

### 1: Trump's challenges in the Middle East - CNN Video

*From the diplomatic shakeups in the Gulf to the defeat of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq, the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) witnessed dramatic shifts in*

Abed and Hamid R. The authors would like to thank Susan Creane for her comments and suggestions, other colleagues in the Middle Eastern Department of the IMF for valuable comments on earlier drafts, Heather Huckstep for administrative support, and Brett Rayner for research assistance. The authors bear the sole responsibility for any remaining errors and omissions. The Middle East and North Africa MENA is an economically diverse region that includes countries with a common heritage, vastly different levels of per capita income, and a common set of challenges see Box 1. The MENA region benefited immensely from the wealth created by the sharp increase in oil prices in the s. The explosion of investment and growth in the oil-exporting countries resonated in other countries of the region through a sharp rise in worker remittances, trade, and capital flows. Gross capital formation, although volatile, was maintained at exceptionally high rates, supporting a strong increase in growth rates of GDP and a vast improvement in living standards. Substantial financial assets were accumulated abroad as national savings exceeded investment, especially in the oil-producing countries. This deterioration in economic conditions brought about pressures for economic reforms, which were undertaken by a number of countries during the mid-to-late s and early s. Fiscal reforms included introducing value-added tax VAT , phasing out subsidies, and improving management of public expenditure. Monetary policy frameworks were strengthened by introducing indirect monetary policy instruments. Trade regimes were liberalized and foreign direct investment FDI was encouraged while exchange rates became more flexible. Although the momentum for reform has slackened more recently, other macroeconomic outcomes have remained positive in much of the region. For example, inflation has been low and on the decline for most of the s; fiscal deficits, while persisting, have narrowed since the mids to levels below those of other developing countries. Financial crises, which plagued other regions during the past two decades, were averted. In addition, for a large number of countries in the region, external and domestic debts are not high by international standards, and debt service is low. Income levels show wide variations within the region. The 24 MENA countries and territories, which include about 7. They share common challenges and cultural links distinct from neighboring economies, including those of Israel and Turkey. In terms of current U. Of the 24 countries and territories, 13 are oil-exporting countries. The dominant religion is Islam, although there are sizable religious minority groups in several countries. However, there are significant linguistic diversities within some countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq. The countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates formed the GCC in the early s, in addition to launching a customs union in January with plans to establish a monetary union with a single currency by January 1, In sum, while macroeconomic stability was maintained, the MENA region as a whole failed to generate high and sustained growth rates. In contrast to other developing countries, the region underperformed since the s and, as a result, did not reap the full benefits of globalization and world economic integration. The experience of the last 50 years across wide regions of the globe has shown that developing countries, on average, have found it much easier to initiate growth than to sustain it. What is unique is the extent to which growth rates since the s have been volatile and low relative to other developing countries. In the oil-producing countries, the real per capita GDP growth rate hereafter referred to as growth was twice as volatile as in the non-oil economies. Even as economic performance in the region improved in the s, the region achieved an annual average growth rate of only 1. A major consequence of this poor record is persistent high unemployment, which has been reinforced by years of high growth rates of population and labor force. The experience accumulated to date indicates that economies that, over extended periods, embrace openness and globalization tend to grow faster than those that adopt inward-looking growth strategies. And, in this regard, the performance of the MENA region has fallen short, depriving many countries of reaping the full benefits of globalization. The challenges facing the region are daunting. Countries in the region must achieve higher rates of sustainable growth and integrate more fully into the global economy if they are to succeed in creating

meaningful employment for a rapidly rising labor force and, more generally, reduce poverty and improve living conditions. In this pamphlet, we take a closer look at economic performance in the region, particularly with respect to growth, unemployment, and global integration, followed by an exploration of possible reasons for the weak performance. In part, this reflects the extended weakness in the oil markets as producers outside of the MENA region gained market share at the expense of oil exporters in the region. Purchasing power parity GDP weights are used for all aggregate averages except for Asia Eight, which is a simple average. Within the region, the contrast in the growth experience of the oil and non-oil economies is striking. On the one hand, in the last 30 years, per capita income in the oil-producing countries declined at a rate of 1. Even during the booming s, oil-producing countries grew, in real per capita terms, at about half the rate of non-oil-producing countries in the region. Again, much higher rates of population growth in the oil-producing countries, among other factors, pulled down per capita growth rates. On the other hand, non-oil economies, enjoyed positive growth rates over the last 30 years, matching those of developing countries in the s and s. It was only in the s that growth in the non-oil economies at 1. In addition to differences in growth volatility and demographic dynamics, the oil-producing countries seem to have experienced what has become known as the "resource curse. Aggregate economic growth in oil-producing countries continues to be dominated by developments in the oil sector. In many of the larger oil economies, oil and other hydrocarbon products, on average, account for 75 percent of total exports. The non-oil sectors, on the other hand, have yet to generate sustained growth high enough to absorb the growing numbers of entrants into the labor force. Volatility and low growth in several of the oil economies are aggravated further by highly procyclical fiscal policy as government spending tends to rise and fall with oil revenue. This is, in part, because of the absence of effective automatic stabilizers, which could cushion the severity of economic fluctuations. Other oil-producing countries in the region have chosen not to establish formal OSFs with precommitted fiscal rules, but have tended to conduct fiscal management with a "virtual" OSF that, in effect, invests the excess oil receipts abroad. Unemployment Economic growth and job creation are closely linked. The outlook for employment generation in the MENA region as a whole becomes even more challenging in the face of the widespread unemployment in the post-conflict states of Iraq, the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and the West Bank and Gaza. These three economies have a combined estimated population of 53 million, with unemployment rates that are well in excess of those in the rest of the region. Of course, employment growth depends not only on output growth but also the elasticity of employment with respect to output, that is, the employment intensity of such growth. Assuming a relatively high elasticity of 0. Only two countries, Qatar and Sudan, have achieved 6 percent or higher average rates of real GDP growth over the last five years. The region receives only one-third of the FDI expected for a developing country of comparable size, and most is concentrated in a handful of countries. Portfolio investment is virtually nonexistent because of the poor state of development of equity markets. Global financial integration lags behind that of other developing countries. Non-oil export growth varied during this period but, on the whole, grew at a slower rate than for all developing countries. Although the number of Internet users is growing in the region, it has remained low by international standards. Exports Shares Exports share indices: Differences also arise between oil producers and non-oil producers in the region and between countries that undertook reforms, and hence grew at higher rates, and those that were less vigorous in pursuing reforms and fell behind. Nevertheless, the economic structures and institutions of the MENA countries do tend to exhibit common features and, given the need for a policy focus on the challenges and opportunities that face the region, there is a strong case for treating the region as a unit of analysis. However, the variations, the differences, and the distinctions between countries, which are relevant to the arguments being made, must always be highlighted. Although population growth in the MENA countries is projected to decline to 1. In the s and s, annual population growth rates in the oil economies exceeded those of non-oil economies by 2 percentage points. Although the rates in these subgroups converged by late s to about 2. Population growth in developing countries averaged 1. There were substantial cross-country differences in population growth rates. In the majority of countries in the region, over two-thirds of the population is under 30 years of age. Over the last 20 years, the labor force has grown in excess of population growth and is projected to grow at 3 percent per annum till The ensuing high and rising share of working age population

could, under the appropriate circumstances, be seen as a demographic gift capable of contributing positively to growth rate in the region. However, this gift is not automatic because it has to be translated into employment growth and a skill mix that is demanded in the global economy. Moreover, other policies and institutions conducive to complementary growth need to be in place to support the growing working age population. Most of the output growth in the region has occurred as a result of increases in capital and labor rather than in TFP, particularly in non-oil economies. A sustained rise in living standards is difficult if higher rates of accumulation of physical capital and labor are not accompanied by positive TFP growth, which is often seen as a prerequisite for employing the largely young labor force in the region while avoiding a real wage erosion. The importance of TFP growth cannot be underestimated in any analysis of growth. Research shows that TFP growth accounts for about 60 percent of cross-country variations in output growth. This research also shows that the importance of TFP growth increases further if allowance is made for the contribution of human capital—job experience and level of schooling—to output growth. MENA countries with negative TFP growth rates, many of which are oil-producing countries, often tend to have relatively poor growth performance. Limited evidence on TFP growth for selected oil-producing MENA countries in the s, according to research conducted by the staff of the IMF, is consistent with these long-run studies. Fortunately, these are the same factors that promote investment and GDP growth, which in turn help boost employment growth. Political fragmentation, recurring conflicts, and authoritarian rule have hampered the development of democratic institutions and remain major obstacles to economic reform. As noted in the widely discussed Arab Human Development Report United Nations, , the region performs poorly in the areas of civil and political freedoms, gender equality, and, more generally, opportunities for the full development of human capabilities and knowledge. To overcome these handicaps, modern institutions, such as freely elected legislatures and competent and independent judiciaries, and institutions that safeguard civil and human rights need to be strengthened. The demarcation line between the public and private sectors in many MENA countries is often unclear, encouraging conflicts of interest, rent seeking i. Civil society organizations such as professional associations, the nonofficial media, and "autonomous" nongovernmental entities tend to be weak and are often co-opted by governments. While there are exceptions, transparency in government is poor and accountability remains a problem, as seen from perception-based measures of governance. Recent empirical studies, based on data from a large number of countries, show that quality of institutions and governance are significant not only for stimulating growth over time but also for explaining differences in the levels of per capita incomes and TFP among countries. On most measures of good governance and institutions, especially voice and accountability, regulatory quality, and control of corruption, the MENA region did not fare as well as other developing and emerging economies Figure 3. Governance Indicators, Source: Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, Each entry indicates percent of countries worldwide that rate below selected country or a region for each governance indicator. Higher score for any indicator shows better governance outcome. Aggregates are simple averages. Some progress, however, has been made recently though it has yet to influence perception-based measures of governance. In most countries, elections for representative legislatures are becoming more open and meaningful, and the political leadership is becoming more aware of the need for political reform.

### 2: Facing Water Challenges in the Middle East | Middle East Institute

*The people of the Middle East and North Africa have long played an integral, if sometimes volatile, role in the history of human civilization. Today, MENA's rapid population growth exacerbates the challenges that this region faces as it enters the third millennium.*

MENA is one of the cradles of civilization and of urban culture. But the influence of MENA extends beyond its rich oil fields. It occupies a strategically important geographic position between Asia, Africa, and Europe. It has often been caught in a tug-of-war of land and influence that affects the entire world. For hundreds of years, the population of MENA fluctuated around 30 million, reaching 60 million early in the 20th century. Only in the second half of 20th century did population growth in the region gain momentum. The total population increased from around million in to around million in – an addition of million people in 50 years. During this period the population of the MENA region increased 3. United Nations, World Population Prospects: The Revision New York: Population Change MENA experienced the highest rate of population growth of any region in the world over the past century. The introduction of modern medical services and public health interventions, such as antibiotics, immunization, and sanitation, caused death rates to drop rapidly in the developing world after , while the decline in birth rates lagged behind, resulting in high rates of natural increase the surplus of births over deaths. The declines in mortality that occurred in the past 50 years in the developing world mostly benefited infants and young children. In MENA, infant mortality infants dying before their first birthdays dropped from close to deaths per 1, live births in the early s to fewer than 50 deaths per 1, live births at the turn of the 21st century. Figure 2 Decline in Infant Mortality Source: On average, fertility in MENA declined from 7 children per woman around to 3. Even though the decline in fertility rates is expected to continue in the MENA region, the population will continue to grow rapidly for several decades. In a number of countries, each generation of young people enters childbearing years in greater numbers than the previous generation, so as a whole they will produce a larger number of births. Population Reference Bureau, May Demographic Consequences and Challenges Regardless of the level of economic development or national income, MENA governments are increasingly challenged to provide the basic needs for a growing numbers of citizens – adequate housing, sanitation, health care, education, and jobs – and to combat poverty, narrow the gap between rich and poor, and generally improve the standard of living. Over the next 15 years these children and adolescents will reach their childbearing years and enter the job market. In most MENA countries, the number of women of childbearing age 15 to 49 years will at least double in the next 30 years. Providing quality reproductive health services to a growing number of women is a challenge and is key to slowing population growth. For example, the elderly population of Egypt 60 years and older is expected to grow from 4. In , for example, there were five Jordanians under 15 years of age poised to enter the labor market for every Jordanian age 45 to 60 nearing retirement age. For Saudi nationals, this ratio was 8-to-1 in see Figure 5. Because of its young age structure and low level of female labor force participation, the proportion of the population that is economically active is lower in MENA than in all other regions. According to the International Labour Organization ILO , the only countries with a dependency ratio of two or higher an average of two or more persons not economically active per one economically active person are found in the MENA region. Many governments struggle to provide for the basic needs of their growing populations. Even some of the oil-rich countries in the Gulf, such as Saudi Arabia, which have traditionally had no unemployment, are faced with youth unemployment. Unemployment is highest among young people and women. In Jordan in , three-quarters of the unemployed were 15 to 29 years of age, and the female unemployment rate was twice as high as that of men. Unemployment rates in Egypt were reported to be 24 percent for women in , compared to 7 percent for men. In Egypt, between and , the literacy rate among the population age 15 years and older increased from 40 percent to 50 percent, but the total number of illiterate Egyptians still grew from 16 million to 19 million. Managing rapidly growing urban populations in the face of housing shortages and inadequate infrastructure is also becoming more of a challenge. The populations of cities are growing faster than the populations of the countries as a whole, as population growth in the rural

areas feeds a pool of potential rural-to-urban migrants. By , Cairo While it is home to 6. Between and , population growth caused the available renewable fresh water resources per person in MENA to drop by more than half: The per capita fresh water resources available are projected to decline to around 1, cubic meters by , the internationally recognized threshold for water scarcity. Today, much of the region is already below the international standard, since nearly 80 percent of available fresh water in the region is found in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. In countries such as Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, the national average is below cubic meters per person per year. MENA, home to more than 6 million refugees, has the largest refugee population in the world. Iran has the largest number of refugees living in its territory. Palestinian refugees are the largest and oldest refugee population in the world. Different policies ranging from labor and trade laws and regulations to those related to raising the status of women and protecting the environment all need to take into account the population factor. To have a better understanding of the population factor, future MENA policy briefs will examine different population issues, highlighting regional and national approaches, success stories, and lessons learned. The Evolving International Consensus on Population The United Nations UN held its first meetings on global population in and , warning that rapid population growth could exacerbate poverty and hinder development in countries with limited resources. Egypt, Iran, and Turkey were among the first less developed countries to officially support family planning. These governments set up family planning programs in the s to improve health and lower population growth as part of their national development plans. At the UN World Population Conference in Bucharest, Algeria was among the countries leading the opposition to family planning programs on the grounds that they were an imperialist conspiracy aimed at limiting the population of the developing world. This group of countries believed that a national family planning program could not play a part in socioeconomic development, and only socioeconomic development was capable of creating the necessary environment for fertility to decline. Later, however, the Algerian government realized that development alone would not be sufficient to lower fertility and reversed its policy. In , Algeria adopted a population policy that promoted family planning as part of its national development plan. Iran reversed its official position on family planning twice since the s. After the Iran-Iraq war ended in , the government of Iran turned its focus to the reconstruction of its war-ravaged country. It saw rapid population growth as a major obstacle to the economic development of the country and began to implement one of the most successful population programs in the less developed world. Most support the provision of family planning information and services, directly or indirectly, as part of their primary health care services. A number of countries, such as Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Turkey, have adopted explicit policies to lower fertility and have implemented national information and education campaigns to encourage smaller families. The Cairo conference was a landmark in the series of UN population conference because it emphasized individual needs and well-being beyond family planning-including the need for comprehensive reproductive health care and improvements in the status of women. High fertility, slowing fertility decline, early marriage, and high teenage fertility are major reproductive health concerns in a number of MENA countries. The practice of female genital cutting, though unknown in some areas outside Egypt and Yemen, is a major reproductive health issue that has brought national and international human rights, health, and women organizations together to call for its eradication. All governments participating in the Cairo conference endorsed its Programme of Action. For Muslim countries, including those in MENA, the endorsement generally came with the reservation that they would interpret and adopt its recommendations in accordance with Islam-a position needed for the delegations to take the recommendations back home for implementation. The Programme of Action touched on issues such as youth sexuality and empowerment of women, which are culturally sensitive in some Muslim countries. Other UN international conferences in the s focused on related aspects of human development: The recommendations resulting from these conferences provide a framework for achieving socially equitable, sustainable development that each country can adapt to their own circumstances. This overview of population trends and challenges in the MENA region is the first in a series of policy briefs from the Population Reference Bureau that analyze population, environment, reproductive health, and development linkages within the framework of the Cairo Programme of Action and the cultural contexts of population groups in the region. Future briefs on MENA will cover specific population-related topics or country case

studies. Thanks are due to Ismail Sirageldin and Tom Merrick who reviewed the draft and offered useful comments. This work has been funded by the Ford Foundation. References At a 3 percent rate of growth, a population doubles in size in 23 years. Toward the 21st Century, ed. Key Findings New York: UN Population Division, Table 5, Data Tables and Highlights, Table Calculations done by author using the following sources: Committee for Refugees, Population Reference Bureau, July Well-being for All Washington, DC: Focusing on human development, the document calls for a wide range of investments to improve health, education, and rights “ particularly for women and girls ” and to provide family planning services in the context of comprehensive reproductive health care. ICPD set the following quantifiable goals for Provide universal access to a full range of safe and reliable family planning methods and related reproductive health services. Reduce infant mortality rates to below 35 infants deaths per 1, live births and under 5 infant mortality rates to below 45 deaths per 1, live births. Reduce maternal morbidity and mortality to levels where they no longer constitute a public health problem. Increase life expectancy at birth to more than 75 years. In countries with the highest mortality, aim to increase life expectancy at birth to more than 70 years. Achieve universal access to and completion of primary education; ensure girls and women the widest and earliest possible access to secondary and higher levels of education. Cairo in Action Since the Cairo conference, many countries have taken concrete policy actions toward the goal of providing universal access to reproductive health care. In some cases, these actions included developing comprehensive national reproductive policies; in others, governments redesigned aspects of existing family planning or other health programs to address reproductive health. The following are examples from MENA: Jordan adopted its National Population Strategy in Later, a national family planning strategy was also developed to inform married women and men, religious and community leaders, and service providers about a full range of reproductive health issues. Iran has created a national reproductive health program that includes economic opportunities for women and services for youth. Syria has introduced population education as a topic in both formal and informal education. In , Tunisia established a Presidential Award in reproductive health to encourage and reward individuals and organizations for their contribution to solving problems related to reproductive health and raising public awareness about the issue.

### 3: The Challenges of the Middle East - Hertog Foundation

*The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is regarded as one of the most water-challenged regions in the world. The destabilizing impact of its resource constraints is compounded by the fact that some 60 percent of the region's water flows across international borders, generating and exacerbating political tensions between states.*

The Middle East in Five issues to watch From elections, to refugee crises, ISIL, shifting alliances and Jerusalem - instability will mark in the region. Wars began to wind down across the region but challenges remain in managing conflict resolution. Next year will be defined by post-war transitions to peace talks, ballot boxes, and reconstruction. Two areas are the exception to this trend: Yemen is the only country that will start the new year without a roadmap to peace and territorial disputes along western Syria , from Idlib to Deraa, will continue next year. Turmoil across the Middle East makes it harder to narrow down the main political issues that will dominate However, five of them should be watched in because of their regional and international impact. Will Syrian refugees return home? There are currently 5. Syrian refugees began to return in small numbers in , and that process might accelerate in as these countries are facing growing security and socioeconomic tensions. Jordan and Turkey have buffer zones on their border with Syria and will face fewer difficulties in enforcing this decision. However, in the case of Lebanon, the Syrian regime fully controls the border and the challenge is to overcome the Lebanese differences over engaging Damascus. The potential return of Syrian refugees could take precedence over the stalled Syrian peace talks and have a significant impact on reconstruction efforts and local governance. As a result, Jerusalem will continue to play a key factor in reshaping Middle East politics in Ankara is drifting away further from Washington, Amman is taking distance from Riyadh, and Tehran is seizing the opportunity to rally allies. The US strategy to rally Saudi Arabia and Israel against Iran will also struggle, as Riyadh will be pressured to take the lead on the Palestinian issue if violence increased in the West Bank. Jerusalem will test old alliances and shape new ones as the Syrian war is winding down. Since ascending to power as deputy crown prince in , MBS has been amassing powers. He pursued that objective with urgency this year, which had an effect across the Middle East. If MBS is more secure in ascending to power, Saudi foreign policy could revert to a rather conventional approach. Saudi Arabia, under MBS, is at a crossroads in Going back to the ballot box: Iraq and Libya The year will witness a return to the ballot box in key countries across the region. He is leading an anti-corruption campaign in the period leading to the elections, as pro-Iranian factions are coalescing to endorse former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Abadi staying in power would be the best chance for the US to contain Iran. Libya is the major electoral unknown of , as elections are not fully confirmed yet. We might witness an interesting face-off in the presidential race between the old guard, General Khalifa Haftar who served in the Libyan army before defecting and Saif al-Islam, the son of the former ruler of Libya Muammar Gaddafi. It remains to be seen whether the country is ready to secure and organise a nationwide election, and whether Libyan rivals can show restraint and overcome their distrust to work together. Will ISIL make a comeback? ISIL, as a central authority with geographical control, has been decimated but the threat it poses is far from being gone. The radical group is gradually converting into an underground operation that could continue launching attacks in Syria and Iraq or across the world. It remains to be seen whether the group will become an ally of al-Qaeda , or continue to act as a rival. If the lack of stability and reconciliation persists in Syria, Iraq or Libya, ISIL or other radical groups might once again exploit the political vacuum to gain strength. While these five issues are expected to stand out in , history has not always been kind to the Middle East nor to those who forecast politics. One thing is certain, unpredictability will mark political developments in

### 4: Opportunities and Challenges in the Middle East and North Africa Media Production Market

*By Juan Cole | (Informed Comment) | - - The incoming Trump administration is riven by a profound division between those determined to avoid deep entanglements in the Middle East, such as Donald J. Trump himself, and the hawks he is putting in key positions, who desperately want to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran.*

That is what the modern Middle Eastern geopolitics have usually been about. Given the vast energy resources that form the backbone of western economies, influence and involvement in the Middle East has been of paramount importance for the former and current imperial and super powers, including France, Britain, USA and the former Soviet Union. World Atlas Prior to the discovery of oil, the region had been a hotbed for religious conflict and wars over other rich resources and land. The declining Ottoman Empire paved way for the rising European imperial and colonial powers interested in securing various territories and controlling access to Asia. In more recent times, interest in the region has been due to the energy resources there. As a result, for centuries, western populations have been acclimatized to a type of propaganda and vilification of the Arab and other people of the Middle East, and of Islam in general. This was especially so during the European colonial times, as so vividly examined by Edward Said, in his well-respected book, *Orientalism*. This negative stereotyping has served to provide justifications for involvement and to ensure stability national interests of the powers that want to be involved in the region. This cultural stereotyping and racism has occurred in the modern times too. Often, especially in the s, war films depicting an Arab or Islamic group as the bad guys were common place, sometimes reflecting prevailing turmoils at the time. Even in the s, those ideas continued, where the bad guy was often a despotic Arab from one of the rogue states and as a result of the terrorist attacks against the US in September 11, and the resulting War on terror , such imagery is likely to continue. Over such a long time then, such boundaries of discourse about the Middle East have already been framed. To overstep those boundaries is to be labeled anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi, anti-West or some other equally negative label. For most journalists in the mainstream then, self-censorship is often the course, sometimes unknowingly. To maintain superiority, control and influence over the region, the West has placed corrupt Arab leaders into positions of power and supported the overthrow of those that are not seen as favorable. This has also served to keep their populations at bay, in return for militarization, power and personal wealth of the elite. Sometimes this has been done in the name of fighting communism. The common theme underlying it though has been the struggle to control access to important resources such as oil. The Middle East is the most militarized region in the world and most arms sales head there. A suppressed people that sees US influence as a major root cause of the current problems in the Middle East has led to a rise in Islamic militancy, acts of terrorism and anti-west sentiment, anti-US in particular. When looking at some of the actions of the US, it can often be seen why this is unfortunately so. With kind permission from J. It looks back at the last years of struggle over control of resources in the Middle East to give some context to various events in recent history. A wave of protests has erupted throughout the Middle East and North Africa. A combination of the global financial crisis, rising costs of living, high unemployment “ especially of educated youth, frustration from decades of living under authoritarian and corrupt regimes, various document leaks revealing more details about how governments around the world are dealing and viewing each other, have all combined in different ways in various countries, leading to a wave of rising anger. Some protests have become revolutions as governments such as those in Tunisia and Egypt have been overthrown. Others have not got that far but have sometimes been peaceful, other times met with very brutal repression. Is this a wave of democracy that cannot be stopped, and will forever change the region, and the global power politics? After the Second World War, with former Imperial Europe weakened, countries around the world had a chance to break for their freedom away from colonial rule. This struggle for freedom and the Cold War had a geopolitical impact on the Middle East. Control of resources and access to oil became paramount, to the extent that dictators and human rights abusers were supported. Within this backdrop, we see another complex reason for the rise of terrorism and extremism. Energy Security Last updated Sunday, May 15, Energy security is a growing concern for rich and emerging nations alike. The past drive for fossil fuel energy has led to wars, overthrow of democratically

elected leaders, and puppet governments and dictatorships. Leading nations admit we are addicted to oil, but investment into alternatives has been lacking, or little in comparison to fossil fuel investments. As the global financial crisis takes hold and awareness of climate change increases, more nations and companies are trying to invest in alternatives. But will the geopolitics remain the same? Crisis in Libya Posted Monday, April 04, The crisis in Libya comes in the context of wider unrest throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The surge of what looks like spontaneous and ground up pro-democracy protests has been spreading throughout a region long controlled by authoritarian regimes from left and right of the political spectrum, and both pro and anti-West. Peaceful protests against the long-running oppressive Qadhafi regime in February resulted in a violent crackdown. Despite some military defections, the opposition has generally been a disorganized and out-gunned rebel force. The West appears to have responded with what looks like a genuine humanitarian intervention attempt. Yet, when looked at a bit more deeply, there are many murky "often contradictory" issues coming to the fore that complicate the picture. These mixed messages make the future for Libya uncertain. Civil war is how some commentators have already started to describe the conflict, which would imply a long drawn out conflict, not a quick fix that the West hoped for. Syria Unrest Posted Tuesday, June 05, Following the trend throughout the Middle East, the so-called Arab Spring appears to have spread to Syria. The government crackdown on anti-government demonstrators in Homs and other provincial cities began over a year ago and is thought to have claimed thousands of lives. Attempts at brokering ceasefires have predictably failed. Iran Last updated Tuesday, December 06, Iran has had a turbulent history in just its recent past. From a democracy in the s, Iran seems to have moved backwards, from an authoritarian regime backed by Britain and the US that overthrew the democratic one, to a religious fundamentalist regime toppling the authoritarian one and taking an anti-US stance. The US ended its support for Iran and instead supported Iraq in a brutal war through the s against Iran where over 1 million people died. Internally, movements towards moderate policies and democratic values are gaining traction, but not with hardliners in power trying to hold on. This section looks into these and related issues. Iraq Crisis Last updated Wednesday, August 01, In , the US and UK invaded Iraq under false pretenses that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction ready for deployment within minutes and posed a great threat to the world, etc. The civilian death toll has been immense, with seeing almost deaths a day. This section looks into issues during the sanctions following the first Gulf War when the US forced Saddam Hussein to get out of Kuwait, which he invaded, as well as the propaganda build-up to the invasion and issues since. Regardless of international opinion and their failure to secure a second UN resolution authorizing war, the U. The Iraqi regime was hardly able to resist and the war ended quickly. Into , for example, some people per day have been dying from suicide bombings, roadside attacks, and other aspects of sectarian violence, and what looks increasingly like civil war; The geopolitical aftermath of the attacks, which will have a long lasting effect, especially as Iran and Syria start to gain more influence. The collection of articles in this section looks at these issues. The build-up to the war on Iraq up to led to immense media coverage and propaganda. This section provides a series of articles looking at issues during the period of UN-sanctions that were mostly enforced by the US and UK. Issues during this period included the immense civilian death toll due to sanctions. Other issues looked at include various bombing campaigns by coalition forces during the sanctions, and the impact on the environment.

### 5: Challenges in the Middle East | Ultimate Challenges

*While these (and other) challenges exist, e-commerce in the Middle East is still poised for growth, and these are exciting times to be related to this field - especially for those ready to grasp.*

Mosul Iraqi forces, supported by U. While predictions can change in an instant, it seems that the big battle to keep an eye on in is the projected assault on Mosul. A Syria with peace deals on the table The Syrian civil war will enter its sixth year in March. The proposal gives credence to a plan previously discussed between the foreign ministers of a series of world powers in Vienna in October. It outlines talks between the two parties scheduled for January, a ceasefire, and a two-year timeline that would see the creation of a unity government followed by leadership elections. The new year will bring more diplomacy, more talks and possibly more delays to the conclusion of a military stalemate in a country that has become so fractured observers hold out only a distant hope that a solution can be found before the end of The radical Islamist group has established a fall-back position in Libya, consolidating their control of the central city of Sirte. France has already initiated reconnaissance flights over the country; the U. Iran is meeting its obligations, U. This sectarian rivalry will continue to be defined by proxy arenas in , such as Yemen and Syria, with each power challenging for dominance in other corners of the Middle East. Whether the escalation is simply a war of words remains to be seen, but expect further conflict between the two in Hamas continued to preserve a ceasefire implemented after the day conflict of summer , distancing itself from rockets fired by rival Salafists and marginal factions in the coastal enclave. However, the group is making efforts to restore its pre-conflict tunnel infrastructure and rocket arsenal, according to Daniel Nisman , president of the Tel Aviv-based security consultancy The Levantine Group. Which means could see another outbreak of violence. Abbas and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, at 80 years old, turned a four-year term in office into a year term after his election in According to the latest Palestinian polling , two-thirds of Palestinians want Abbas to resign. But the president has only strengthened his hold on power, and has moved no closer to scheduling elections to allow Palestinians a choice over who represents their interests. Speculation swirled in that Abbas was to step down. If it happens in , it could trigger Palestinian elections for the first time in more than a decade or, alternatively, an internal change in leadership that could revive Palestinian hopes of peace. The Turkish military conducted a series of operations in response to PKK attacks against security forces. Unless President Recep Tayyip Erdogan or Davutoglu offer serious concessions to the Kurds, expect further Kurdish moves to separate from Ankara, strong responses from the Turkish leadership to counter what they perceive to be Kurdish terrorism, and continued conflict in the ashes of a distant ceasefire. Trump has called for a ban on all Muslims entering the U. The majority of Republicans 90 percent believe that the U. If the White House turns red on November 9, we could see an even deeper U.

### 6: Middle East " Global Issues

*From the battle to retake Mosul to the outcome of the U.S. presidential election, these are the key developments that will change the Middle East in the coming year"for better or worse.*

### 7: The Middle East in Five issues to watch | Politics | Al Jazeera

*The Middle East in Five issues to watch. From elections, to refugee crises, ISIL, shifting alliances and Jerusalem - instability will mark in the region.*

### 8: The Environmental Challenges Facing the Middle East - Blogs - Jerusalem Post

*The Middle East Program analyzes the evolving security dynamics in the region and evaluates different strategies the United States can pursue to protect its interests in the region. See the Middle East Program's publications and past*

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*events on security challenges in the Middle East [HERE](#).*

### 9: Top Challenges Faced by HR in the Middle East - Arabian Gazette

*Dr. Moshe Terdiman is a Middle Eastern Studies scholar, who is an expert on Islam in Africa, Islamic social issues, environmental issues in the Arab and Muslim world, Islam and the environment.*

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