Mediterranean Discourse on Regional Security Annual Meeting
Youth and Local Government as Partners in Security?

Local Government and (In)security across the MENA Region:
Extended Literature Review

July 2018

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Abstract

This literature review, prepared for the Mediterranean Discourse on Regional Security Annual Meeting 2018, provides prospective conference participants an overview of and insights into local governance in relation to security partnerships and shared responsibility across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The report opens with a brief overview of useful theoretical and conceptual frameworks, aiming to create a strong foundation for meaningful discourse and mutual understanding. Following this, relevant research-based academic literature in relation to local governance and security across the MENA region is introduced and organised into categories: militarised, transitionary and stable contexts. Finally, selected policy recommendations from recent research are provided and accompanied by bounded critiques.

In sum, this report hopes to display the value and applicability of non-orthodox approaches to human, national and regional security in regards to local governance, and inform critical conversations about the role of local actors in security partnerships.

1. Introduction

Insecurity in the MENA region has increased dramatically since the 2011 uprisings. Participants of the 2017 Mediterranean Discourse on Regional Security recognised the necessity for innovative, “out of the box” thinking that questions orthodox approaches and proposes new, inclusive solutions to acute regional insecurity.

Part of this solution is recognising local governments across the MENA region as significant stakeholders in security partnerships. Former approaches to local empowerment have remained largely ineffective, rooted in top-down and European perspectives. How can we move towards a new understanding of insecurity in the MENA countries?

As former EU special representative to the Middle East Marc Otte noted in regards to the quest for regional order, “the first step is to recognise that the old order is gone forever. The second is that such a demarche will require patience and leadership, as it is not an easy road to travel.”1
Research-based literature on a diversity of topics – from reports on service provision by local stakeholders in rebel-held areas of Syria, to analyses of EU engagement with rural stakeholders in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt – suggests that security partnerships must be inclusive and founded upon the principle of shared responsibility.

This literature review consists of useful definitions and conceptual frameworks, relevant research and selected policy recommendations geared to provide foundations to address the questions driving this year’s Mediterranean Discourse. Namely, what is the significance of local stakeholders to security partnerships? How can we better share responsibility between actors across the Mediterranean? And, finally, what can be learned from the current conditions of instability and insecurity across the MENA region?

[The author invites constructive criticism from core group conference participants in order to widen the scope and depth of this literature report. This review is the result of bounded research which would undoubtedly benefit from a wide variety of academic and professional insights, relating to either the theoretical framework used to analyse local governance in the MENA region or the selection of research presented. In addition the author plans to use this literature review as the basis for further research. Contact details are included in the appendix.]

2. Definitions and Frameworks

At present, academic literature theorising about local governance and insecurity uses a wide range of contested and contradictory terms. As recognised by participants at the 2017 Mediterranean Discourse on Regional Security, popular buzzwords are often thrown around without being properly defined.²

This chapter presents suggested definitions for key concepts, as well as a useful foundation to assess local governance in order to encourage conference participants to structure their discourse and recommendations around a common framework.

2.1. What is Local Governance? Terminology and Basic Concepts

The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Guide to Local Governance in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings (2016) clarifies basic terminology and concepts relating to local governance, government and development.³

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<th>Local Governance</th>
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<td>is a combined set of institutions, systems and processes at the subnational level through which services, including security and welfare, are provided to citizens and through which the latter articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations.</td>
<td>is a set of governing institutions imbued with statutory public authority over a subnational area, including institutions with different mandates and powers, including a political head, elected official and technical and administrative units that deliver public goods and services.</td>
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The UNDP Guide also differentiates local development from general development.⁴
2.2. Assessing Local Governance in Fragile Contexts

In a German Development Institute report, Grävingholt and von Haldenwang (2016) identify three key dimensions of state fragility in the context of decentralisation and the (dis)empowerment of local stakeholders. All three dimensions interact with each other and are based on the ability of state institutions to interact constructively with the population at a local level, to guarantee security and stability. This framework will be utilised to provide a structure of evaluation in the following chapters.

**Capacity Dimension:** How well-established is the state’s ability to provide basic services?

**Authority Dimension:** How strong is the state’s monopoly on the use of violence?

**Legitimacy Dimension:** To what extent is the regime’s claim to represent a good or rightful political order acknowledged by members of society?

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3. Constellations of Insecurity: Local Governance in Fragile Contexts

This chapter provides an overview of relevant research-based academic literature in relation to local governance and (in)security across the MENA region. Theory relating to legitimacy, engagement, framing and securitisation, and the security-stability nexus is introduced to supplement research conclusions.

Literature on local governance in fragile and securitised contexts can be broken down into three categories: militarised, transitionary and stable contexts. These divisions do not reflect any country divisions or subjective evaluations; they are constructed for purposes of clarity.

3.1. Local Governance in Militarised Contexts
In reference to Grävingholt and von Haldenwang’s three dimensions of effective local governance, militarised contexts are defined by diminished capacity, fragmented or weak authority and a severe lack of centralised legitimacy.6

Research focused on local governance, security and security partnerships in militarised contexts across the MENA region is centred around the influence of violent conflict on governance, and the ways in which local government functions in different constellations of insecurity.

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Patterns and functions of local governance in rebel-held Syria is an emerging area of scholarly literature that provides a range of thought-provoking case studies that spur interest in the security-stability nexus; namely, in the works of Heller (2016), Becker and Stolleis (2016), Al Dassouky (2017) and Hilal et al (2017).

In a study of Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) operating in the Idlib province, Al Dassouky argues that the local governance strategy of Jihadist groups depends on building support in three main ways: (1) providing social services, such as maintaining the electricity grid, (2) combining this approach with coercive policies to control local populations and (3) using these channels of engagement to spread religious and political ideology.7 HTS has a step-by-step, experimental approach: establishing a “permanent presence” in localities that is a “collection of best practices gathered from its affiliate groups and other jihadi groups around the world.”8 In this sense, HTS is addressing human security regimes in the absence of a centralised regime. This should push policymakers to consider the range of local actors to be potentially involved and empowered in security partnerships.

Heller (2016) also focuses on rebel-held Idlib, but instead draws attention to the competition for legitimacy among Islamist armed groups including HTS. Heller contends that Idlib’s LACs are both restrained and empowered by international assistance, which enables them to provide “intermittently successful municipal services”9 and gain legitimacy among the local population.9

Becker and Stolleis (2016) are optimistic about the capacity of grassroots civil society organisations to provide a viable alternative to Islamist groups, despite identifying that donor funding limits the scope of LACs. On relations with armed groups: “the efficiency of local civil actors depends largely on the local power balance and the military groups active in their area.”10

The Swiss Peace Foundation report on the experience of LACs in opposition-held Syria* also displays how the conditionality of donor funding has a decisive impact on local security priorities and overall transparency. Hilal et al argues that LAC governance methods are gradually becoming more and more formalised and developing common approaches in the

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* Key findings were based on the experiences of semi-structured interviews and group discussions from LACs in opposition-held cities: Daret Ezzeh, Ma’aret al Numan, Zamalka, Kafr Takharim and Nawa.
absence of centralised authority. While early LACs prioritised short-term responses to humanitarian needs, the surveyed LACs are evolving a newfound focus on long-term development and local governance goals.\textsuperscript{11}

The aforementioned works identify the connection between human security and human development (stability). Although security and stability do not contradict each other, they can be separated. Put simply, while security can be fulfilled through short-term projects, stability is achieved through long-term improvements and building capacity. This interrelationship can be observed in the transition from humanitarian responses (i.e. providing emergency medical assistance) to long-term development responses (i.e. developing local infrastructure for service provision) among LACs.

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The research of Heydeman (2018) and Meninghaus (2016) draws attention to the local governance strategies employed by the Syrian regime, and identifies the complexities of the interrelationship between authority, legitimacy and capacity. Conference participants should draw attention to the local dynamics of competition among armed groups. Who are the legitimate local security stakeholders? What implications does this have for building lasting security partnerships?

Meninghaus (2016) explains how service provision enables armed groups to gain legitimacy and assert coercive authority in the context of aid inequality across regime- and rebel-controlled areas in Syria. To begin, Meninghaus urges policymakers to rethink how they conceptualise warfare. What if violent conflict is a transformative experience for local governments, instead of just a destructive experience? In other words, local governance structures are not static in militarised contexts: they are always changing and responding to security conditions.* Meninghaus demonstrates how local governments have become “hybrid systems” of humanitarian and political governance, as their capacity is deeply influenced by access to humanitarian aid.\textsuperscript{12}

Heydeman (2018), writing for Brookings, reiterates the transformative potential of modern warfare. He also urges policymakers to reject orthodox approaches to state fragility and classify Syria as a fierce state, “one in which ruling elites elevate survival above all else and design institutions to support this aim.” In short, Heydeman displays how wartime economic governance has been hijacked by state-sponsored elites to ensure authoritarianism will be reconstructed in post-conflict Syria despite a lack of popular legitimacy (see Section 2.4). This authoritarian resilience is also a testament to the practice of transactional loyalty, “strengthening the dependence of citizens on regimes through the use of redistributive social policies” such as channelling humanitarian aid into regime-controlled areas, an observation established by Meninghaus (2016).\textsuperscript{13}

\* Meninghaus uses \textit{Spatial Theory} to frame this understanding of conflict and the distribution of humanitarian aid. In sum, Meninghaus draws upon the works of Henri Lefebvre to argue that space is a product of social construction that unfolds in three dimensions (material, represented and symbolic). Thus, the \textit{spatial politics of war} refers to the ways in which different understandings of space – i.e. spaces categorised as accessible for humanitarian aid – are being produced by different actors. See source.
There are also many invaluable case studies on local governance in Iraq. State legitimacy is also examined by Gaston and Derzsi-Horvath (2018), who present research conducted by the Global Public Policy Institute across three governorates, examining and assessing the role of local, hybrid and sub-state forces (LHSF), including Kurdish forces, popular mobilisation forces and local or minority forces.\(^*\) The presence of LHSFs in the surveyed governorates had mixed implications for security. Gaston and Derzsi-Horvath record that while the presence of LHSFs facilitated reconstruction and regular governance activities by providing security guarantees to local populations, their tendency to “mobilise around a specific ethno-religious identity” and pursue military strategic aims significantly compromises the security of local actors and undermined the legitimacy and authority of the Iraqi state.\(^{14}\)

Von Billerbeck and Gippert (2017) argue that traditional theories about legitimacy are state-centric, and do not account for power that is fleeting and fragmented across non-state actors.\(^{15}\) These traditional approaches to legitimacy are often unable to explain contemporary security issues in the MENA region.

As Hilal et al (2017) emphasise in their case study of Local Administrative Councils (LACs) in opposition-held Syria, local perceptions of good governance influence the legitimacy of rebel groups.\(^{16}\)

Therefore, the source of legitimacy is sometimes not as important as how the source of authority confirms to ideas about legitimacy.\(^{17}\) A recent Middle East Research Institute policy brief (2017) summarises the security situation in militarised contexts across the MENA region: there is a serious mismatch between what local governance structures are expected to do, and what they can actually do, “especially in regards to service provision”.\(^{18}\)

Thus, legitimacy is something that can be gained and lost through material factors and processes (i.e. providing quality healthcare) and ideational factors and processes (i.e. conforming to ideas about good or fair governance).

It is possible for regimes to possess authority without popular legitimacy: Heydeman in particular illustrates how the “fierce” Syrian regime has achieved a pyrrhic victory, trading sovereignty for survival. Meninghaus echoes this narrative, noting how loyalties in militarised contexts are often determined by short-term survival needs, such as access to humanitarian aid. The Global Public Policy Institute report does supplement these works but draws attention to the dangers of delegitimising the central regime through decentralisation and local empowerment in extremely fragile contexts.

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As aforementioned, scholars such as Meninghaus (2016) push policymakers to consider violent conflict as a process that has the potential to transform local governance dynamics.\(^{19}\) In this regard, Meddeb (2016) and Collombier (2016) root their research in local security dynamics in

\(^*\) The governorates surveyed between February and July 2017 were Ninewa, Salah ad-Din and Kirkuk.
Libya, providing insights into the capacity of local actors to engage with each other through trade and reconciliation, as well as with non-also actors.

In fact, Meddeb adopts a transnational approach, and provides a brief introduction to the informal economy constructed by local actors along the Tunisian-Libyan border. Despite the challenges posed by competing jihadi groups, local actors have transformed their pre-existing governance and trade structures to accommodate new constellations of insecurity. This narrative of local resilience echoes the aforementioned experiences of local groups in rebel-held Syria.

On the other hand, Collombier writes about the reconciliation process between armed groups in the Nafusa Mountains. Ultimately, the mediation process since 2015 is the result of security partnerships between local, national and international actors. Civil society actors, such as tribal and community leaders, required the logistical and financial support of non-local actors – such as the UN – to initiate the process. However, the “social dialogue” challenged top-down approaches to security partnerships and engagement.

In sum, we can understand engagement between security stakeholders in the MENA region in multiple dimensions. This provides insight into the capacity, legitimacy and authority of local actors. Breaking down engagement to its constituent parts helps scholars understand the security priorities of local actors. Selected aforementioned works will be used for reference. Namely, some engagement modalities are material and motivated by cost-benefit calculations. Meddeb’s case study is a prime example of engagement between local stakeholders geared to increase mutual benefit.

However, some engagement is discursive by nature, wherein interactions are designed to spread norms to other localities and governments. This echoes Al Dassouky’s earlier conclusions about governance methods of jihadi groups, geared to spread ideology. Further, interactions can be horizontal (i.e. trans-local) or vertical (i.e. between municipalities and central governments), and inclusive or exclusive.

Homel and Masson (2016) integrate a helpful case study into their research on security sector reform (SSR) in fragile and conflict-affected communities, in the context of the problematic engagement of external actors. The security campaigns conducted by international stakeholders in the Jenin Governorate (northern Palestinian Territories) from June 2007 onwards, they argue, is a powerful reminder of the ineffectiveness of solely donor-led security programmes. SSR programmes priorities good local governance as an effective guarantor of human security. The Jenin model, however, exhibited top-down and exclusive modalities of engagement that draws attention to the necessity of shared responsibility in vertical and horizontal security partnerships.

* Research identified several shortcomings of the Jenin model, including (1) the notable absence of shared security objectives between local population and centralised (foreign) authorities implementing the program, (2) the lack of local ownership over security apparatus training or meaningful governance reform, (3) the overlapping of authority mandates, i.e. the right to arrest and (4) the creation of an authoritarian security regime, rather than a democratic transitionary security regime. See source.
3.2. Local Governance in Transitionary Contexts

Regimes in transitionary conditions are often difficult to define. However, the following works discussed on security dynamics and local governance structures comprise a diverse collection of research that identifies transitionary contexts as those in which capacity, authority and legitimacy are in flux: transforming from one regime to another.

Both Fabbri (2017) and Abderrahim (2017) research local empowerment and decentralisation in a transitioning Tunisia.

Fabbri (2017) examines the fight against corruption. On one hand, Chahed’s new government has implemented significant administrative change: a positive step towards local empowerment. However, Fabbri draws attention to the “democratisation” of endemic corruption, and the accompanying rise of local economic networks. She concludes that these informal economies undermine national development and security, contrary to the conclusions of Meddeb in regards to emerging economic governance along the Tunisian-Libyan border. 23

Abderrahim (2017) also recognises the significant legislative and institutional reform pursued by the new government, as well as positive steps towards good governance led by a growing civil society that has “capitalised” on new freedoms. Despite this, local empowerment is challenged by the problematic legacy of the past regime, leading to poor coordination mechanisms, inadequate access to logistical and financial resources, not to mention deep regional disparities. Abderrahim echoes aforementioned authors and argues that security guarantees provide the regional stability necessary to pursue progressive decentralisation.24

Legitimacy is therefore already fragmented, which can mean that sources of local authority remain rooted in the institutions and norms of past regimes. McCullough (2015) defines legitimacy as simply the acceptance of authority by both elite and non-elite groups, on the basis of voluntary or at least somewhat voluntary compliance.25 Bringing security into the picture, both Abderrahim and Fabbri note that the new regime does not possess popular legitimacy or perceived capacity to act as a security guarantor.

Further, the research of Grävingholt and von Haldenwang casts a dark shadow over the recent local elections in Tunisia: there are many risks associated with promoting local empowerment and decentralisation in fragile contexts. These include conflicts of security interests between local, national and international stakeholders, which may lead to the exclusion of local communities in constructive dialogue.26

Local government in the transitioning Egyptian regime is currently in a stranglehold. Academic literature is generally pessimistic about the capacity and empowerment of local stakeholders, especially following the Egyptian parliament’s ratification of Law 70 (2017) regulating the work of NGOs and civil society organisations: a law denounced by Human Rights Watch, the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies in a joint statement.27
Khazbak (2016) puts it simply: local administration is not meaningful local government. There is no “systemic participation” of local stakeholders in security or development initiatives, despite precedents in the 2014 constitution. In fact, Egypt remains one of the most highly centralised countries in the world according to a study by the World Bank in the same year.

This degree of centralisation in transitioning regimes has acute consequences for human security and development. Kourtelis (2018) provides qualitative research on the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) to argue that regional programmes designed to improve organisational capacity of ENP countries are met with failure due to the centralisation of power away from local (rural) stakeholders: state elites or the inward-looking European Commission (EC). Kourtelis asserts that EC experts operate on the basis of selective engagement; notably, the EU has offered Tunisia and Egypt €25m and €36m respectively since 2012 as a result of regime change.

3.3. Local Administration in Static Regimes

The term “static regime” refers to MENA countries that have withstood socio-political pressure and maintained their pre-2011 governance structures, despite some strain. In this sense, capacity, authority and legitimacy generally remains centralised.

Ghanem-Yazbeck (2018), in a paper for the Carnegie Middle East Centre, defines the Algerian state as a hybrid authoritarian regime, maintained on the art of concession without fundamental change (post-2011). Namely, political and economic elites have designed mechanisms to transform their power through measured, selective reforms at critical times. This selective engagement remains a running narrative in ineffective MENA security partnerships. Systemic change is rendered near impossible, and local actors are thus excluded from national or regional (security) partnerships.

In The Politics of Development in Morocco, Bergh (2017) shares many of Ghanem-Yazbeck’s conclusions about the disempowerment of local security stakeholders, arguing that despite the transformative Arab Spring, power is still centralised. The Moroccan regime, Bergh contends, has actively stalled decentralisation reforms, forcibly impeding any meaningful participation by citizens in policymaking on a local or national level.

This centralisation is highly prevalent in Lebanon, too. Lerman (2016) notes that “in formal terms, Lebanon is still sovereign” and stable. However, the legitimacy of the centralised state has been undermined by local power struggles (i.e. the Garbage Crisis led to the near total breakdown of sanitary services), while the capacity of local governments has been undermined by the flow of Syrian refugees to north Lebanon.

Local Governance Under Pressure, published by Oxfam Italia and authored by Ghanem (2016) uses case studies from governorates in North Lebanon to present the impact of the influx of

* The author references the spread of “reproduced narratives”, wherein minimal and minimised input from local actors results in an echo-chamber organisational pyramid. This “epistemic community” is inward-looking and implements policies from the top down, reproducing narratives and conclusions of previous country reports. See source.
Syrian refugees on local governments. This security threat has negative implications for local human security, including (1) the disruption of traditional labour roles, (2) political polarisation, (3) inequality between Syrians and Lebanese workers, (4) the implementation of reactionary security measures, such as curfews, (5) pressure on service delivery capacities of municipalities and (6) the fragmentation of humanitarian aid delivery.\textsuperscript{34} The International Institute for Environment and Development echoes these conclusions regarding the relationship of international aid agencies with local government, their lack of coordination and often conflicting mandates for the provision of services.\textsuperscript{35}

Using Lebanese case studies, a 2007 UNDP report published by the Oslo Governance Centre identified problems for local governments in a stable, post-transitionary context, including limited capacity, strained local participation and the conflation of local government with central government.\textsuperscript{36} See the UNDP Project Assessment for Local Governance in Complex Environments for another helpful case study on the political economy and challenges of decentralisation.\textsuperscript{37}

These reports on local governance in strained conditions in a state with centralised authority displays the “delicate balance” of security and stability in Lebanon,\textsuperscript{38} and the extent to which the Syrian refugee crisis is securitised by state and local elites.

Securitisation is a process vital to the understanding of local perception of security threats. Put simply, public issues – such as inadequate access to basic goods and services in Lebanon due to the strain of over a million Syrian refugees – become security issues via a process of securitisation. This can be considered “more extreme version of politicisation,” or even dramatisation.\textsuperscript{39} Legitimate sources of authority or elite groups influence threat perception by framing (establishing) certain public issues as national security issues, leading to increasingly securitised responses.

Conversations between security partners can therefore be framed by threat perception. Roccu and Voltolini (2018) argue that the \textit{security-stability nexus} is the “master-frame” of security-related conversations and thus the contextual framework of shared responsibility.\textsuperscript{40}

Put simply, this framework bounds security to stability. The characteristics of the security-stability balance can be framed within the three dimensions of effective governance – capacity, authority and legitimacy – and are applicable to the three categories of fragility across the MENA region – militarised, transitionary and stable contexts.

4. Selected Policy Recommendations

This chapter introduces a variety of policy recommendations relating to the quest for regional security, the role of local governance in security partnerships and promoting shared responsibility. Some aforementioned works are referred to. These recommendations are designed to provide a framework for critique and discussion, and do not reflect the author’s perspectives.

Many security partnerships across the MENA region are top-down and exclusive by nature. For instance, EU engagement with MENA local stakeholders is an area for improvement. The following are selected suggestions from a variety of regional experts.

As outlined by participants of the 2017 Mediterranean Discourse, dysfunctional security partnerships tend to increase security challenges due to the atmosphere of conflicting interests and mistrust.\textsuperscript{41} Dokos and Tsankonas recognize that conditions may not be ripe for a comprehensive “security regime”, and instead suggest cooperation motivated by collective security, based on the principle of potential mutual benefit from cooperation: the logic of calculated consequences.\textsuperscript{42}

In this vein, Lerman (2016) outlines the “variable architecture” of meaningful regional discourse and stabilisation, arguing that security partnerships must rely on existing structures – above all, on the “Big Brussels Bureaucracies” – to pave the way for new forms of cooperation, namely for like-minded players to work together through informal and semi-formal channels to formalise their pre-existing common approaches to security into “concrete and enduring forms of cooperation.”\textsuperscript{43}

However, Lerman’s approach may work to strengthen top-down, EU-based approaches to security-building across the MENA region. As Otte insists, “The term Middle East remains a Western concept that does not necessarily fit with the perception that the people and the leaders of the region have of themselves.”\textsuperscript{44}

In their study of community safety and security sector reform (SSR), Homel and Masson build on the shortcomings of the aforementioned Jenin model to suggest the development of key regulatory frameworks, or “transmission belts” of communication and feedback from the local to national levels in order to facilitate dialogue and counter state and local corruption, whilst reinforcing local feedback mechanisms.\textsuperscript{45} This must be accompanied by significant change in legal or administrative frameworks in favour of decentralisation and transparency: an “institutional anchorage” of SSR.\textsuperscript{46}

Partnerships, in this sense, are collaborative and inclusive, balancing local ownership (bottom-up authority) with national and international regulation (top-down legitimacy) in the atmosphere of shared responsibility for security.

4.2. Capacity-Building and Legitimacy

Service provision and delivery by local stakeholders has been identified as a powerful guarantor of human security. The ensuing recommendations are collected approaches from academic literature identifying means by which to increase the legitimacy of local stakeholders in security partnerships on local, national and international levels.
In transitionary contexts, Abderrahim notes that challenges to local empowerment can be mitigated by the provision of legitimate training for new councils, in areas such as effective decision-making and the efficient mobilisation of (often limited) public resources.47

In militarised contexts, Al Dassouky identified that Syrian LACs can be strengthened separate to the regime, via (1) the promotion of a productive and vocal civil society, (2) effective local administration that streamlines projects and priorities, and (3) improved management of local resources through technical training, consistent salaries and mainstreamed regulations.48

Case studies relating to stable contexts also recognise the importance of mitigating risks to human and national security through fostering local participation, establishing mechanisms for economic stabilisation (i.e. programmes that support start-up grants, or rapid employment initiatives), supporting local businesses and establishing technical training or assistance programmes.49

In short, granting local governments capacity to act effectively generally increases their legitimacy and resilience. However, Grävingholt and von Haldenwang note decentralisation initiatives in fragile contexts can lead to adverse consequences, due to (1) choice of partners, (2) emerging reality-expectations gap and its consequences, (3) personal safety and access of humanitarian workers and (4) conflicts of interest, unintended effects and political risks.50

The International Peace Institute addresses how good governance can contribute to achieving sustainable peace. The efficient and effective management of resources by local actors can increase legitimacy via a transfer of responsibility, which must be accompanied by internationally guaranteed transparency and accountability mechanisms to mitigate against potential negative consequences of decentralisation.51

4.3. Aspects of Community and Local Empowerment

The International Peace Institute report also recognises the empowerment of vulnerable communities as a vital dimension of building sustainable peace and mitigating against security risks. The following are related literature and recommendations.

The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies ESS-S seminar on Demographic Change and Youth in the MENA Region identified the necessary creation of communication platforms to deal with delicate issues, like women’s empowerment and religion, at a community-based level as integral aspects of human security.52

Williams (2016) outlines the necessity of youth political participation at a community level in order to address the root causes of regional insecurity, such as violent extremism, by using international institutions such as the UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security to maintain pressure on MENA partner states to implement community-based projects to empower vulnerable youth.53
5. Conclusion
Although the literature discussed in this report is diverse in objectives and scope, there are several valuable conclusions that can be drawn in the form of guiding questions for conference participants.

1. What is the role of international donors on the capacity, legitimacy and transparency of local actors in fragile contexts? Does this influence the mechanisms through which security threats are addressed?

2. Should security partnerships include all guarantors of human security, including rebel groups as security providers in militarised contexts?

3. To what extent should local ownership be valued as a guiding principle of shared responsibility? Is there a conflict between local ownership and local empowerment via regional security partnerships?

4. What is the outcome of centralised, top-down planning in security partnerships by national governments and regional partners?

5. Finally, how can we develop mechanisms between local, national and regional security stakeholders that facilitate the sharing of expertise, feedback and responsibility? How can we design them to ensure transparency and accountability?

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4 Ibid. 5

5 Jörn Grävingholt, Christian von Haldenwang. "The Promotion of Decentralisation and Local Governance in Fragile Contexts." Bonn: German Development Institute, 2016. 3

6 Ibid.


8 Ibid, 7.

9 Heller, Sam. "Keeping the Lights on in Rebel Idlib: Local Governance, Services, and the Competition for Legitimacy among Islamist Armed Groups." In Arab Politics Beyond the Uprisings: The Century Foundation, Nov 2016. 5


38 Lerman, "The Mediterranean as a Strategic Environment: Learning a New Geopolitical Language." 20


41 Weyland, Petra. “Shared Responsibility and Comprehensive Security.” 6


44 Otte, "The Quest for Regional Order in the Middle East."


46 Ibid. 322

47 Abderrahim, "Beyond Slogans.” 9

48 Dassouky, "The Role of Jihadi Movements in Syrian Local Governance.” 15

49 Ghanem, "Local Governance under Pressure.”

50 Grävingholt and von Haldenwang. "The Promotion of Decentralisation and Local Governance in Fragile Contexts." 16-18

