model in Arab states.



## Arshad Mahmood

Researcher and former visiting lecturer at a number of German universities, including FOM University of Applied Sciences, SRH Berlin University of Applied Sciences, and FHM University of Applied Sciences. His research addresses organizational development, human resource management, entrepreneurship, digital transformation, organizational sustainability, and local governance. He has published a number of studies in peer-reviewed journals, including "Resilience Strategies in Gulf Smart Cities: Addressing Climate Change and Urban Policy Challenges", published in *Omran* (2025). He received his PhD in Organizational Development and Entrepreneurship from Universiti Sains Malaysia in 2018.

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## Why Development Policies Fail at Implementation: Evidence from Arab Public Administrations

This study examines why development policies fail during implementation in Arab public administrations, focusing on Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt. The study adopts a comparative qualitative approach combining analysis of national development strategies, public-sector reform programmes, and institutional reports published between 2024 and 2026 with 18 semi-structured interviews with actors involved in policymaking, implementation, evaluation, and governance. The findings identify three mechanisms underlying implementation gaps: institutional coordination, compliance-focused performance management, and bureaucratic risk aversion. The study shows that implementation failures are shaped not only by capacity and resource constraints but also by fragmented responsibilities, administrative incentives, and accountability arrangements. It proposes governance measures focused on cross-government coordination, outcome-oriented performance management, and incentive and accountability reform.



## Arto Kallioniemi

Professor at the University of Helsinki, Finland. His research addresses worldview education, religious education and educational leadership. With Eelis Mikkola and Mika Perälä he co-authored "Adapting Philosophy for Children for Finnish Upper Secondary Schools: A Comparative Analysis of Philosophy, Religious Education, and Culture, Worldviews and Ethics", published in the *British Journal of Religious Education* (2026). He holds a PhD in Theology from the University of Helsinki.

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## Intelligent Accountability and Trust-Based Leadership in Qatari Government Schools

This paper examines the relationship between administrative accountability and the professional autonomy of school leaders in the Qatari public education system, focusing on the role of trust-based leadership in strengthening leadership efficacy and innovation in government schools. It examines the effect of administrative practices on school leaders' autonomy and identifies four interrelated gaps – trust, accountability, communication and policy – and their implications for leadership practice. The paper draws on an in-depth qualitative analysis of data from interviews with 12 government school leaders and four educational experts from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, alongside an analysis of the legislative framework governing the Ministry's operations (Ministerial Resolution No. 6 of 2026, based on Amiri Resolution No. 35 of 2022). The paper proposes an "intelligent accountability" model as an institutional framework that balances accountability with trust and strengthens school leaders' professional autonomy. To operationalize the model, the study proposes an integrated package of practical policies and procedures: alleviating documentation burdens by reviewing and revising professional licensure regulations; integrating professional satisfaction and trust-climate indicators into evaluation tools; developing trust-based leadership capacity-building programmes; and integrating school leaders into decision-making circles through advisory councils. The paper links these proposals to the objectives of Qatar's Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) and Qatar National Vision 2030.



## Brahim El Morchid

Professor at Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech, Morocco. His research addresses the role of institutions in development and economic transformations in Africa and the Arab world. He is Vice-President of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa in Dakar and an expert with the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research in Rabat. His work has appeared in Arabic- and French-language journals. He contributed a study titled "Rent-Seeking Practices in Africa's Maritime Fishing Sector: The Case of Morocco" to the edited volume *Globalization, Development and the Fragility of Marine and Coastal Spaces*, edited by Hubert Gérardin et al. (2026), and published "The Challenge of Sustaining Morocco's Argan Forest: An Analysis from a New Institutional Economics Perspective" in the *Journal of Forest Economics* 40, no. 4 (2025). He received his PhD in Economics from Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech, in 2005.

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## When Reforms Reproduce "Organized Irresponsibility": Towards a Corrective Approach to the Institutional System in Arab States

This paper examines how successive institutional reforms in Arab states since the 1990s have reproduced "organized irresponsibility". Rather than narrowing the scope for escaping accountability, they have made it harder to identify who is answerable for failures across a range of domains such as poverty, investment, education and natural disasters. The paper argues that organized irresponsibility is not the product of a legislative vacuum or of incidental technical shortcomings, but of the interaction of three structural mechanisms that the reforms themselves reproduce. The first is rent-seeking, which turns the moment of reform into a new market for privileges. The second is the institutional gap generated by transplanting Western formal rules that do not sit well with local informal norms. The third is forbearance, understood as a deliberate strategy of rule rather than bureaucratic incapacity. It further argues that correction lies not in a wholesale break, but in constructing the structural opposite of each mechanism along gradualist lines. The paper adopts a critical analytical approach, drawing on Ulrich Beck's concept of "organized irresponsibility" and Alisha C. Holland's concept of "forbearance", as well as on the new institutional economics literature. The paper concludes that correcting the system from within rests on three shifts: disciplined institutional translation in place of turning reform into an opportunity for rent-seeking; differentiated targeting of interest groups in place of selective absorption; and, finally, deliberate accountability grounded in "costly signals" in place of forbearance.



## Faisal Al-Mansouri

Professor in the Public Administration Programme at the School of Economics, Administration and Public Policy, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He began his academic career in the Tunisian university system, where he became a professor of higher education in 2000 and held a number of academic and administrative posts, including the directorship of university institutions. He holds a PhD and a master's degree in Economics from the University of Illinois, United States. His research addresses public administration, crisis management, entrepreneurship and leadership, environmental management, and financial management, with particular attention to the intersections of public policy and economic and institutional change. He has published peer-reviewed research in international journals, including the co-authored study "Sovereign Contagion Credit Risk Measure across Financial Markets in the Eurozone: A Bivariate Copulas and Markov Regime Switching ARMA based Approaches" in the *Review of World Economics* 158, no. 2 (2022).

## Governance and Natural Resource Rents: Evidence from the Middle East and North Africa

This paper examines the determinants of good governance in the Middle East and North Africa, focusing on the relationship between good governance, oil rents, and administrative reform. It moves beyond the conventional literature on the "natural resource curse", which assumes that resource wealth inherently undermines institutional quality, to ask a question more closely tied to conditions and contexts: through which mechanisms, and under what circumstances, are oil rents and administrative reforms associated with governance outcomes in the region? The paper adopts a qualitative review of administrative reforms during the third (1989-2009) and fourth (2010-2022) waves of globalization, distinguishing between domestically generated reforms driven by internal political pressures and externally imposed reforms associated with the conditions of integration into the global economy. The findings suggest that the number of externally imposed or domestically generated reforms does not adequately explain governance outcomes, highlighting the importance of examining the institutional conditions that determine whether reforms translate into actual improvements in governance. The descriptive evidence also shows that the relationship between oil rents and governance is neither consistently negative, as conventional resource-curse theory assumes, nor positive in all cases, but varies with the prevailing reform trajectory in each country. These findings suggest that the relationship between oil rents and governance quality in the Middle East and North Africa depends on reform trajectories rather than following a fixed pattern, offering a new theoretical contribution to understanding the political economy of resource wealth and institutional development in the region.



## Hamed Ali

Professor of Public Policy and Economics and former Dean of the School of Economics, Administration and Public Policy at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Texas at Austin. He has taught at the American University in Cairo, Texas State University, and Southern Methodist University. He served as Vice-President for the Middle East of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) and Chair of the Steering Committee of the International Commission on Accreditation of Public Administration Education and Training (ICAPA). His research focuses on conflict, governance, economic development, natural resources, and public policy. His work has appeared in leading scholarly journals, and he contributed a chapter to Contemporary Issues in Microeconomics, edited by Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz.

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## Hicham Barkia

Research professor at the Regional Centre for Education and Training Professions, Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima, Morocco. His research addresses educational governance and policy, the integrated school improvement project and school leadership, school life and citizenship, children's rights and participation, educational assessment, and teacher training. He is the author of *Le Maroc et l'Élimination de la Schistosomiase* (Eliva Press, 2026). He holds a PhD in Environment and Health from Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra.


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## From the Promises of Decentralization to the Test of Participatory Governance: Territorial Stakeholders and Education Policy in Morocco


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## Jalal Alloug

Researcher working in financial management in public administration at the Ministry of Economy and Finance, Kingdom of Morocco. He published "The Principle of Foresight-Based Budgeting in Moroccan Local Authorities" in *Atlantis*, no. 51 (March 2026). He holds a master's degree in the Administrative and Financial Management of Public Administration from Mohammed V University, Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences, Salé.

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## From the Promises of Decentralization to the Test of Participatory Governance: Territorial Stakeholders and Education Policy in Morocco

This paper examines how participatory governance is enacted in Moroccan schools amid promises of decentralization and expanding roles for territorial, civil society, and economic stakeholders in education policy. It explores how institutional recognition of participation translates into meaningful roles in designing, implementing, and monitoring integrated school improvement projects, treating schools as settings where national policy orientations are tested locally. The paper argues that stakeholders' presence within governance structures or invitations to meetings do not, by themselves, demonstrate meaningful participation; its depth depends on clear responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and opportunities to influence diagnosis, priority setting, action planning, monitoring, and accountability. The study adopts a multi-source documentary approach, combining analysis of nine constitutional, legislative, regulatory, and strategic documents with examination of 412 integrated school improvement projects covering all 82 provincial education directorates and three school levels. A brief verification questionnaire addressed to school principals supplements the documentary evidence. Coding frameworks distinguish stakeholder recognition, participatory depth, coordination, and monitoring mechanisms. The findings reveal a gap between strong formal institutionalization and limited enactment within schools. Stakeholders contribute little to diagnosis and action proposals, coordination and accountability mechanisms are frequently absent, and contributions focus primarily on support and services. The paper proposes an exploratory framework for gradations in the enactment of participatory governance to examine progression from presence and representation towards influence and responsibility. It concludes that evaluating educational decentralization requires examining the conditions for meaningful participation, opening a comparative debate on local governance in the Global South.




## Latifa Al-Mansuori

Director of the Legal Affairs Department, and PhD candidate in Public Administration at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. Her research addresses law, governance, public policy and crisis management in the public sector. She holds a master's in Public Policy from the Doha Institute.


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## Global Discourse on Women's Empowerment and Its Influence on Government Policy Formulation in the State of Qatar: An Institutional Theory Perspective


This paper examines how global discourse on women's empowerment has been transferred into government policy frameworks in the State of Qatar. Shaped within the United Nations system through its conferences, conventions, and agendas, this discourse redefined empowerment internationally and then entered national policies as a reference framework for women's empowerment strategies. The paper asks: How has this discourse been transferred into Qatar's policy frameworks? Using institutional theory as its analytical lens, the study adopts an explanatory case-study design based on documentary analysis of primary official texts, including the Permanent Constitution, successive laws regulating women's employment, Qatar National Vision 2030, and national and sectoral development strategies. The study finds that the transfer occurred through a cross-field cycle of institutionalization spanning education and employment, in which the institutionalization of women's empowerment in education paved the way for that of women's participation in the labour market. Informal institutions mediated a selective reinterpretation of global discourse, reflected in the precautionary arrangements and compromise formulations accompanying its local adoption. Finally, the declining use of the term empowerment in higher-level planning documents, alongside accumulating regulatory provisions, indicates a more deeply embedded stage of institutionalization: empowerment has moved to the cultural-cognitive pillar of institutions and no longer requires explicit affirmation in official discourse.




## Louay Abdelfettah

Lecturer at Mohamed First University, Oujda, Morocco. His research addresses security and intelligence and their relationship with democracy, human rights and governance, as well as the security implications of migration and the law of armed conflict. He published a chapter, "The Legal Status of Jerusalem and Problems of Enforcing the Law of Occupation: Existing Obstacles and Possible Options", in the edited volume *International Humanitarian Law: Troubling Problems and Painful Choices* (Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2026). He holds a PhD in International Relations from Mohamed First University, Oujda.


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## Economic Intelligence in the Arab World: Acquiring Strategic Knowledge in the Service of Development, Technological Progress and Power-Building


This paper examines the role of economic intelligence in acquiring strategic knowledge and deploying it to advance development, technological progress and power-building in Arab states. It explores its conceptual foundations, strategic functions, legal and institutional frameworks, and the role of intelligence agencies in knowledge production, drawing on Arab experiences in technology acquisition, localization and national capacity-building. The paper argues that limiting economic intelligence to protection and threat monitoring constrains its developmental and strategic potential. Realizing this potential requires moving beyond information gathering towards the proactive acquisition of knowledge linked to decision-making, innovation and technology transfer. It also requires coordination between civil, scientific and diplomatic institutions and intelligence services, without subordinating economic and scientific policy to a purely security-driven logic. Adopting a legal, political and strategic approach, the paper draws on academic literature, legal texts, national strategies and institutional documents. It compares the experiences of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Morocco, with reference to selected international models. It finds that Arab states possess institutions and initiatives supporting knowledge acquisition, but vary in their degree of coordination and strategic integration. An effective economic intelligence system requires a clear institutional doctrine linking knowledge needs to information gathering, analysis, deployment and evaluation, while ensuring legitimacy and oversight. Ultimately, national absorptive capacity determines the success of technology transfer: knowledge becomes sustainable power only when translated into relatively independent productive and technological capabilities.



## Mahmoud Hamad

Assistant Professor of Political Science and Constitutional Law at Cairo University, and founding director of the Public Policy and International and Security Studies programmes at Cairo National University. His research addresses the role of the judiciary in public policy, democratization, constitutionalism, politics, and society in the United States, and Middle Eastern studies. He published "Judicial Independence in the Arab World: Constitutional Review Institutions and Supreme Judicial Councils" in *Hikama* 3, no. 6 (Spring 2023). He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Utah, United States.

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## Development, Governance and Public Administration Reform in Egypt: The Experience of the New Administrative Capital

This paper examines the role of relocating capital cities in development and governance in general, and the case of Egypt's New Administrative Capital in particular. It analyses the relocation guidelines issued by the Egyptian government, focusing on their six key elements: identifying the new governmental headquarters; establishing the technological infrastructure for these sites; managing existing government premises; selecting the staff to be relocated; determining relocation incentives; and managing and governing the relocation process itself. The paper argues that the motivations behind constructing the New Administrative Capital stem from a combination of demographic, developmental, political, and strategic factors – alongside, of course, administrative reform. This paper utilizes a case study methodology, comparing Egypt to similar cases and discourse analysis, as well as examining primary sources such as legislation and presidential and ministerial decrees. This paper concludes that the capital's developmental impact should be assessed by how effectively the government meets its stated goals. It remains too early to judge whether the new capital can create a viable urban community that eases pressure on an overcrowded Cairo or delivers the intended economic benefits of this mega-project. Politically and strategically, however, the government appears to have achieved its objectives. In administrative reform, the relocation has helped consolidate and accelerate several reform efforts. The Egyptian experience ultimately shows that redesigning state institutions is relatively easier than changing how those institutions operate in practice.




## Manzoor Khan Afridi

Professor of Politics and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan. His research addresses the politics of the Middle East, Pakistan–China relations, Pakistan's foreign policy and the conflict in Afghanistan. He published "The SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) and Its Policy Relevance for Pakistan" in the *Journal of Physical Education, Health and Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2026). He received his PhD in International Relations from Jilin University, Changchun, China, and completed postdoctoral work at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.


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## Measuring Governance Resilience Instead of Governance Quality: A New Index for Arab Countries


Traditional governance quality metrics assess routine performance but fail to capture how systems respond under severe stress, and stress management is considered a difficult task for states. This study addresses this gap by introducing the Governance Resilience Index (GRI), a multidimensional framework structured around six key dimensions: institutional redundancy, adaptive policy capacity, fiscal and administrative buffers, social trust and inclusion, information credibility, and crisis-execution capability. To clarify the concepts, the study introduces a formal distinction matrix that separates governance resilience from nominal capacity, robustness, and agility. A pilot application in Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt provides detailed empirical case studies, illustrating how the GRI diagnoses distinct country-specific resilience configurations and identifies critical bottlenecks such as Morocco's top-down execution strengths versus sub-national inclusion gaps, and Jordan's high social capital compensating for fragile fiscal buffers. Furthermore, a rigorous statistical validation framework, featuring proposed multivariate regression architecture, evaluates the index's incremental explanatory power over conventional indices like the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). Focused on the Arab region, which faces unique challenges from climate risks, rentier dynamics, and conflict, the GRI offers a vital diagnostic tool for public-sector reform, crisis preparedness, and developmental policymaking, shifting the governance paradigm from static compliance to stress-period adaptability.



## Mariam Aljabaly

PhD researcher at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Her research addresses educational technology and innovation education, training teachers to develop an innovation mindset among school students, artificial intelligence in education, and ways of applying innovation activities in everyday lessons. She is a co-author of "Teachers' Facilitation of Students' Making and Maker Mindset in the Elementary Classroom", published in the *International Journal of Technology and Design Education* 36 (2026). She holds a PhD in Education from the University of Helsinki.

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## Intelligent Accountability and Trust-Based Leadership in Qatari Government Schools

This paper examines the relationship between administrative accountability and the professional autonomy of school leaders in the Qatari public education system, focusing on the role of trust-based leadership in strengthening leadership efficacy and innovation in government schools. It examines the effect of administrative practices on school leaders' autonomy and identifies four interrelated gaps – trust, accountability, communication and policy – and their implications for leadership practice. The paper draws on an in-depth qualitative analysis of data from interviews with 12 government school leaders and four educational experts from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, alongside an analysis of the legislative framework governing the Ministry's operations (Ministerial Resolution No. 6 of 2026, based on Amiri Resolution No. 35 of 2022). The paper proposes an "intelligent accountability" model as an institutional framework that balances accountability with trust and strengthens school leaders' professional autonomy. To operationalize the model, the study proposes an integrated package of practical policies and procedures: alleviating documentation burdens by reviewing and revising professional licensure regulations; integrating professional satisfaction and trust-climate indicators into evaluation tools; developing trust-based leadership capacity-building programmes; and integrating school leaders into decision-making circles through advisory councils. The paper links these proposals to the objectives of Qatar's Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) and Qatar National Vision 2030.



## Marie Kortam

Researcher and policy adviser for Syria at War Child. Her research addresses armed groups and armed conflict, violence and violent extremism, and refugees and migration. She is the author of *Violences (in)visibles et quête de justice à Tripoli après la guerre civile libanaise* (2024) and of a study entitled "The Unease of a City, and Beyond It the Unease of a Country: Marginalization, Inequality and Grassroots Struggle in Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen", published by the Institut Français du Proche-Orient. She received her PhD in Social Sciences from Paris-Diderot University.

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## Negotiated Governance in Contexts of Fragility: Lessons from Northwest Syria (2011–2024)

This paper examines the forms of governance that emerge when the state's monopoly over authority and service provision recedes, drawing on the experience of northwest Syria in the period up to December 2024. It asks: how does governance continue in the absence of a central authority monopolizing the public sphere? It proposes "negotiated governance" to explain the production of authority, services, and protection through ongoing negotiation among multiple actors, including armed groups, humanitarian organizations, and communal networks. Governance arrangements emerge through interaction and negotiation over resources, authority, and accountability. The paper draws on thirty-eight semi-structured interviews conducted in 2025 as part of the Beyond Compliance Consortium project led by the University of York. It analyses patterns of authority, control, accountability and humanitarian access, and the relationship between compliance, civilian needs and the harm civilians experience. It proposes "negotiated governance" as an analytical alternative to the dichotomy between the "functioning state" and the "failed state", one capable of accommodating institutional pluralism without presupposing a pre-existing hierarchy among actors. Through a comparison of the National Army and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham models, it explores how the degree of centralization of decision-making affects variation in control, accountability, and the exercise of authority, treating this relationship as a preliminary explanation in need of further testing. The paper concludes that the design of humanitarian and development interventions in contexts of fragility requires understanding the actual mechanisms through which authority and accountability are produced locally, rather than focusing solely on recognition of existing authorities.



## Mohamed Alaa Abdel Moneim

Assistant Professor of Public Administration at the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, and Dean of the Marketing and Human Resource Management programmes at the University of East London – European Universities in Egypt. He is the author of *A Political Economy of Arab Education: Policies and Comparative Perspectives* (Routledge, 2015). With David Rosenbloom he published "Polycentric Governance and Inclusive Policies: Egypt and the Implementation of Fiscal Stimulus in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic" in the *International Journal of Public Administration* (2023), and in the same year contributed "A New Role for Non-State Actors in Egyptian Policymaking" to *Sada*, published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He received his PhD in Public Administration from American University, Washington, DC.

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## Reform without Governance: Education Reform Trajectories in Egypt since 2017

This paper discusses the strategy adopted by the Egyptian government in 2018 to radically reform the education system, which was beset by structural imbalances. It reviews the strategy's main features – developing teaching methods, diversifying the sources of learning, and concentrating on foundational skills – and documents how it has failed to meet its objectives, citing the continued dominance of private tutoring and commercial study guides, as well as the government's retreat from several pillars of the project, such as restricting the distribution of tablets to particular categories of pupils. The paper argues that the structural character of Egypt's education system has placed strict limits on the prospects for substantive and sustainable reform, given the collision between these new policies and the system's historical legacy, the prevailing social and value system, and the political calculations of the governing regime. The paper relies on a comparative approach, analysing two applied cases concerning the government's attempts to reform the secondary-school certificate system, alongside an account of the structural failure to create genuine mechanisms for school accountability and the governance of educational performance. The paper concludes that efforts at education reform cannot be reduced to technical instruments or top-down plans: their success depends on how far they take in political and social reality. The findings show that any attempt to circumvent the roots of the crisis without dismantling entrenched centres of power – private tutoring foremost among them – or that overlooks the political cost of reform, will inevitably see reform policies fail.



## Mohamed El-Aoufi

Lecturer at Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco. His research addresses civil-military relations, political economy, and military expenditure in its relation to economic and social development. He holds a PhD in Political Science from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez.

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## The Political Economy of Armament and Development: Theoretical Debates on the "Guns and Butter Trade-Off" in the Arab States of North Africa

This paper discusses the political economy of military expenditure and social development in the Arab states of North Africa by interrogating the "guns-versus-butter trade-off", particularly the tension between prioritizing hard security spending and meeting the financial requirements of societal security. It argues that increased public resources allocated to military affairs may constrain the state's capacity to finance social policies, particularly in the areas of health, education, and social protection. It adopts a multidimensional analytical approach that combines comparative political analysis with an examination of quantitative indicators of military and social expenditure. It draws on the political economy of armament and social development. The paper concludes that there are disparities in the allocation of public financial resources between military and social spending. Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Mauritania, and to a lesser extent Tunisia, exhibit relative imbalances in this allocation, while Sudan and Libya are characterized by the specific conditions of internal conflict and institutional fragmentation, making it difficult to distinguish between official military expenditure and the war economy. Accordingly, the "guns-versus-butter" trade-off cannot be explained solely by national security considerations; it is also shaped by the determinants of the political economy of power and the position of the military establishment within the political system. The central challenge facing the seven states is therefore to establish a complementary relationship between hard security and societal security, rather than treating them as competing claims on public resources.



## Mothana Al-Masri

Researcher in public policy and local development. His research focuses on development policy and local governance, the relationship between local communities and public policymaking, particularly development and cultural policies, and heritage governance. His interests also include social history in the Jordanian and Qatari contexts; migration, refugees, and diaspora; identity, belonging, and integration; sociocultural transformations; and memory and place. He published "The City as a Space for the Production of Cultural Heritage: Representations of Qatar's Diving Community" in *Tajseer* (2025), and *The Diving Community in Qatar: History, Culture, and Struggle* (Khutut wa Dhilal, 2025). He holds a master's degree in Sociology and Anthropology from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies.

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## From Marginalization to Agency: The Bedul and the Renegotiation of Development and Heritage Management in Petra

This study examines the Bedul community of Petra as a case revealing the limits of governance and development in the Global South. It explores the relationship between resettlement, heritage governance and local development policies, focusing on how the community has redefined development after decades of government and international interventions that have failed to address its economic and social challenges sustainably. The Bedul's resettlement in Umm Sayhoun in 1985 was not accompanied by sustained livelihood reconstruction or the creation of an alternative economic and social base. The community has consequently remained heavily dependent on Petra's tourism economy, despite increasing regulatory and security restrictions on its activities at the site. The study also identifies the Bedul's limited involvement in policymaking, despite their extensive local knowledge, as a key shortcoming of the existing governance model. Drawing on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted in Petra and Umm Sayhoun, the study foregrounds the community's own understanding of development. Its findings reveal a vision centred on recognition, livelihood reconstruction, income diversification, the use of heritage and culture as economic and cultural capital, and greater participation in tourism and decision-making. The study concludes that the Bedul's demands articulate an alternative conception of development rooted in lived experience. Examining these perspectives is therefore integral to understanding governance itself, exposing the gap between top-down policy outcomes and the community's priorities for rebuilding its social and economic life.



## Muhammad Saleem

Lecturer at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan. His research addresses circular economy practices, community development, and area studies. He holds a master's degree in Management Sciences from Universiti Sains Malaysia.

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## Why Development Policies Fail at Implementation: Evidence from Arab Public Administrations

This study examines why development policies fail during implementation in Arab public administrations, focusing on Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt. The study adopts a comparative qualitative approach combining analysis of national development strategies, public-sector reform programmes, and institutional reports published between 2024 and 2026 with 18 semi-structured interviews with actors involved in policymaking, implementation, evaluation, and governance. The findings identify three mechanisms underlying implementation gaps: institutional coordination, compliance-focused performance management, and bureaucratic risk aversion. The study shows that implementation failures are shaped not only by capacity and resource constraints but also by fragmented responsibilities, administrative incentives, and accountability arrangements. It proposes governance measures focused on cross-government coordination, outcome-oriented performance management, and incentive and accountability reform.



## Noha Nadeem

Researcher in political science. Her work centres on international relations and peace studies, post-conflict recovery and state-building, governance and security in Africa, and Global South approaches. She published "Reframing Iran's Presence in Africa from a Global South Perspective" in the *Journal for Iranian Studies*, issued by the International Institute for Iranian Studies, Riyadh (April 2026). She received her PhD in Political Science from the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University.

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## Local Governance in Post-Conflict Contexts: Toward a More Contextually Appropriate Approach to State-Building in Africa

This paper discusses state-building in African societies emerging from conflict, particularly the role of local governance in restoring governing capacity and strengthening the institutional functions of the state. It examines the limitations of approaches that have centred on rebuilding formal institutions according to standardized institutional arrangements, in contexts characterized by uneven capacities across regions, multiple sources of authority and legitimacy, and interaction between formal institutions and local structures. The paper argues that state-building in African contexts requires shifting the focus from the state institution to the governance system through which authority is exercised. This approach connects central capacity with local effectiveness and organizes the interaction between formal institutions and local sources of authority. The paper adopts a synthetic analytical approach based on a critical review of the literature on state-building, peacebuilding, local governance, and the state in Africa, drawing on comparative experiences from post-conflict contexts to develop an analytical framework for the proposed approach. The paper concludes by proposing four pillars for rebuilding governance systems in African contexts: contextual appropriateness, gradualism and institutional adaptation, integration between central capacity and local effectiveness, and the management of institutional plurality. It further advances an adaptive approach that places learning, experimentation, and revision at the core of institutional capacity-building, while maintaining a national framework that safeguards the rule of law, rights, accountability, and national cohesion. The effectiveness of this approach remains contingent on political, institutional, and financial conditions that support long-term learning and on further testing across diverse African contexts.



## Rached Hersi

Researcher at the Governance Research Laboratory, Faculty of Legal, Political and Social Sciences, University of Carthage, Tunisia. His research addresses governance and public policy, state capacity, weakness and fragility, and political violence, terrorism and regional security, with particular attention to North Africa and the Arab region. He also works on AI governance, regulatory sovereignty, and the influence of international standards on national policy, and on the use of comparative and computational approaches and AI tools in political research. He holds a master's degree in Private Law from Tunis El Manar University.

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## From External Compliance to Regulatory Sovereignty: The Impact of the EU AI Act on AI Governance in the Arab Region

This paper discusses the impact of the EU AI Act on AI governance in the Arab region, distinguishing between Arab economic actors' compliance with European obligations and Arab states' use of the Act when developing national regulatory frameworks. It examines the possibility of moving from receiving external rules to acquiring the capacity to select, adapt and enforce external rules according to national priorities. It argues that the Act directly binds economic actors when its extraterritorial application conditions are met, while serving as a selectively adopted reference for states. Similarities between Arab and European frameworks do not establish regulatory transfer, and legislative borrowing alone does not produce regulatory sovereignty. The paper uses an analytical and critical legal approach to examine the Act's scope and obligations, drawing on the Brussels Effect and normative power. It complements this approach with a qualitative comparison of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, as cases with diverse regulatory instruments, examining regulatory instruments and their binding force, governance provisions, institutional arrangements, external references and national adaptation. The paper concludes that the selected cases develop AI governance through national strategies, ethical principles, data protection rules and sectoral regulation, rather than wholesale replication of the European model. Regulatory sovereignty requires defining national problems and priorities, selecting regulatory references, and building legal, institutional, human and technical capacities for verification, enforcement, accountability, and continuous updating. The paper advocates national governance arrangements that manage trade-offs between rights and innovation, security and fundamental rights, and independence and openness.




## Rachid Azzman

Assistant Professor at the Regional Centre for Education and Training Professions, Tangier–Tetouan–Al Hoceima, Al Hoceima branch, Morocco. His research addresses the relationship between law, education and society. He published "The Practical Application of Educational Facilitation Techniques in Constructing the Philosophy Lesson" in *Tafakur: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, no. 2 (Spring 2026). He holds a PhD in Law and Administrative Sciences from Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Tangier.


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## From the Promises of Decentralization to the Test of Participatory Governance: Territorial Stakeholders and Education Policy in Morocco


This paper examines how participatory governance is enacted in Moroccan schools amid promises of decentralization and expanding roles for territorial, civil society, and economic stakeholders in education policy. It explores how institutional recognition of participation translates into meaningful roles in designing, implementing, and monitoring integrated school improvement projects, treating schools as settings where national policy orientations are tested locally. The paper argues that stakeholders' presence within governance structures or invitations to meetings do not, by themselves, demonstrate meaningful participation; its depth depends on clear responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and opportunities to influence diagnosis, priority setting, action planning, monitoring, and accountability. The study adopts a multi-source documentary approach, combining analysis of nine constitutional, legislative, regulatory, and strategic documents with examination of 412 integrated school improvement projects covering all 82 provincial education directorates and three school levels. A brief verification questionnaire addressed to school principals supplements the documentary evidence. Coding frameworks distinguish stakeholder recognition, participatory depth, coordination, and monitoring mechanisms. The findings reveal a gap between strong formal institutionalization and limited enactment within schools. Stakeholders contribute little to diagnosis and action proposals, coordination and accountability mechanisms are frequently absent, and contributions focus primarily on support and services. The paper proposes an exploratory framework for gradations in the enactment of participatory governance to examine progression from presence and representation towards influence and responsibility. It concludes that evaluating educational decentralization requires examining the conditions for meaningful participation, opening a comparative debate on local governance in the Global South.



## Rasha Katami

Researcher on women's issues. She published *Women's Participation in Political Life in Jordan: Legislative Evolution and Its Impact on Political Empowerment* with the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan. She holds an MA in Human Rights and Human Development from the University of Jordan, Amman.

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## Outcomes of the Royal Commission for Modernizing the Political System in Jordan from a Gender Perspective: An Analytical Study

This study examines the outputs of the Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System in Jordan from a gender perspective. It assesses the extent to which a gender-sensitive approach is reflected in those outputs, and their capacity to enhance Jordanian women's political participation in accordance with the principles and standards of gender-responsive governance. The study argues that measuring the success of the transition to gender-responsive governance requires evaluating the extent to which women can effectively exercise the role guaranteed to them by law, rather than the existence of that guarantee alone. The paper analyses the Royal Committee's outputs and the associated legislative and institutional documents to identify how they address women's political participation and the mechanisms adopted to strengthen their representation in political life, and to assess the consistency of the resulting reforms with international principles and standards of gender-responsive governance. The study concludes that the document partially succeeded in moving beyond numerical participation towards active engagement and the capacity to influence decision-making and to reach decision-making positions; sustaining this progress, however, requires the implementation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.




## Reem Kurdieh

Researcher in public policy. Former Planning and Statistics Manager at the Port of Latakia, Syria. Her research addresses the development of administrative mechanisms for the maritime transport sector, seeking to balance operational efficiency with sustainable development while attending to workforce capacity-building and institutional transparency. She holds a Master of Public Administration from the National Institute of Administration, Damascus.


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## Smart Ports between the Logic of Efficiency and Sustainable Development: A Comparative Case Study of the Ports of Tanger Med and Tartus


Digital transformation toward "smart ports" is one of the most prominent manifestations of artificial intelligence in the maritime transport sector, but it poses a fundamental tension in Global South countries between the "logic of efficiency" (automation, productivity, competitiveness) and the "logic of sustainable development" (social justice, labour protection, just transition). This study examines how governance mechanisms address this tension, through a comparative case study of Tanger Med Port (Morocco) as a leading model, and Tartus Port (Syria) as a case of an existing port facing digital transformation in a fragile context. To overcome the challenges of research in fragile environments (absence of documents and limited capacity to conduct interviews), the study adopts a methodology combining analysis of open sources, assessment by global standards, and scenario-based policy analysis. The results reveal that Tanger Med Port has achieved global efficiency and created broad job opportunities, but suffers from gaps in social protection and union dialogue, which tilts governance in favour of the logic of efficiency. As for Tartus Port, it is analysed prospectively through three scenarios (optimistic, realistic, pessimistic) derived from models in similar contexts. The study concludes that equitable digital transformation does not occur automatically, but requires clear governance mechanisms: active social protection, proactive training, mandatory social dialogue, and national data sovereignty.



## Sabrine Abu Libdeh

Researcher and university lecturer at Al-Quds University. Her research engages contemporary social and political questions; sociology in its anthropological, social, legal, political and economic branches; human rights and law; questions of women and youth; and development policy and sustainable development. She is the author of Palestinian Refugee Youth between Integration and Political Alienation (Dar al-Jundi, 2024), and published "The Impact of Digitalization on the Unity of Palestinian National Identity: Digital Resistance or Digital Dispersion?" in the peer-reviewed Qabas Journal for Humanities and Social Studies, issued by the University of El Oued, Algeria (2025). She received her PhD in Sociology and Anthropology from the University of Tunis, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

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## From Fragility to Resilience: Civil Society Governance and Self-Administration in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

This paper undertakes a systematic historical comparison of two principal models of community governance in Palestine: the popular committees of the First Intifada (1987–1993), and the emergency committees and community initiatives that emerged after the outbreak of the 2023 war. It begins by exploring how grassroots action is reproduced whenever the governance vacuum generated by the structure of settler colonialism reappears, and the extent to which the instruments of that action and the conditions of its legitimacy have been transformed by decades of civil-society institutionalization following the Oslo Accords. The paper argues that grassroots response has retained its underlying logic while its instruments have undergone a structural shift. Tactical flexibility has displaced stable organizational cohesion; hybrid legitimacy has displaced horizontal legitimacy; and sectoral leadership has displaced comprehensive structural leadership. Emergency committees thus constitute a hybrid formation that bears the imprint of institutionalization retains only a limited margin of political efficacy and tends toward a mode of resilience recalibrated by external standards. The analysis rests on a theoretical framework that brings together settler-colonial theory and approaches to critical resilience and hybrid governance. This framework is operationalized through a systematic historical comparison of the two models along five analytical dimensions: structural context, organizational structure, sources of legitimacy, participation and gender, and governance outcomes. The paper concludes that the historical model of popular committees cannot be restored under present conditions, and that emergency committees constitute a hybrid form in their own right rather than a distorted replica of the earlier model.




## Saleh El-Sheikh

Professor of Public Administration at Cairo University and adviser to the University President for governance and institutional development. His research addresses public administration, local administration, administrative reform and the administrative organization of the Egyptian state. He holds a PhD in Public Administration from Western Michigan University, United States.


## Development, Governance and Public Administration Reform in Egypt: The Experience of the New Administrative Capital


This paper examines the role of relocating capital cities in development and governance in general, and the case of Egypt's New Administrative Capital in particular. It analyses the relocation guidelines issued by the Egyptian government, focusing on their six key elements: identifying the new governmental headquarters; establishing the technological infrastructure for these sites; managing existing government premises; selecting the staff to be relocated; determining relocation incentives; and managing and governing the relocation process itself. The paper argues that the motivations behind constructing the New Administrative Capital stem from a combination of demographic, developmental, political, and strategic factors – alongside, of course, administrative reform. This paper utilizes a case study methodology, comparing Egypt to similar cases and discourse analysis, as well as examining primary sources such as legislation and presidential and ministerial decrees. This paper concludes that the capital's developmental impact should be assessed by how effectively the government meets its stated goals. It remains too early to judge whether the new capital can create a viable urban community that eases pressure on an overcrowded Cairo or delivers the intended economic benefits of this mega-project. Politically and strategically, however, the government appears to have achieved its objectives. In administrative reform, the relocation has helped consolidate and accelerate several reform efforts. The Egyptian experience ultimately shows that redesigning state institutions is relatively easier than changing how those institutions operate in practice.




## Sara Badran

PhD research student in Digital Humanities at Hughes Hall College, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom. Her research addresses digital humanities, artificial intelligence, algorithmic bias and digital justice; the impact of AI on democracy and freedom of speech, on labour markets and on higher education; and postcolonial questions and cultural representation in digital media. She holds an MPhil in Digital Humanities from the University of Cambridge.


## Smart E-Governance and Sustainable Administrative Development Goals: A Critical Review of the Digital-Era Governance Thesis in Selected Arab Experiences


This paper examines the role of smart e-governance in advancing the goals of sustainable administrative development within Arab government bodies, amid accelerating digital transformation and the effects of artificial intelligence on the conduct of public affairs. It traces the conceptual development of digital governance and theoretically grounds the notion of the smart government as an advanced stage of digital government transformation. The paper argues that smart digital governance is not confined to the use of technology in delivering government services, but constitutes an institutional framework that strengthens transparency, accountability and citizen participation in public policymaking, and improves the quality of government services. It further holds that the deployment of artificial intelligence applications can develop the interaction between government and citizen and achieve higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness. The paper adopts an analytical approach combining analysis of the effect of smart governance applications on the development of government services with a study of a number of relevant Arab experiences, in order to examine their roles in improving government performance and identify the opportunities and challenges associated with their deployment. The paper concludes that smart e-governance is one of the foundations of sustainable administrative development, through improved design and delivery of public services and greater citizen participation in public affairs. It recommends securing political support for digital transformation programmes, developing the legislative frameworks governing electronic transactions and data protection, and redesigning government services and digital infrastructure, so as to ensure a successful transition to the smart governance model in Arab states.



## Taieb Touili

Senior administrator for higher education and scientific research at the University of Carthage, Tunisia. His interests lie across the subfields of sociology. He contributed a chapter entitled "Separated Under One Roof? A Study of Three Tunisian Women's Cases" to Research on the Formation of Individual and Collective Identities (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Tunis, 2025). He received his PhD in Sociology from the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of Tunis.

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## Knowledge Governance and the Malfunction of Development: A Sociological Study of the Approaches Guiding Employment Policy in Tunisia

This paper examines the relationship between knowledge governance, employment policy and the malfunction of development in Tunisia from a critical sociological perspective, with a focus on the university system and its internal contexts. It shows that the developmental crisis is not merely an economic dysfunction, but the outcome of deeper structural failures driven by epistemological choices in knowledge-governance policy: the fragmentation of the sciences and the reliance on technocratic approaches produce "mutilated knowledge", which isolates the academic institution and its scholars from the complexities of social and economic reality. The paper argues that the quality-assurance apparatus and narrow specialization in Tunisian higher education are not deployed in the service of development, but function as instruments of symbolic domination and selective discrimination in recruitment competitions and precarious employment, producing impaired graduates and excluding academic talent. The paper analyses a number of public policy documents and draws on field interviews with fourteen respondents, including senior officials, academics and researchers. The paper concludes that the present university quality-assurance system is dominated by formalism and lacks any genuine developmental effect. It closes with practical recommendations for establishing an alternative knowledge governance founded on epistemic bridging and complex thinking, so as to move beyond the developmental impasse and rebuild the social contract of higher education.



## Talal Elsaghir

Visiting researcher at the University of Helsinki, Finland. His work addresses educational leadership and the management of intellectual capital, education in contexts of crisis and digital transformation, curriculum development and contemporary teaching strategies, and quality management and institutional excellence in education. He published "The Role of Educational Leadership and Its Impact on Improving Performance and Developing the Educational Process in Educational Institutions in Light of Transformational Leadership, Its Dimensions and Roles" in the *Rihan Journal for Scientific Publishing* 56, no. 2 (2024). He holds a PhD in Educational Sciences from the University of Tripoli, Lebanon.

## Intelligent Accountability and Trust-Based Leadership in Qatari Government Schools

This paper examines the relationship between administrative accountability and the professional autonomy of school leaders in the Qatari public education system, focusing on the role of trust-based leadership in strengthening leadership efficacy and innovation in government schools. It examines the effect of administrative practices on school leaders' autonomy and identifies four interrelated gaps – trust, accountability, communication and policy – and their implications for leadership practice. The paper draws on an in-depth qualitative analysis of data from interviews with 12 government school leaders and four educational experts from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, alongside an analysis of the legislative framework governing the Ministry's operations (Ministerial Resolution No. 6 of 2026, based on Amiri Resolution No. 35 of 2022). The paper proposes an "intelligent accountability" model as an institutional framework that balances accountability with trust and strengthens school leaders' professional autonomy. To operationalize the model, the study proposes an integrated package of practical policies and procedures: alleviating documentation burdens by reviewing and revising professional licensure regulations; integrating professional satisfaction and trust-climate indicators into evaluation tools; developing trust-based leadership capacity-building programmes; and integrating school leaders into decision-making circles through advisory councils. The paper links these proposals to the objectives of Qatar's Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) and Qatar National Vision 2030.




## Taoufiq El Harrouti

Assistant Professor at the Regional Centre for Education and Training Professions, Casablanca–Settat, Morocco. His research spans educational governance and management, mathematics, mathematical modelling for sustainable transport, and artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things. He is a co-author of "Enhancing Learner Performance Prediction on Online Platforms Using Machine Learning Algorithms", published in the Indonesian Journal of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (2024). He received his PhD in Science, specializing in mathematics and computer science, from Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra.


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## From the Promises of Decentralization to the Test of Participatory Governance: Territorial Stakeholders and Education Policy in Morocco


This paper examines how participatory governance is enacted in Moroccan schools amid promises of decentralization and expanding roles for territorial, civil society, and economic stakeholders in education policy. It explores how institutional recognition of participation translates into meaningful roles in designing, implementing, and monitoring integrated school improvement projects, treating schools as settings where national policy orientations are tested locally. The paper argues that stakeholders' presence within governance structures or invitations to meetings do not, by themselves, demonstrate meaningful participation; its depth depends on clear responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and opportunities to influence diagnosis, priority setting, action planning, monitoring, and accountability. The study adopts a multi-source documentary approach, combining analysis of nine constitutional, legislative, regulatory, and strategic documents with examination of 412 integrated school improvement projects covering all 82 provincial education directorates and three school levels. A brief verification questionnaire addressed to school principals supplements the documentary evidence. Coding frameworks distinguish stakeholder recognition, participatory depth, coordination, and monitoring mechanisms. The findings reveal a gap between strong formal institutionalization and limited enactment within schools. Stakeholders contribute little to diagnosis and action proposals, coordination and accountability mechanisms are frequently absent, and contributions focus primarily on support and services. The paper proposes an exploratory framework for gradations in the enactment of participatory governance to examine progression from presence and representation towards influence and responsibility. It concludes that evaluating educational decentralization requires examining the conditions for meaningful participation, opening a comparative debate on local governance in the Global South.



## Yasmin Al-Khiwani

Researcher in international relations. Her work addresses international affairs, the dynamics of power and international rivalry, and the effect of technological change on international politics, as well as institution-building in post-conflict contexts. She holds a Master's degree in Diplomacy and International Relations from the Yemeni Academy for Graduate Studies, Sana'a.

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## Institutionalizing Customary Norms to Ensure Inclusive Services and Social Harmony in Post-Conflict Yemen

This paper examines the potential for institutionalizing tribal norms in Yemen to ensure service delivery and social harmony in the post-conflict era. It argues that the weakness and fragility of formal state institutions since the escalation of the conflict in 2015 have hindered their ability to resolve disputes and provide essential services to citizens, while tribal norms have emerged as a resilient mechanism for conflict resolution, dispute settlement and even service provision. The study employs a qualitative methodology, combining a review and analysis of the existing literature and studies with primary data collected through three personal interviews conducted remotely. The paper concludes that the customary system is effective as a rapid alternative for resolving conflicts and ensuring social cohesion, but that it suffers from structural shortcomings in representation and justice, and from the exclusion of women and of vulnerable and marginalized groups. It therefore advocates a hybrid governance model integrating the customary system with the formal state apparatus under strict constitutional and legal safeguards that guarantee rights and ensure balance.

# Session Chairs



## Abdel-Fattah Mady

Associate Professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), and Editor-in-Chief of *Hikama: Journal of Public Administration and Public Policy,* published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He previously worked as Professor of Political Science at Alexandria University, a researcher at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, an expert with the United Nations Development Programme, a visiting professor at the University of Denver, and an adviser at the Cordoba Peace Institute in Geneva. He received his PhD in Political Science in the United States in 2005. He has authored several books, including two on the Arab–Zionist conflict: *Religion and Politics in Israel* (1999) and *Silencing History: The Palestinian Question in Egyptian History Textbooks* (2025). He has edited many other books in comparative political systems.



## Abdou Moussa El-Bermawy

Researcher at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, and member of the editorial board of *Hikama*. He previously served as Director of the Institutional Capacity Building Unit at the Education Reform Program in Egypt, and as Research Advisor at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights. He has provided his expertise to a number of development bodies and international organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme and the Canadian International Development Agency. He has also served as co-editor of several books, including *Youth and Democratic Transition, Transitional Justice and Democratic Transition in the Arab Countries, Constitutions and Democratic Transition*, and *The Yemen of Revolution, Democracy and War*, and as a contributing author to the book *Arab Spring: Modernity, Identity and Change*, published by Palgrave in 2020.



## Ihab Maharmeh

Researcher at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) in Doha, member of the editorial board of *Hikama*, a journal published by the ACRPS and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, and Policy Analyst at Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network. He previously worked at Birzeit University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Public Administration and a master's degree in International Studies from the Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies. He also holds a master's degree in Public Policy and International Cooperation from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and a PhD from the School of Law, Politics and Sociology at the University of Sussex, United Kingdom. His research has been published in peer-reviewed academic journals in Arabic and English, covering topics such as technocracy, the politicization of public employment, local governance, and settler colonialism.



## Jala EL Akoum

Researcher at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), with more than ten years of experience in research, analysis and project support in the Arab region, particularly in governance, public administration modernization, institution-building, and economic statistics. Her experience includes work on governance and development in conflict-affected countries, contributions to social and economic dialogue efforts in Libya, and participation in international statistical initiatives. She holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in Economics from Saint Joseph University of Beirut.



## Moosa Elayah

Associate Professor at the School of Public Administration and Development Economics, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He also serves as Executive Director of the Association for Middle Eastern Public Policy and Administration (AMEPPA) and as a non-resident fellow of the Academic Alliance for Reconciliation, Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding in the Middle East and North Africa, based at the University of Jena, Germany. He previously worked as Assistant Professor at Radboud University Nijmegen and Leiden University in the Netherlands. His academic and research work focuses on international development management, including peacebuilding, crisis and conflict management, public policy, the management of non-governmental organizations, regional development programmes, and social protection in post-conflict economies.



## Nasser Yassin

Director of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) in Beirut. He served as Lebanon's Minister of Environment from 2021 to 2025, leading an environmental reform agenda focused on sustainable development, strengthening climate action, public and environmental policy innovation, and expanding community participation in environmental protection. In 2023, following his appointment to coordinate the National Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan, he oversaw cooperation with United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners in responding to the needs of more than one million displaced people in the wake of the Israeli war on Lebanon. He previously held a tenured professorship at the American University of Beirut, where he served as Director of Research and Director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. He currently lectures in executive education programs in several countries, in collaboration with the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Qatar University, Duke University, and the Competency Academy in the Sultanate of Oman. His scholarly contributions include three books and dozens of peer-reviewed journal articles and policy papers.



## Rami Zaatari

Technology and Data Expert at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), working within its Governance and Conflict Prevention Division. He has over 20 years of experience in digital development and digital transformation. Since joining ESCWA in 2006, he has supported Arab countries through the development of regional initiatives, public policy advisory services, and capacity-building activities, including support for the implementation of the Arab Digital Agenda 2023–2033. His current work focuses on the relationship between digital transformation and governance, particularly how artificial intelligence and emerging technologies can strengthen public institutions, improve service delivery and accessibility, and foster more inclusive and responsive governance. He pays particular attention to the needs of conflict-affected countries and to aligning digital transformation with the development priorities and institutional capacities of Arab states. He holds a bachelor's degree in Computer and Communications Engineering from the American University of Beirut and a master's degree in Software Engineering from Boston University.



## Tamer Qarmout

Associate Professor of Public Policy and former head of the Master of Public Administration programme at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, a member of the Programme and Research Advisory Committee (PRAC) of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), and chair of the working group on "Public Administration in Situations of Conflict and Fragility". Before entering academia, he held several management positions at the United Nations Development Programme. His research focuses on public policy analysis and formulation, institutional reform, foreign aid, and conflict resolution.



## Younes Abouyoub

Chief of the Governance and State-Building Division for Western Asia and Africa at the United Nations. He previously served as Head of the Political Office of the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Conflict Prevention and as Senior Political Adviser to the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General to Burundi. He also headed the Political Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General to Yemen and served as his Senior Special Adviser. His other positions included Senior Political Affairs Officer responsible for regional affairs in the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Head of the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Libya, and Senior Expert on the United Nations Security Council Panel of Experts on Sudan (Darfur). He has also held various posts in the United Nations Department of Political Affairs in New York and the United Nations Office at Nairobi. He holds a PhD in Political Sociology and master's degrees in Law and Political Geography.