

# GLOBAL STRATEGY FORUM

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*The 33rd in our series of expert comment and analysis, by GSF Advisory Board member, **His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal**, who served as Crown Prince of Jordan from 1965-1999 alongside his brother, the late King Hussein of Jordan. As always, the views expressed are those of the author and not of Global Strategy Forum unless otherwise stated.*

## Reinforcing Connections: Interaction, Co-operation and Resilience

Muhammad Ali Jinnah often said India was not a country, but a subcontinent of nationalities whose leadership should focus on *'peace within and peace without.'*

This is not new. In 1919 Sir Halford Mackinder observed: *'Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; who rules the World Island commands the World.'*

The struggle for control of the energy ellipse from Eurasia to the Straits of Hormuz may emerge as the most crucial test of the East-West world power balance in the next decade. A time of reckoning is approaching in West Asia, inclusive of Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and the Arab countries of the hinterland to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The regional hotspots of the Eastern Mediterranean: Cyprus and Turkey, Palestine and Israel, and Kashmir in South Asia, contain distinct communities, presenting a security dilemma.

The continuing conflicts in Syria, Libya, the Yemen, the powder keg that Iraq remains, looming chaos in Lebanon, alongside the US Peace Plan and Israeli responses, together with the abrupt ending of funding to UNRWA, tantamount to defining Palestinian refugees, if not the Palestinian entity itself out of existence, have added new elements to regional problem solving.

It should perhaps be no surprise – the clue was in the title – that the Deal of the Century bears all the hallmarks of a real estate transaction and none of the ingredients for successful conflict resolution: talking, listening, and compromising on a shared solution with majority support. All difficult to achieve when key partners are notable only



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by their absence, forced out by impossible demands.

But moving on, the regional picture has been further complicated by the cancellation of the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), the potential scuppering of New Start and the terrifying development of nuclear cyber and space weapons involving all major nuclear powers. Last month witnessed the 75th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Amnesia is dangerous. There is a seismic political fault line running from the Baltic to the Indian Ocean.

Unfortunately, just when needed, an authentic Euro-Atlantic policy for the West Asian region, which is of course dependent on stable relationships with Russia, India, China and the ESCAP zones of influence in South and East Asia, is in tatters. To paraphrase Robert Kaplan: as Europe disappears Eurasia coheres.

Meanwhile, China's Belt and Road initiative shapes the emerging Eurasian world order, witness Turkey and Pakistan's increasing international role, Russia's Eurasian Economic Union. Mapping this initiative from a Mashreq perspective is a must.

The coronavirus crisis has exposed our fragility. International, national and local landscapes in its aftermath will be determined by the decisions we make nationally and globally in responding.

Key political and humanitarian challenges in West Asia-North Africa (WANA) stare us in the face. Foremost is the lack of coherence within the WANA region which remains

unrepresented by an inclusionist ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), where regional commons could be addressed. Rather, the WANA states attend UN plenaries as individual countries, with individual agendas.

More people are on the move than at any time since the Second World War and 80 percent of the world's refugees are Muslim. Territoriality, Identity and Migration, T.I.M. should become priorities.

Equally clear, is the historical lack of investment in the collective capacity for 'conflict resilience' in WANA.

All hinges on what we do next.

*Homo economicus* would say this is a non sequitur. These figures are not interconnected. One relates to political and humanitarian challenges. The other to market forces and the market is the deity of our postmodern times.

Far from being the great leveller, COVID-19 has increased inequalities whilst simultaneously intensifying retrenchment and narrow nationalisms.

The schisms are so numerous, the inequities so stark, that a universal respect for human dignity must be brought back to the consciousness of the international community. A politics of humanity is needed to restore respect for human dignity.

Poverty, exclusion and marginalisation deny the human rights of almost half the world's population. Poverty undermines religion, subverts reason and invites hatred. It denies



health, opportunity, basic freedoms, and mutual respect, whilst destroying self-respect by targeting the soul of our humanity.

These challenges can only be met collectively. Building regional resilience must be the place to start. Hence what I call the Triple Helix encompassing the three main components of regional security: political, economic and civil society.

Water scarcity is matched only by unequal and inadequate access to energy resources; problems which will be exacerbated by climate change.

Above all we must advocate for the integration of equality of access, across borders as well as between and within marginalised groups. Or future waves of displacement will be environmental refugees; and no country will have the resources to provide safe haven.

Turning to the second component of the helix – we have to move from economic politicking to economic policy.

We are a region riddled with contradiction. Burdened with legacies of rentier stagnation and inequalities. Yet, brimming with opportunity: literacy records, resource wealth and youth. Socio-economic and socio-political challenges can only be met together through policy based on human dignity.

The final component is human security, the absence of which is a failure of good governance and undermines social cohesion.

The response lies not in securitisation but in good governance: the rule of law, inclusivity,

social cohesion, shared identity and equality of opportunity.

Eurasia lives as a colonial-era legacy that helps dictators rule today and prompted populist revolt. Policymakers must recognise that the rhetoric of the ‘war on terror’ fanned bitter historical resentments. It stokes justification for militant Islamist groups and erases memory and therefore the potential for modern Islamic politics.

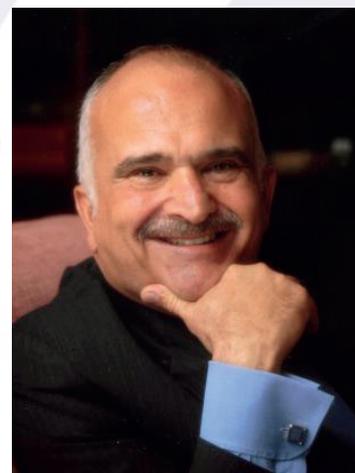
Policy planners today see the region as mired in anarchy, a ‘new world disorder’ where war is a condition of life.

Can we transcend that disorder and conceptually move to a more comprehensive strategy?

I invite my readers to an approach based on four groupings of operational sectors: political; security; human; and structural.

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