

# Human Development in the Arab Spring

The implications of decentralization for societies in the context of human development

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**T**he Arab Spring signals a time of great potential to address the primary challenge currently facing governments and people in the Middle East and North Africa: to advance human development at a hitherto unseen pace and level of effectiveness. Were this to be accomplished for the majority of the affected population, the social and political consequences would address effectively the root causes of the popular revolts themselves.

The engine for sustainable human development is local communities and neighborhoods identifying, planning, and implementing the socio-economic and environmental projects they most need. Crucially, for this to be achieved, governments in the region must catalyze and further these local processes in two ways, namely: (1) decentralizing decision-making and capacities and creating the necessary administrative arrangements and programs that promote local development and (2) supporting

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both experiential training in facilitating participatory planning with local communities and the development projects prioritized by the people. This essay provides programmatic and organizational recommendations for the effective building of civil, governmental, and private capabilities to help implement human development driven by local communities. These recommendations are based on experiences in Morocco and draw heavily from global cases. The essay relates a human development model rooted in decentralization to situations with powerful regional implications: Iraq, Palestine, and the Western (Moroccan) Sahara. Morocco has created a number of essential national frameworks for promoting human development, but unfortunately implementation is too inconsistently applied and modest of scale, there is a serious lack of access to financing, and one finds limited application of the intended participatory methods that promote community-wide dialogue and democratic planning of development projects. Human development in the essay is also examined in the context of free trade, with particular attention paid to rural areas, where most poverty is concentrated.

## **Introduction**

This essay makes a case that to sustainably advance shared prosperity, human development, and political stability, particularly in the Arab Spring, nations should decentralize to sub-national levels the resources necessary to catalyze and implement community development. Further, it suggests that the Kingdom of Morocco, led by H.M. King Mohammed VI since 1999, has incorporated principles of decentralized management and human development in its national and local programs, charters, and strategies. Increasingly, Morocco is suggested as a model for the successful progress in the Arab Spring because of its stability opportunities, and embracing of cultural diversity, the adoption of the Moroccan model being understood to have the potential to inspire further transformative outcomes for the region.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, there are also extremely difficult internal challenges that could undermine Morocco's future: rural poverty, youth despondency, severe economic disparity, and the commonplace of exploited labor.

If Morocco could effectively implement participatory development through decentralized administrative systems across the population, the model could then be emulated and adapted to help create pathways for the people of other Arab Spring countries to achieve the kind of socio-political future they seek. Morocco could lead and guide the region by its attempt at, and example of, community democratic development—or “bottom-up” civil movements—that, with cross-sectoral partnership, elevate life conditions across communities and provinces and at the national level. Morocco’s development experiences and lessons are, therefore, informative and relevant regionally and globally.

The essay discusses the implications of decentralization for national governments, regions, and local communities in the context of human development. It also examines specific Moroccan social programs and agencies and gives recommendations as to how to achieve greater results, which are vital in advancing community development. The essay presents pre- and post-World War II origins, ideas, and approaches towards development, discussing how these could inform present-day strategies to be adopted by Arab Spring countries, either directly or through international community engagement. Examples are drawn from the experience of U.S. agencies. Connections are made in the essay between decentralization and conflict resolution, with specific regard to Iraq, Palestine, and the Western (Moroccan) Sahara. Given that rural poverty in these regions is of such great concern, the essay analyzes conditions and strategies in the context of Moroccan rural development, which are magnified further in importance due both to the great potential and the threat from free trade, in particular with the United States and, more broadly, between more and less developed economies.

## **Decentralized Development and National Governments**

The Arab Spring has brought about a heightened sense of urgency for governments and societies in the Middle East and North Africa to promote development that both directly engages and benefits the majority of the population. The people’s powerful demand for change, and their willingness to pay the most tragic price for it, was transformational. By

responding to this determination for genuine growth and justice, governments and social organizations now have the opportunity to gain greater national and regional stability by increasing jurisdictional autonomy of sub-national interests (communal, public, civil, and business). In practice this means local people receive the political and social space and financial support to create and implement development projects that meet their particular human needs and that are driven by them, as the intended beneficiaries. Decentralized systems thus engender localized decision-making (through different organizational arrangements, as discussed below) and utilize local capabilities (financial, operational and technical) to create development projects.

This section views contemporary political and economic conditions faced by national governments in Morocco and Iraq in particular. Additionally, it seeks to demonstrate that sustainable human development necessarily implies that governments decentralize their power in favor of advancing local planning and management. To sum up, a popular sense of control of local and personal development affairs that improve lives, achieved through a participatory process that reflects local tradition and norms, equates directly to the nature and longevity of the political order.

Morocco's relative social and political stability during this tumultuous time is largely due to King Mohammed VI's early and consistent promotion of human development, including from 2008 and his commitment to decentralized government, now enshrined in Article I of the new Moroccan constitution of 2011. The Moroccan experience thus demonstrates that national leaders gain public trust when they show sustained commitment to advance human development.<sup>2</sup> The late U.S. Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke (once a Peace Corps Director in Morocco in the early 1970s) viewed public diplomacy to be ultimately effective by partnering for human development around the globe,<sup>3</sup> an opinion supported by studies conducted after 2003.<sup>4</sup>

However, both the correct vision for development (in which Morocco has made important strides) *and* its successful implementation (which Morocco unfortunately has not achieved as needed) are required in order to attain long-term socio-political stability in the Arab Spring countries. In Morocco and elsewhere, local communities in all municipalities must

work together to identify and implement the projects they most need and want. This objective is achievable provided three factors are present: administrative structures and programs, local investment, and national political will.

Governments—Iraq’s being an example—may be reluctant to decentralize out of a concern that this process could promote secessionist movements and become a cause of conflict. However, more often it is precisely the resulting lack of empowerment in decision-making at the local and provincial level that heightens political resistance, tension, and sectarian conflict and violence.<sup>5</sup> While decentralization may cause national politicians and bureaucrats to feel depoliticized and less influential, the central level nevertheless remains vital in its areas of responsibility such as macroeconomic policy, foreign policy, national judiciary and security, and development targets that encourage inter-regional balance and performance.

The continuation of such centralization could also help avoid—and counter—the pitfalls of poorly implemented decentralization, such as reduced social protection and greater social and geographic stratification.<sup>6</sup> Therefore national governments ought to consider decentralizing for development in a positive light, as a short- and long-term strategy both for meeting the real needs of the people while at the same time advancing social integration, national unity,<sup>7</sup> and the development of grassroots political empowerment—all necessary conditions for governmental durability.

Would the violent turmoil that exists in present-day Iraq be less—or even absent—had the nation undertaken decentralized reconstruction in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion in 2003? Or adopted federalism (a formalized decentralized system) in the three years following,<sup>8</sup> before the upsurge in Sunni-Shia intercommunal violence? Does there exist a viable alternative to ISIS, notorious murderers also battling for hearts and minds and possess considerable financial resources as well as a commitment to the implementation of social and economic programs?

As unachievable as it may seem at the present time, decentralization of power to sub-provincial levels, as close to the people as possible, appears the only viable way for Iraqis to feel more in control of their lives and to have even a remote chance of experiencing the person-to-

person, Sunni-to-Shia interaction that could build localized processes of acknowledgement of each other, of shared development and of peace.

It has become urgent to provide despairing young people new opportunities, through sustainable projects where they can build a better future and develop a sense of belonging to their communities instead of joining violent extremist groups such as ISIS out of desperation to find salvation. In addition, the local self-reliance (or ability to implement community decisions) that decentralization promotes is suggested to increase the defense capabilities of a given country by making military attack on population centers more difficult.<sup>9</sup>

Federalist decentralization divides policy-making and management power between central government and regionally autonomous levels. A form of legitimate autonomy within an overall context of national sovereignty (similar to Morocco's proposed solution for the Western Sahara) could have the effect of decreasing the Shia-Sunni violence and conflict.<sup>10</sup> More than ever this kind of administrative arrangement appears to be the most viable means of achieving long-term stability and unity in Iraq.

The U.S.-led Iraqi reconstruction effort could have advanced sustainable sectarian reconciliation at the outset by integrating community-based methods in the process of building local administrative capacities and development projects. There are well-tested participatory approaches incorporating confidence-building measures that have led factions in conflict elsewhere to joint cooperation in project planning.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, from a human development perspective, it is inexplicable for the management of reconstruction to have been outsourced away from Iraqis to U.S. firms and agencies, including the military. The opportunity for tens of billions of dollars in US funding for Iraq's reconstruction to pass through American organizations in order for them to manage rebuilding appears to have been too great a temptation. There is also too often acceptance among international development agencies of the self-defeating assumption that there is greater efficiency in project implementation (in terms of costs and timetables) the more control they have over its management. The United Nations concluded from the reconstruction carried out after the First Gulf War that Iraqis could manage projects without onsite help from foreign contractors.<sup>12</sup> Foreign

reconstruction is prone to being self-serving and humiliating for the host people, and can cause staggering loss of potential and resources. Consequently, without Iraqis sense of ownership, too many projects remained incomplete or were sabotaged.<sup>13</sup> The well-established tenet accepted by 2006 in Iraq—that people do not destroy projects they control and from which they benefit—was learned (again) the tragically hard way: 318 American reconstruction personnel lost their lives over the course of the war.<sup>14</sup>

With a massive \$60 billion having been spent by the United States on reconstruction in Iraq, and considering the much lower costs of successful human development projects in Morocco, it is another travesty of the war that, today, not every Iraqi benefits directly in a meaningful way from U.S.-led reconstruction projects. Had this amount been spent on community projects—which are driven by local beneficiaries in all project phases and that bypass costs for security to protect US reconstruction teams—then the accompanying bottom-up social development and multisectoral partnerships would have created a *de facto* decentralized administrative system.

With the current increase of U.S.-led training of Iraqi trainers, there is now again the opportunity to integrate into these programs skills-building in facilitating community dialogue on vital projects, which will build goodwill with local populations likely more than any other measure. The training hubs of the U.S.-led coalition for Iraqis—who then themselves interface with the local communities—should also be strategic points of dispersion of participatory planning capacities; a model can be created in the pivotal Sunni Anbar province, whose human development projects may be funded by bordering Saudi Arabia.

If however, the Iraqis, employing necessary coalition support, do not fill the human development void, then it is clear that ISIS, like any hopeful long-term political player, will attempt to fulfil this role in its areas of control. To the enabler of truly sustainable human development belong the beneficiaries' hearts and minds.

In an evaluation conducted by this author, one Moroccan municipality (or commune, usually between 10,000 to 20,000 people) experiences development transformation (sustainable projects in agriculture, clean water, and income generation; as well as health, education, and

natural resource management) with an investment \$3 million. Theoretically, Morocco, with its 729 rural municipalities, should achieve a rural socio-economic and environmental renaissance, brought about through participatory democratic planning, at a cost of \$2 billion. (Morocco and Iraq each possess about the same national population, with Iraq having about 10 percent more people living in cities.) With participatory development enabled through decentralized systems, savings come from utilizing local know-how and resources, labor in-kind from beneficiaries, and lower administrative costs since projects are community-maintained.

## **What are Human Development Projects?**

In essence, for human development projects such as those specified below to be sustainable in financial, technical, social, and environmental terms, they must utilize methods that catalyze and organize the participation of the people, the intended beneficiaries. Evaluations of such projects conducted by the World Bank, USAID, the UN, and innumerable other organizations over several decades overwhelmingly show that active engagement of project beneficiaries—as much as adequate financing—is essential to achieving project sustainability.<sup>15</sup> Since the 1990s, after a decades-long path to legitimacy, the participatory approach has enjoyed mainstream acceptance at the cutting edge of human development practice.

The participatory premise is that the timing of meetings, project implementation and of the overall development process rests with the people—acting in communities—who identify problems, find and implement solutions and benefit from the initiatives thus created. When local communities perform their own investigation, analysis and implementation of projects, their knowledge (critically built during the data-generating and information-sharing process) is directly relevant.

The participatory approach has developed and expanded to comprise hundreds of ‘families’ of methods of carrying out group dialogue on community needs and data-gathering to identify and meet project development goals. To enable an inclusive planning process to take place the approach applies visual—and therefore generally accessible—dia-

gramming and planning centered around projects addressing high-priority, local, socio-economic and environmental goals. Typical methods of analysis include mapping, where local communities analyze household wellbeing, risks, and community assets and gaps. Diagrams identify key development institutions, work activities across seasons, historical timelines, and root causes of problems. Using visually-based methodology, community members improve their ability to determine and evaluate solutions to problems, create and present action plans, link available funds with priorities, manage projects, and advocate successful local initiatives for greater scale.

The participatory community planning approach has been applied with success in a wide variety of situations. The projects cited below all emerged from group assessments of their own needs.

In rural areas, improvements have taken place in farming systems,<sup>16</sup> food production,<sup>17</sup> natural resource management,<sup>18</sup> cooperatives,<sup>19</sup> land use,<sup>20</sup> pest control management,<sup>21</sup> sanitation,<sup>22</sup> and protected area management.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, in the field of business and public services, improvements have been noted in business management and production, infrastructural projects, poverty alleviation and economic development, technological developments including software, architectural planning, community control of policing and schools, the creation and delivery of services, and waste dumping.<sup>24</sup>

With regard to health care, improvements are visible in terms of access and empowerment for the disabled,<sup>25</sup> disease control (health education),<sup>26</sup> sexual and reproductive health,<sup>27</sup> public health, and nutrition.<sup>28</sup>

In pedagogy, this methodology has been shown to assist formal and informal education,<sup>29</sup> experiential learning and communication,<sup>30</sup> adult education<sup>31</sup> and—on college campuses—in increasing student involvement in academic decisions,<sup>32</sup> university-community partnerships,<sup>33</sup> gender and youth development,<sup>34</sup> and in overcoming racial prejudice and other forms of discrimination.<sup>35</sup>

Participatory planning methodology improves disaster management, including crisis situations such as war and drought,<sup>36</sup> as well as their amelioration/peace-building,<sup>37</sup> management of displaced people,<sup>38</sup> emer-

gency relief in a conflict situation,<sup>39</sup> and the work of welfare organizations.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, it is cited as a crucial factor in improved organizational development;<sup>41</sup> building civil society;<sup>42</sup> human resources management;<sup>43</sup> project and program evaluations;<sup>44</sup> management practices;<sup>45</sup> and policy development, reform, and advocacy.<sup>46</sup>

## **Human Development over the Decades; Lessons for the Arab Spring**

This section explores the beginnings of social development theory and practice from before the Second World War to the globalized present. These development themes and experiences provide a context to the assertion that communities in Arab Spring countries have the potential to overcome specific challenges including rural poverty and those associated with free trade. Furthermore, Arab states that have not gone through the upheaval precipitated by the Arab Spring could prevent such revolutions if they were to preempt and adopt these development methods and strategies.

### *Pre-War to the 1950s*

Analysis of the relationship between popular participation and social development has been undertaken from the times of the ancient Greeks. However, it was only during the nineteenth century that participation (then defined as ‘civil involvement in political life’<sup>47</sup>) came to be viewed as a precondition for overcoming social inequalities. Local community initiatives took place in the late nineteenth century—generally in poor urban neighborhoods to improve living conditions—inspired by the intellectual legacy of Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59). The modern phase of community development emerged in the 1960s in the United States.

In the aftermath of the two World Wars, development policies emphasized economic growth and reconstruction, as well as, to a lesser degree, human development. Between 1948 and 1952, more than \$13 billion in U.S. foreign economic assistance was provided through the Marshall Plan to various countries to support rebuilding infrastructure, food aid, management training, institution building, and improved ag-

gricultural production. The success of the Marshall Plan led to the United States expanding aid to developing countries around the world, a process which initially took place within the framework of the 1949 Act for International Development (also known as the Four Point Program). Taken from President Truman's 1949 inaugural address, the goals of the four points can be summarized as follows: (1) support for decisions of the United Nations; (2) revitalization of the world economy; (3) "strengthen[ing] freedom-loving peoples around the world against the evils of aggression"; and (4) modernization and capital investment. European countries bordering the Communist bloc received 63 percent of military aid and 54 percent of development aid.<sup>48</sup> During the 1950s, U.S. bilateral aid programs in Africa were designed to help build infrastructure, promote growth, ensure the stability of governments sympathetic to the United States, and assist American firms to access their markets and resources.

Through the 1950s, mainstream modernization economists—emphasizing capital, technology, labor, income, import/exports and urbanization to achieve growth—distrusted what they considered the "populist" development work of social workers and field activists. They viewed the masses as lacking the skills and foresight to plan for the future and thought the process could invite political instability.<sup>49</sup> Thus, human development as a concept first emerged in recognition of the creativity of local communities and marginalized groups, their values, expressions of identity, and needs.<sup>50</sup> It is both intuitive and logical that local communities know local conditions best, since they live with them and are thus positioned to manage and monitor development activities in a sustainable manner. As democratic planning of local development progresses, people feel affirmed—a public sentiment that would be particularly politically and socially stabilizing in the context of the Arab Spring.

### *The 1960s: The People's View and Satisfaction*

During the 1960s (referred to by some as "the first development decade"<sup>51</sup>), mainstream development initiatives began to reflect the view that overall social development—and not just capital, technology, labor and income—is essential to alleviate poverty.<sup>52</sup> The major historic ex-

pression of this is the United States Foreign Service Act (1961), passed under the leadership of President Kennedy. It marked an attempt to de-contextualize U.S. development assistance from U.S. military, political, and economic interests. Further, the 1961 Act created the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as the Peace Corps.

Regarding the present day Peace Corps, while typical two-year volunteer assignments are likely prohibitive in many Arab Spring countries, Peace Corps Response, the agency's program for shorter, specialized assignments is perhaps more suited to the region in the current circumstances. Response Volunteers ought to be offered to universities in Arab Spring countries, especially since such contact can be an excellent gateway to human development opportunities for the students in their engagement with local communities. Hassan II University is Morocco's first experience—and success—in utilizing a Response Volunteer in this way. Currently, the quantity of Volunteer projects across the agency is necessarily low structurally because of the extremely small amount of funding Volunteers can access (sometimes less than \$500 per volunteer per year, contributed from USAID's Small Project Assistance program). Furthermore, as part of a government agency, there are boundaries to the extent Volunteers can raise funds for local community projects. Considering, for example, that a village clean drinking water system can range in price from \$5,000 to \$25,000, a Volunteer should more ideally receive (in combination from expanding USAID's Small Project Assistance grants and from the host countries) an annual project development allowance of \$5,000 to accomplish a major local human development impact. This, combined with appropriate Volunteer training in facilitating participatory planning, would make the Peace Corps the most immediately productive and cost-effective international development agency of the United States (and likely of any government). Adopting this approach, combined with Kennedy's vision to expand the agency to 100,000 Volunteers, the Peace Corps would achieve its latent global potential to advance popular development.

*The 1970s and Promoting Self-Reliant Rural Development*

Human development aligned with 1970s perspectives of scholars and people throughout the developing world who considered the modernization model overly geared towards consumption and who believed that neither account for their social reality nor unfolded in a universal manner.<sup>53</sup> According to this world-system or international dependency point of view, the developing nations' export of their surplus raw materials and farm products leads to an economic order resulting in their impoverishment, social dislocation, and reduced autonomy—and which furthers the concentration of wealth in developed countries.<sup>54</sup>

King Mohammed VI pointedly described this perspective in his 2014 speech at the U.N. General Assembly when he said: “What applies to the West should not be used as the sole criterion for determining the efficiency of other development models; nor should one make comparisons between countries—however similar their circumstances may be—even when these countries belong to the same geographical area. Accordingly, the first call I should like to make from this rostrum regards the need to respect the characteristic values and principles of each country as it builds its own development model. This is particularly true for developing countries which are still suffering from the consequences of colonialism.” He continued: “Instead of providing the assistance needed by the peoples concerned, some Western countries, which asked nobody's permission to colonize countries of the South, continue to impose on them harsh conditions which hinder these countries' normal course towards progress.”<sup>55</sup>

By way of example, then, what are the characteristics of systemic rural poverty that exists in present-day Morocco, and how have US agencies' efforts fared while seeking to improve the situation, particularly since 2006 when Moroccan-US free trade has been in effect and which has since further tilted the balance of trade in favor of the United States? There are not nearly enough value-added enterprises of raw products, especially among farming communities, where most poverty is concentrated.<sup>56</sup> Without adding processing, organic certification and/or other value, vast revenue is lost and the largest gains on Moroccan agricultural product are made by others, mostly in Europe. Morocco's export of its

raw product for processing elsewhere is at the root of rural poverty, consistent with the world-system/dependency explanation. Its proponents generally consider human development a befitting remedy for these shared problems of Southern nations. It will further their twin objectives of delivering socio-economic benefits to meet immediate needs, while at the same time inducing institutional structural reforms that build self-reliance, thereby stemming increasing foreign debt (the cause of devaluation, inflation, unemployment, and political instability).

In Morocco, the dominant barriers to realizing value-added and market opportunities include a pervasive need for irrigation infrastructure, technical skills, knowledge of trade opportunities, an agricultural processing line (from tree and plant nurseries to market) and federated associations to promote sustainable development. According to Morocco's Agency for Agricultural Development, 80 percent of the Kingdom's 14 million rural inhabitants depend on revenues from the agricultural sector. Rural Moroccans comprise 43 percent of the country's 32 million population and 75 percent of their households earn less than the national average (IFAD, 2013). Farmers primarily rely on revenue from barley and corn; however, increases in population and low-market value thwart economic growth. These staples are planted on more than 70 percent of agricultural land, yet account for only 10-15 percent of agricultural revenue. Farmers are transitioning to cash-crops, commonly fruit trees and plants, to generate greater income. However, the high demand for young trees has made them too expensive for many families and nurseries and the skills to maintain them are not sufficiently dispersed. The Ministry of Agriculture suggests billions of trees and plants are needed in the process of overcoming subsistence practices.

The U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in Morocco wound down its first five-year project in 2013. MCC missed an historic opportunity with its Moroccan ministerial partners to greatly advance the country in its agricultural transition. Granted a budget of \$320 million in this sector (out of about \$600 million in total), it seems MCC top-down managed this initiative. For example, MCC bought and planted young trees, rather than creating new, community-managed nurseries from seed, which would have resulted in millions more trees for the same cost. Furthermore, they planted just a few varieties,

including olive, creating discontent among California olive growers who felt their government was aiding their global competition to a disproportionate extent.<sup>57</sup> If instead MCC had planted across Morocco the few dozen varieties of fruit seeds and aromatic plants that do not require pesticides and then secured their organic certification, it would have on average doubled the products' value in comparison to what Moroccan farmers currently receive. Additionally, doing so would have promoted greater long-term comparative advantage and economic diversity, inducing less pressure on a particular product's market. Finally, MCC had to pay local people to water the trees they planted, showing a serious lack of community ownership; local beneficiaries are found to give their work free of charge to development projects when these have been determined by them through participatory democratic means, receiving as a result socio-economic and environmental benefits. For this to happen, their participation needs to occur at all stages and at the earliest possible opportunity. In sum, local people should manage from the bottom up the design, implementation, and evaluation processes of projects so that the potential arising from similar opportunities may be harnessed successfully in the future.

### *The 1980s and 1990s: Globalization, Stimulus and Free Trade*

The 1980s witnessed the rise of anti-development movements that arose in the context of the liberalization and privatization policies of the IMF and World Bank foisted on governments of developing nations. The shared consensus is that these policies were excessive in their economic austerity, bringing about major political instability in emerging countries and continuing to bear harmful financial consequences into the 1990s.<sup>58</sup>

Today, from a decentralization-human development perspective, the global debate between the proponents of austerity and stimulus, as to which measure will reverse troubled economies, errs in favor of stimulus as more likely the better choice (with a *caveat*). Human development stimulus would see thousands of smaller projects at the local level that communities identify and control, instead of fewer, large-scale costly projects with higher associated risks. Benefits accrue for local communi-

ties from projects that are more quickly implemented. In addition, such human development is finely suited to help shorten recessions and promote growth, in two ways. Firstly, people's ability to adapt to changes by building their practical and critical thinking skills and confidence is increased.<sup>59</sup> Secondly, economic diversity is created with lower, shared risks on private investments with smaller project costs and new partnerships (including community contributions of work and materials).<sup>60</sup>

While the philosophical roots of participatory methodology are ancient, based in consultative decision-making, they are integral to the modern era. Participatory development stimulus stands where the classic 'left' and 'right' of the political spectrum can meet, creating decentralized systems and building a society that empowers at the local level and where the people determine and drive their individual and communal growth.

In the context of the U.S. political landscape, participatory stimulus combines core features of both major political parties. It is dedicated to alleviating poverty that is explained to be systemically and historically created (a Democratic outlook) while at the same time it sees central planning of local development as contributing to waste and resentment, seeking instead to transfer power to the people so that they may manage their own affairs (federalism, the Republican party's identity principle).

The prerequisite for the application of participatory stimulus is that it is supported adequately by national laws and policies that promote local democratic planning and action and subnational multi-sectoral partnership.

National foreign debt ultimately reflects endorsements of borrowers' national growth. Participatory stimulus is the smart insurance that creditors should support to guarantee in the best manner possible that loans are paid back. With connections that transcend party lines and benefits in multiple domains, participatory stimulus may also be the most politically acceptable pathway across the global arena.

The globalization epoch began in the 1990s and intensifies multi-dimensional relations across borders. It is fueled by declining communication and transport costs, a technological revolution and the spread of economic and political liberalization. The Arab Spring profoundly embodies globalization's empowering characteristics of a "global-local

nexus”<sup>61</sup> and “time-space compression.”<sup>62</sup> The people of the region are creating change and value locally, while global networks (in-part) can form and become formed by the local events.

Such interconnectedness between nations and people in a situation of free trade of goods and services could also be very promising and contribute to lessening the potential for regional and international conflict. This could happen if free trade agreements brought in their wake additional significant investment and measurable success in human development, particularly in rural areas, with the time needed to address structural reforms, including decentralization, before the removal of tariffs. Without the presence of all these factors, the potential economic consequences of globalization, with its unprecedented level of integration of national economies and its dislodging of identities and communities towards an homogenous global culture and products, could dislocate and impoverish the interior of countries and concentrate wealth in large cities.

Mexico’s hurried opening of its markets to U.S. and Canadian corn under NAFTA provides an unfortunate example. The resulting fallout in the price paid to farmers combined with Mexico’s ‘prudent’ cuts in rural development spending, forced 1.5 million farmers from their land during the 1990s.<sup>63</sup> With the drop in global commodity prices during that same period, tens of thousands of small farms in the United States were also lost (though income assistance was in place for them), even as the agricultural trade surplus with Mexico ballooned.<sup>64</sup> Trade policies, new technology and subsidies for export trading partners devastated and provoked counter-actions from local farmers unable to compete with cheap grain imports in several countries including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia, Ecuador, India, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, and South Korea.<sup>65</sup> Between 1995 and 2002 in the United States, 38,310 small farms were lost largely because NAFTA and the World Trade Organization required countries to remove safeguards that protected small farmers from predatory commodity traders and poor weather. Trading giants in grains manipulated supplies and prices so farmers were paid at an all-time low for their commodities while the consumer price index for food in the United States rose by almost 20 percent during that period.<sup>66</sup>

The brutal lesson learned from the Mexican-U.S. experience under NAFTA—the need for a transition period—is being incorporated into current U.S. free trade agreements with Morocco, Jordan, and Bahrain. However, the transition period to address the unequal distribution of the burden by creating employment and diversifying incomes is not unfolding at the rate needed, especially in rural areas, adding further political and economic stress, which could lead to a drop in real wages and higher trade deficits, which we are seeing in Morocco. Ideally, in their design free trade agreements should incorporate new national human development initiatives that are genuinely participatory in their application. The consequence of advancing free trade with industrialized countries in a given region—without governments in that region (with international development assistance) first building decentralized development programs for vast human development—will be a pronounced increase in social tension that could deteriorate into chaos.

## **The Moroccan King and Implementing Decentralization and Development**

The passion of King Mohammed VI for human development is clear and the Moroccan decentralization model, innovative and highly progressive. Nevertheless, their effective implementation—together with the necessary administrative structures for national public benefit—is widely viewed to be insufficient, yet rectifiable in this respect. This section explains Morocco's decentralization model and additionally describes its broader applications, integration with Islamic concepts and relevance in the context of Palestine.

For years prior to the onset of the Arab Spring, the King of Morocco consistently promoted human development and a decentralized government system in order to efficiently and directly respond quickly to the needs of the people. The King's framework for advancing both development and democracy rests on the binding together of the two processes so that each occurs by way of the other and are thus mutually reinforcing. Development then occurs through localized democratic procedures and democracy-building happens through the participatory method of advancing human development.

The King often speaks of this integrated democratic-sustainable development approach in his public statements. For example, a hundred published statements of his appearing from 2005 to 2010 in Maghreb Arab Press, Morocco's government press agency, there are 105 such references. It would be hard to find more scathing a speech (to both houses of parliament no less) by any head of state on local government mismanagement (concerning Casablanca) than that of the King of Morocco on 11 October 2013. This is rivalled by his August 20 speech on education of the same year.<sup>67</sup> The King speaks with dedication about unity among southern nations—as well as unity among Morocco's religious and ethnic groups, all of which are enumerated in the 2011 Constitution. He places particular emphasis on visiting new local projects during his travels throughout the country. His 2005 launch of the National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD) galvanized a progressive, self-reliant and sustainable human development vision. Despite its shortcomings, analyzed below, the NIHD inspired civil society action, government support and flexibility, corporate social responsibility, and was a necessary precursor of decentralization, as discussed further below.

Since his accession, the Moroccan king has overseen the formalization of his progressive ideas relating to sustainable development and participatory democracy, national political reconciliation, decentralization, civil society, gender justice, South-South partnership and ethnic-cultural-religious diversity, among others. The king himself certainly wins the general Moroccan public's hearts and minds—after all, years of consistent dedication to popular development and empowerment engenders public trust. The launch of the Morocco-U.S. Strategic Dialogue is a reflection of his steadfast commitment to development and democratic reforms.

However, with the institutional legal frameworks in place, everything still rests on actual delivery: are local communities coming together and creating initiatives that better their lives? In Morocco, the reality is that human development implementation and tangible results fall dishearteningly short of critical public needs and expectations. On the whole, in the eyes of far too high a percentage of the public, execution of the participatory plan is not living up to either the promise—or the great potential for success.

Conventionally, there are considered to be four general pathways for nations to decentralize—devolution, de-concentration, delegation and privatization. In principle, King Mohammed VI's Roadmap to Decentralization synergistically combines the first three of those organizational approaches that have been applied in cases around the globe.<sup>68</sup> First, the King's plan involves devolution—building necessary capabilities of sub-national government—in the manner of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Brazil.<sup>69</sup> Second, the Roadmap incorporates de-concentration-collaborative work by sub-national government, civil, and community groups for development, with ongoing central-level support (financial and technical, for example)—as applied in India and Sri Lanka.<sup>70</sup> Third on the list is delegation—the participatory method—as applied in Tanzania,<sup>71</sup> where, as Morocco's monarch describes it, “citizens are the engine for and ultimate objective of all initiatives.”<sup>72</sup> The King underscored his nation's contribution to the decentralization project, namely “the necessary public funds.”<sup>73</sup>

Combining these three decentralization pathways creates a social public system where national and sub-national multi-sectoral actors assist and partner (via devolution and deconcentration) to support community-driven development (delegation). This would, in theory, create a system and an environment that are highly conducive to the advancement of sustainable human development. It is the reform and creation of public policies and programs that need to follow across the human service sectors. In addition, working through and evolution of the functioning of the decentralized system are proving to be hurdles for Morocco and its national government, but which could be overcome with specialized experiential training.

Morocco's 2011 elections saw the rise of the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD). The PJD has the opportunity to embed decentralization in public administration, effectively the *sine qua non* for human development to take hold across the kingdom. This would be entirely appropriate given that Islamic concepts—including *shura*, *ummah*, *baya* and *tawhidi*, among others—embody the ideas of decentralization for human development.<sup>74</sup> Together, these concepts form a system of local governance and comprise part of a worldwide Muslim framework that furthers social justice, accountability of leaders and em-

powerment of the people. This example illustrates the broad appeal of beneficiary-managed social enterprises, which exists precisely because its fundamental concepts are mirrored in diverse philosophical and spiritual traditions.

Prior to its rise to political power, Hamas was known for its decentralized management of human service delivery. The Fayyad Plan's approach in the West Bank embodied components of decentralized human development in order to build political and economic self-reliance by increasing local control. Decentralized organizational arrangements for human development are a necessary component of liberation from international dependency<sup>75</sup> and could now be a critical structural feature in a Palestinian unity government. Self-reliance through decentralization and development could enable Palestinians to de-link from economic and political domination, price fluctuations, and external control, as well as promote their autonomy. Palestinian governments could find common ground in the process of forming a federalist-decentralized government to enable what they have proven already by their actions to be at the core of their identities—namely meeting human needs through local action and management.

## **Implementing Decentralization in Morocco: Problems and Reforms**

Having established human development as the primary goal, we turn now to practical questions. What are some of the fundamental choices and difficulties that Morocco faces in implementing its designated national programs and charters and how should they be addressed?

First, decentralization of development management and capacities should take place as far down as possible in order to effectively and directly engage local people and communities in the planning of projects that are most important to them. The 2010 amendment to the national Communal Charter set the stage for the communal (municipal) level to plan and drive human development. The Charter requires communal councils to create community development plans formulated by the participation of the people. These completed multi-year plans are sent to the ministries of Interior and Finance for consideration for funding.

Are Moroccan communes ready, however, to take on this responsibility of determining (with the citizens of their jurisdictions) the most needed and viable development projects? A governor in the Marrakesh region recounted to me that, after making available \$50,000 in funding for a number of municipalities to create participatory community development plans which, once submitted, were found to be identical with regard to both priorities and text. In the participatory approach, there is no blueprint, no single way in which development unfolds because of the range of permutations of several factors—local economic, social and environmental—that exist. It is, therefore, impossible that all the villages of those municipalities of a province ranked the same development projects in exactly the same way. It is clear from this that council and community members did not experience the training they needed to facilitate effective community-wide dialogue toward creating project action plans. Unfortunately, this seems not to be an isolated case—even as Morocco has principled and legal frameworks for decentralized development, the people on the whole do not have the training and knowledge needed to take full advantage of this enormous opportunity.

What is the remedy? Villages and neighborhoods need third party facilitators of group dialogue who apply participatory planning methods for community assessments and consensus-building. Indeed, the quantity and durability of local human development projects largely reflects the extent to which such facilitators are involved in this way. Facilitators could be school teachers, members of civil society organizations, locally elected officials, government extension workers, university students, representatives of socially responsible corporations, religious leaders or development workers—potentially any citizen who is in a position to interface with local communities and whom local people accept in that role. Government, civil, and private agencies need to train their community-level workers in participatory facilitation by way of ‘learning by doing’ in the field in order to catalyze and assist local development processes. This experiential learning pedagogy not only most effectively builds the needed skills, but also results in communities identifying and creating development projects, as the training takes place in real settings. In Morocco there is a dearth of participatory trainers and too few programs, although the need for both is broadly recognized. The kingdom

is significantly expanding its investments in youth—including training at Youth Centers, universities, and high schools—and starting to incorporate participatory facilitation of development would create abundant opportunities for youth themselves and for their surroundings.

Essentially, the challenge to participatory human development across provinces and nations lies in catalyzing grassroots community meetings across villages and neighborhoods and establishing the projects that communities determine during that process, to which they contribute in-kind, including in terms of labor. Typically, entire communities do not come together spontaneously to plan projects in a participatory way; rather, there needs to be a catalyst of an inclusive process, who also acts to help maintain the development momentum, especially during the early stages as partnerships become identified and form. In a sense, facilitators are community organizers and as such their function has gone by a variety of titles. In this communal context, the functions of facilitators are to organize meetings where all voices can be heard, manage competing interests—and conflicts—analyze factors that affect projects, understand power relations and the needs of the poor, build confidence and self-reliance, form partnerships, inform the communities, as beneficiaries, of government and other resources available, and generally act as a bridge between people and institutions.

There is a country-wide need and desire for experiential participatory development training, especially now as Morocco requires this as part of its national initiatives for growth. Morocco's Ministry of Interior needs to continue to support the existing development training programs for women elected to communal councils and to expand them to include all council members. Locally elected women face major challenges as part of male-dominated councils and professional support networks are needed and important to help them to be effective. Human service ministries (Agriculture, Health, Education, etc.) need to provide the same kind of training for their community-related workers. The National Endowment for Democracy and the Middle East Partnership Initiative, among others, have assisted in the creation of such programs in certain regions.

The National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD) administered at the provincial level, created an ideal framework for projects that reflect people's ideas as well as for the training required for local commu-

nities to determine those priority projects. Additionally, the process of Moroccan decentralization and the NIHD are synergistic, mutually reinforcing each other. The NIHD could help build new partnerships and structures of regionalization through funding training and projects—essentially the bricks and mortar of a decentralized administration. Implementing projects in this way would create the pathways, partnerships and institutional arrangements inherent in decentralized systems.

In terms of planning, it made sense for the NIHD (2005) to precede decentralization (2008). However, the INDH needed to be more effective in order to lay further—and still needed—groundwork for equitable and prosperity-generating decentralization. Generally, the INDH accepts proposals only once a year at altering (and short lead) times and proposal formats remain intricate and inaccessible for most people (in a country where rural illiteracy rates are greater than two thirds). NIHD administrators in turn often complain about the dearth of viable proposal submissions. The result is that the great majority of communities who have planned projects are still not benefitting from NIHD. The king and the NIHD Observatory have themselves stated that the levels of community participation in planning and managing INDH projects are not nearly adequate.

The King of Morocco's great challenge is to guide the transition toward decentralization, as an intermediary between social sectors and institutions and between the central, regional, and provincial administrative tiers, so that new and productive relationships are formed. In all probability it would be a mistake to allow the government to decentralize by itself; given the depth of the central-level bureaucratic mindset and *modus operandi* that may require external facilitation to build horizontal and vertical multi-sector partnerships and mediate in the decentralizing process.

Therefore, this author recommends the creation of a new agency of decentralization on the part of the King, possibly as part of the palace administration. Such an act would institutionalize this necessary role and allot a definite time-frame, given that the decentralized system itself must be self-sustaining within a short period. The future of Morocco, and arguably of all Arab Spring nations, depends on decentralization so that human development may be successful.

## **The Western (Moroccan) Sahara**

Even taking into account the acknowledgment of the very harsh experiences endured by the parties to the Western Saharan conflict and by the people affected, and with complete recognition of all the parties' expressions of identity, there exists an inescapable reality: not under any imaginable circumstance will Morocco relinquish its sovereignty over the area. Far too much on different levels of national effort and identity are invested in its southern provinces, where is now an existential matter for Morocco.

This conflict of forty years has prevented the Maghreb regional bloc of nations from forging the wide-ranging partnerships needed to excel economically and live securely in a globalized world. Shared regional challenges involving migration, the environment, and security are not being addressed as they should, and opportunities for green agricultural growth that could transform societies through reinvestment in communities, as well as other major human development initiatives, are unrealized. There is an unfortunate irony in that Morocco's king, who is intellectually and emotionally a backer of regionalism—and specifically of the Maghreb Union of North African nations which is the subject of his 1993 doctoral thesis—should have this aspiration rendered unrealizable because of conflict surrounding the Sahara, the region which to Morocco is as sacred as the very concept of sovereignty. Through the years, various analyses have attempted to make connections between the Saharan conflict and the plight of the Palestinian people and the conflict with Israel. The common denominator in the two situations is an acceptance that attaining peace requires meeting at least the minimal national aspirations of all the parties to a given conflict. Thus, in the Middle East there can be no peace without Palestinian statehood; neither can there be peace without Israel attaining its legitimate security needs. In the Sahara, while the Polisario Front seeks complete independence, from the Moroccan point of view, it is wholly unimaginable that the Kingdom would relinquish this territory.

In an effort to resolve the Western Sahara conflict, the central parties—Morocco and the Polisario Front—are talking under United Nations auspices.<sup>76</sup> Morocco catalyzed the negotiations with its reconcilia-

tion proposal, delivered to the United Nations Security Council, to create an enhanced autonomy of the Sahara within Moroccan sovereignty. Morocco is committed both to advanced decentralization (referred to by the King as regionalization) and human development using the participatory approach; these would be applied to the benefit of the region's inhabitants. Morocco's proposal has received a high level of international interest and is considered to be viable, by the United States included.

There is a regional and international need to resolve this conflict. Critically, maintaining the *status quo* is not in the interests of either party at the epicenter of the issue. Morocco could in theory press ahead alone with its autonomy plan for the region—and should, if it continues to find that its overtures to its partner for peace do not go beyond non-starters. However, doing so without reconciliation creates difficulties for Morocco and the Polisario Front.

This situation has created the chance for them to stretch the bounds of what Saharan autonomy within Moroccan sovereignty could mean. One cannot help but wonder whether, if they were to put to one side the 'label' of independence for the moment and focus instead on defining the practical conditions they seek, their core requirements for attaining peace could be met within this arrangement. As a result of the Moroccan proposal, the onus is placed on the Polisario to describe how they envisage an organizational arrangement for governance that promotes the prosperity of the people and assess whether such an arrangement could be accommodated by the 'autonomy within sovereignty' framework. They may conclude, after thorough analysis, that Morocco's proposal enables a governance system that could meet their and the people's economic, political, cultural, and environmental interests.

Morocco's 'autonomy within sovereignty' proposal is not a contradiction in terms. A high degree of flexibility could be envisaged, potentially enabling complete levels of self-determination in socio-economic and political matters. In all likelihood this would include complete control of cultural affairs, the ability to levy taxes and determine budgets for the region, the opportunity to generate revenue based on natural resources in the area and international trade, to maintain ports, to develop economic policies, and to enter elections and be elected.

If—after negotiation and discussion—conditions such as these still did not meet the Polisario Front’s self-determined interests and needs, they could reject them. However, not entering into substantial discussions at this point would be deeply unfortunate, considering that essentially Morocco is not in a position to offer more than this framework.

However, the Kingdom would remain in a position to press ahead unilaterally with its plan for decentralization—creating genuine autonomy within sovereignty through the real application of the participatory method, with the goal of advancing human development for every person in the region, beginning with the most marginalized communities. However, in order to successfully do so, a far greater amount of local community planning and projects need to be implemented at an accelerated rate as compared to current levels of achievement. Communities know what they need and want; it is a matter of them meeting and planning and the dedication of financing the initiatives they together determine.

In actuality, a five-year participatory development mobilization of this kind is a clear pathway to peace that is in Morocco’s control. Integrating and culminating into a referendum on independence organized along inclusive terms would result in a win for autonomy, due to the enhanced empowerment and self-reliance that are brought on by people’s participation in development. There is hardly a greater promoter of goodwill and national unity, than helping to enable the achievement of the self-described development goals of local communities.

## **Conclusion**

To endure in political terms, governments in the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere need to disperse power to local levels and support communities in creating the development they seek. Additionally, government and private budgets for regional and international development assistance should more heavily support building the skills necessary to facilitate participatory community planning and implement projects determined by the local people—and agencies should be flexible as to the types of such projects.

Empowering human development lies at the nexus of most if not all world philosophies. The participatory approach has ascended globally on the basis of irrefutable evidence mounting over decades that it is the staple of sustainability because it is driven by the people. Political survival and human development have aligned in the Arab Spring. Boldness is rewarded in this tumultuous time and King Mohammed VI of Morocco is a leader who has endorsed and instituted many of the necessary national frameworks for a human development 'take-off'. As vital as this is, it will be the actual implementation that ultimately decides futures in the Arab Spring, necessitating the application of the practical recommendations contained herein.

Following is a summary:

1. Political stability is aligned with human development; peace is at the price of jurisdictional diversity and autonomy.
2. Human development excels when governments decentralize power.
3. Community participation in all phases of project development is critical for sustainability.
4. Human development builds decentralization by forging institutional partnerships and helping to build shared development so that powerful interests are not simply further entrenched at sub-regional levels.
5. Support for popular development engenders trust and is an effective pathway for public diplomacy, and is critical now to be integrated in U.S.-led training of Iraqi trainers.
6. Even with good policies in place, it is their delivery that is crucial: are local communities creating initiatives that better their lives?
7. Decentralization is necessary to achieve liberation from international dependency and could further unify Palestinian government.
8. Decentralized human development has been integral to the human service work of Islamic groups and is embodied in Islamic concepts.
9. Parties to the Western Sahara conflict should define what 'autonomy within sovereignty' could mean, potentially revealing mutually acceptable decentralization arrangements.

10. Decentralization should take place as far down as possible to directly engage local communities; administrations can later re-centralize if needed.
11. Villages and neighborhoods need facilitators of community dialogue who apply participatory methods and move forward project development.
12. Support is necessary for training in participatory facilitation (by way of ‘learning by doing’) and resulting projects determined by local people.
13. Peace Corps Response, with its program of shorter assignments, is appropriate in volatile situations and locations. USAID should fund \$5,000 per Volunteer service for projects and the number of Volunteers should increase to 100,000.
14. Barriers to value-added and market opportunities in subsistence settings is a widespread need of irrigation infrastructure, fruit seeds, technical and cooperative-building, and value-chains that deliver products to global markets.
15. For economic stimulus, thousands of smaller projects at the community level will be far more effective than fewer, large-scale and much more costly projects.
16. To build interdependence and lessen conflict, free trade could help if governments in the region first decentralize for human development over a transition period.

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