

ARAB CIVIL SOCIETY AT THE CROSSROAD OF DEMOCRATIZATION: THE ARAB SPRING IMPACT

The uprisings that the Arab world has experienced since the end of 2010 have fundamentally affected all the countries of the region. In this context, while civil society has had a profound role to play, the level of development of civil associations in each of the countries of the region has not been irrelevant to the outcomes. The diversity in outcomes is matched by a similar differentiation in the nature of the states and regimes, with civil society experiencing a similar evolutionary path. This paper aims to identify the notion of civil society and its components vis-à-vis the Arab world, and accordingly to present a classification of the Arab states, based on the degree of the active presence of civil associations. The linkages between civil society and democracy are also explored. Finally the paper offers a set of policy suggestions with regard to the enhancement of Arab civil society.

Key words: Arab states, Arab Spring, Mediterranean, civil society, European Union, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia.

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The so-called Arab Spring had a profound effect on the wider Middle East paving the way for significant changes. Although the process is still in motion and the outcome is far from secured, few, if any, Arab states were not affected. The monarchies proved more resilient and better prepared to deal with it, primarily by introducing certain measures and reforms to appease the demands of the masses – furthermore, they do enjoy a certain leverage in terms of their political systems. In contrast, most of the republics failed to foresee the uprisings; hence they were unable to accommodate the growing dissatisfaction of the masses and their demands for wider political participation, accountability, respect for human rights, and freedom of speech, creed and association.

A number of common features were evident – the role of social media in carrying out and sustaining

the revolts; the un-organized nature of the civilian movements and the lack of any institutional connection to the major political forces; and the role of the youth and women – hence, a leading role for civil society. Still, the outcomes varied impressively: from the successful overthrow of autocratic regimes, independently of external assistance or other exogenous factors, to a state of civil war, and from the introduction of reforms by the ruling regimes to a crushing of the uprisings. Such extreme variations are the result of the particularities of individual countries, the existence and incorporation of concrete state and social institutions, as well as the presence of a functional and vibrant civil society. Therefore, a look at the framework within which Arab civil associations function is plausible, whereas the concept of civil society and the organizations representing it, is in need of clarification.

The relevance of civil society in the Arab world

Civil society is perceived by many as a western concept—the outcome of Western Europe’s historical development, where civil society flourished reaching a high level of development as a distinct, independent and essential (although, by no means, exclusive) to the democratic process and institutional rule. As a result, its relevance and applicability to the Arab/Islamic world is questioned. This raises two interrelated issues: does civil society exist in the Arab world, and, if yes, which organizations are to be regarded as part of the civil society community. Hence, what really lies beneath this skepticism is essentially the concept itself.

It is generally accepted that civil society refers to “the zone of voluntary associative life beyond family and clan affiliations,” (Hawthorne, 2004, p. 3) hence “its critical sphere is the one between the citizens and the state,” yet it is also separate from the market. (Niblock, 2005, p. 487) Therefore, it is comprised of associations and organizations whose primary objectives are to promote and represent the views and interests of different groups and carry out activities and respective actions. In this context, three important conditions apply: (Niblock, 2005, p. 487)

- the respective associations need to be autonomous from the state;
- civil society implies values and behavioral codes of respecting each other’s right to operate, hence a “commitment to the peaceful management of differences among individuals and collectivities sharing the same space, i.e. the polity”;
- the civil associations need to operate within a context where the state safeguards their freedom of operation (preferably within “a clearly articulated legal framework,” or at least in a manner where their autonomy is assured).

In that respect, according to Saad Eddin Ibrahim, civil society is composed of non-state actors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as political parties, trade unions, professional organizations, community development associations and other interest groups. (Ibrahim, 2005, p. 28) This concept is not an exclusive one – in fact it does not only focus on those associations relevant to the political and democratization process – therefore, other forms

of organizations can and tend to be included in the definition. These comprise non-profit and religious organizations, business associations, advocacy groups, societies and clubs, research institutions, as well as more informal political, social, and religious movements.

Criticism derives from doctrinal as well as academic perspectives. In the first instance, civil society is perceived as a Western, alien to the Islamic ideology of statehood and community, concept – “a secular, anti-religious transplant aiming at Westernizing Muslim societies.”¹ (Hanafi, 2002, pp. 57-75) In the second instance, criticism derives from the nature of the traditional, in substance, Arab world and state, which, with its tribal and religious communal organization, cannot constitute part of civil society. Also, the core concern of Western and Islamic society differs, where the former puts emphasis on individual rights and obligations rather than the social cohesion of the latter. Yet, as Tim Niblock argues, none of the above foci are implicit to the Western and Islamic societies respectively as both have developed mechanisms and approaches that incorporate these concerns. Furthermore, contemporary Arab states, as a hybrid format of statehood, have integrated important western notions and mechanisms, whereas practical experience illustrates that whenever the opportunity for civil organization is given to an Arab population, relevant associations flourished; therefore, the concept cannot be regarded as alien to the people of this region.

Which associations are considered relevant remains significant. Whether tribal/clan and family based institutions are to be included alters the perceived size and strength of civil society in the Arab world, and valid arguments do exist on both sides. The inclusion of labor unions and, especially, political parties can also be questioned because of the exclusive nature that the first inclines to have, and of the connection to state power and its apparatus the latter can enjoy. Notwithstanding the undisputed nature of charitable associations as civil society institutions, their relevance to the political process and especially to the democratization process (a vital concern of this paper) is rather limited. Another element to be reckoned with is the global setting and its function; i.e. the ability (and eligibility) of such organizations not only to communicate their cause abroad as well as to participate in actions and projects

with their counterparts from other regions. In that respect, and beyond the aforementioned debate, the focus of this paper is on those associations which are, directly or indirectly (or can be), involved in the political, and especially the democratization process, and accordingly can be active participants in the ongoing wider regional initiatives.

The domestic and the global environment

The Arab states share a common cultural, linguistic and religious heritage, yet, their historical evolutions, especially their contemporary state formation processes differ. Such specificities tended to form the basis for a 'local' national (*vis-à-vis* a regional Pan-Arab) identity, coinciding with an evolving state-centred polity. Yet, their *stateness*, in relation to that of the West and the European world, differs in character and degree, although variations are also present among the regimes and the political systems. Most of the contemporary Arab states are not the exclusive result of an indigenous political process. Many were former colonial entities, which replaced the imperial structure of the Ottoman sultanate, and therefore, Western rule had a profound effect on their state formation (although not always to the degree that Pan-Arab nationalists and Islamists claim). Apart from the drawing of boundaries, colonial powers imposed the centralized nation-state format, and political elites to rule over those entities. Hence, the post-colonial regimes, whether the result of nationalist republican revolutions or monarchies (traditional or otherwise), had to embark on a state and, simultaneously, a nation building process. The new *states* and *nations* had to be imposed on the communities within, while also to transform the communities into citizens. The outcome was, in varying degrees, the advent of authoritarian (but not totalitarian), autocratic regimes² (Bill and Springborg, 2000, p. 294), where:

- power is highly centralized;
- the ruling elite seeks to exercise a monopoly over the legitimate political activities;
- the autonomy of the political institutions is limited and the state apparatus is fairly intrusive; and
- coercion is the major pillar for regime survival and there are serious constraints on personal and political freedoms.

The end result is an absence of functioning democratic and democratically elected institutions, and thus, of mass political participation and accountability. As a result, the regimes' legitimacy is challenged, and, as their revolutionary credentials were inevitably fading away, they had to resort to other means including extensive social benefits, the use of Islam, the introduction of reforms such as greater parliamentary rights and controlled political and economic liberalization, and the commitment for improved performance and good governance depending on the resources of the individual regimes. These reforms were in contrast to the overriding former *etatist* approach, a characteristic of almost all republics and monarchies alike. The extensive role of the state was deemed essential to ensure development, for the state and the nation building process. It was also seen as a mechanism to enlarge the regime's constituency as an increasing number of citizens were acquiring a vested interest in its survival.

As a whole, the Arab world is a highly intrusive regional system. Interventions were alternating between support (i.e. turning a blind eye to the regimes' abuses) to pressures for structural reforms and democratization. Yet, almost all the Arab Mediterranean countries are involved in a multilateral framework of cooperation with the European Union (EU), i.e. the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, a framework that allowed the EU to exert pressures for reforms, whereas it offered many opportunities to Arab societies for contacts, the flow of ideas and the transfer of know-how. The end of the Cold War and the transformation of Eastern Europe influenced the growth of civil society in the Middle East, whereas the rise in importance of the human rights and democratization ideals re-enforced the global perception for active Arab civil associations. The regional environment, although highly competitive, threatening, and insecure, is especially characterized by extensive societal and other links among Arab societies.

The state of the art: civil society in the Arab world

A historical overview

The colonial era was a turning point in the evolution of civil society in the Arab world by introducing modern forms of associations. At the

time, the field was dominated by community-based self-help groups, guilds, merchants, religiously oriented charitable and educational institutions (funded by Islamic endowments), whereas peasants and tribes led the public space in the rural areas. The European incursion gave birth to secular and politicized institutions such as professional associations, trade unions, and cultural and sports clubs – ironically, it was these groups, and the political parties, that mobilized the local population in favor of independence. After independence, civil society was taken over by the new nationalist and reformist regimes. In particular, in the countries ruled by strong state-socialist and populist regimes, civil associations were either brought under the state umbrella, hence becoming a tool of the state (like the trade unions), or were prohibited from functioning – in the case of Palestinian territories, oppression was exerted by Israel. It was only in the late 1970s, during the phase of gradual economic and political liberalization that civil society gained momentum.³ Civil associations proliferated impressively, yet, not in all sectors and rarely independently of the regimes' encouragement and support. In fact, when Arab leaders boast of their countries' civil society, they are referring to organizations that are carrying out their own national development agenda. Oppression, harassment and an insecure legal framework continued to be a major obstacle for the civil associations to function properly, especially the politicized and pro-democracy ones.⁴ (Hawthorne, 2004, p.12)

State and thematic classification

A classification based on the aim and focus of the civil associations is applied here, bearing in mind that many associations can have diverse activities and aims, thereby fitting in different clusters:

1. The service-NGO sector, delivers a variety of services such as charity, job training, educational assistance, community development projects, and fostering solidarity and companionship. It is comprised of the typical non-profit organizations, which are also active in the cultural and sports domain, including youth organizations and mutual aid societies.
 2. The membership-based sector is comprised of professional organizations, including labor unions, professional syndicates and chambers of commerce. Among the largest in many Arab countries, the main purpose of these groups is to provide economic and social services for their members, whereas they frequently offer a framework for political activism (hence, they are tightly monitored). (Sullivan, 2000, pp. 1-18)
 3. The third sector is predominantly comprised of pro-democracy associations with an overriding politicized agenda. These seek to promote democratic concepts and change by carrying out democracy-education programs, mobilizing citizens, observing elections, monitoring the human rights practices of the governments, lobbying for changes in laws and government practices, fighting corruption, and researching the respective issues.
- The presence and size of the aforementioned clusters differ, reflecting the domestic political realities. However, the key indicators for grouping the states are their position vis-à-vis civil associations that criticize the ruling regimes, i.e. whether they are “willing to allow organizations critical of key aspects of government policy to operate” and to what extent:⁵ (Niblock, 2005, p. 497)
- *The liberal corner, where such associations function freely.* Even if they do not mirror their western counterparts, in Jordan, Morocco and Lebanon (a unique case because of the equal strength of the state and civil society) civil associations function relatively freely, as do political parties, and are fairly effective in pressuring their governments on human rights related issues. These countries also enjoy the extensive presence of other forms of NGOs. The Palestinian entity should also be included here, although its structure and formats are different; in fact, the first intifada can be treated as a unique and advanced form of civil society experience.
 - *The in-between space, is made up of two clusters,*
 - *where such associations operate, but under heavy restrictions.* In Egypt, Kuwait, Tunisia and Yemen, civil associations, as indeed political parties, operate under severe pressures and limitations (like denying them a legal status) whereas they are frequently undermined by the parallel presence of similar in aim government-sponsored bodies.

- *where such associations operate only in predetermined by the state specific areas.* The prime example is Saudi Arabia. No political parties function whereas the presence of civil associations is strong yet only in closely defined and monitored spheres (primarily charitable and religious associated bodies). Religion and tribe are the two principal dimensions, with the latter exerting effective pressure in terms of doctrinal principles. The remaining Gulf emirates are somewhere in between this and the remaining cluster, as they allow the operation of associations only in areas that do not concern politicized issues, hence religious associations and chambers of commerce dominate the civil space.
- *The oppressive corner* where pre-Arab Spring Syria, Libya and Ba’thist Iraq were not in favor of any civil association outside the control of the state. These three radical republics, because of their state-centred socialist ideological platform, an interventionist in nature state apparatus was in place. Still, strong popular organizations such as trade and peasant unions did exist, but they were under state control (indeed a continuum of it), whereas in the case of Syria and Iraq, the Ba’th party held a unique position. Still, some quasi-independent associations, primarily religious charities and chambers of commerce, were present representing a nucleus of a future civil society body.

Features and characteristics

The bulk of Arab civil society is localized and active in the service sector. Yet, more importantly, it is predominantly made up of organizations that support the status quo, that are inexperienced, and either advocate conservative reforms or are simply apolitical. Also, they receive significant government funding hence they are reluctant to jeopardize their work by upsetting their benefactors. Variations do exist, yet they do not seem to mirror the socio-economic outlook of the states. Of relevance are the size of the population and the presence of a substantial manufacturing sector. Their prospects, thus, depend critically on the political structure in place.

Another vital feature is the overwhelming presence of the religious-based associations, in

particular Islamic organizations. They have been very active in almost all clusters, whereas their funding has been plentiful. But their significance for the democratization agenda is complex.⁶ (Kepel, 2002, pp. 360-76; Kramer, 1996, pp.71-82) Such organizations – like the Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt and Jordan), Al Nahda (Tunis), FIS (Algeria), Hamas (Palestine), and the Movement for Justice and Development Party (in Morocco) – while very active in the human rights agenda and very critical of government policies, do not always share the same appreciation as the secular organizations regarding democratic rule. This resulted in the absence of a “unifying vision for social and political transformation, leading to a deep polarization.” On the one hand, the religious groups want to use the civil associations as the leading vehicle to Islamize society, whereas the liberals believed that civil society “is the only bulwark against such a transformation.” (Hawthorne, 2004, p. 19)

By the 1990s, a small community of pro-democracy organizations existed in most parts of the Arab world. High-caliber groups pushed for reforms and sustained repeated harassment. Alas, they remained a very tiny part of associative life, attracting only a very small percentage of the population; moreover, truly active membership was even smaller. Those that managed to score a breakthrough in favor of policy change did so using their personal connections in the government. State oppression was a major obstacle to their effective operation, expressed, among others, in a very tight and interventionist legal framework, while a widespread political culture of apathy did not assist either. Also, they did not enjoy any leverage with the media. In a nutshell, they have not been able to expand this space much or to affect the political game more broadly.

Still, by the end of the last decade, such NGOs had proliferated enough to form (in some countries) a movement. They “were breaking new grounds and finding loopholes in current legislation” that enabled them to operate and develop despite the restrictions. (Kubba, 2008, pp.28-29) The mood was changing and certain developments increased their potential:

- socio-economic developments within, including urbanization, increased the pressure on the regimes and further exposed their inability to deliver;⁷

- progress in education shaped a critical mass of highly educated people with considerable experience in advocacy and organizational skills, willing to express their ideas openly;
- networking allowed them to benefit from the experience and know-how of their fellow organizations abroad;
- alternative resources (including US and EU projects funding) were available to them;
- the loss of the state's absolute control over the flow of information (due to the development of the internet and social media) allowed them to develop alternative tools of communication and distribution of their publications.

The Arab Spring in the process

An absolute correlation between the presence of a vibrant civil society and the *Arab Awakening* might be an oversimplification, yet it certainly exists. The Tunisian uprising that began in December 2010 was not a totally new, and therefore unpredictable, development. Over the past decade, the Arab world (especially in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) was experiencing protests, strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of social protest – essentially, a grass roots movement was actually in the making. Hence, the Arab Spring was only a “more dramatic example of the unrest common across the region”.⁸

Of more relevance are the outcomes: in the monarchies of Jordan and Morocco (from the liberal corner), the introduction of important reforms were able to satisfy the street protests. In Tunisia and Egypt the regimes, failing to do so, were overthrown after extensive and persistent demonstrations. Still, there was no tragic and fatal confrontation, and the political structure managed to maintain its basic tenets – indeed it can hardly be claimed that the streets were looking for a radical transformation of the political system rather than an honest and durable reform of their republics. In the case of Egypt, although it followed chronologically the Tunisian uprising, the process was in the making for almost a decade. Certain civil associations, like Kifaya and the National Association for Change, were the direct outcome of this process which also enjoyed contacts and links with civil associations abroad. Furthermore, in Egypt, the pro-democracy

associations maintained a strong momentum after the overthrow of Mubarak and continue to illustrate their commitment and appeal (as well as their political and electoral inexperience). (Brown, 2012) In Libya and Syria, on the other hand, the uprisings slipped into a state of civil strife and war, where the focal points were, primarily (yet not exclusively) either tribal or sectarian affiliations, and the opposition in exile forming part of the political leg of these blocs. A number of civil society groupings were formulated after or even during the civil war. In the case of Syria, the emerging absence of the central authorities in some areas made the formation of new civil society groups essential.⁹ Finally, the Arab peninsula was not immune to the Arab Spring, thereby generating reformist pressures, and, accordingly, divergent regime responses. In that respect, the only republic, Yemen (which in comparison to the rest of the Gulf monarchies enjoyed the presence of substantial civil associations) followed Egypt's route, although the landscape remains volatile.¹⁰

The outcome for democracy is far from secure. Yet, in all cases, civil associations were impressively present in the process which itself generated new ones. Also the aftermath and the ongoing democratizing steps illustrate the vibrant presence and need for these civil associations. The election process indicated both a wide and diverge range of new political formations – with many activists participating in independent, from political parties, formations – as well as a direct link between the civil associations and the electoral formations and parties. Finally, the outcome of the elections brought Islamist formations to power, whereas the constitutional debate and referendum in Egypt illustrated a continuum in the gap between the liberals and the Islamists, the power of autocratic habits, as well as the liberals' sustained strength in mobilizing the streets.¹¹

Prospects and policy proposals

Arab civil society came out of this experience victorious, establishing itself as a major and complex ‘player’ in the democratization process – not only can it form a counterweight to state power, it can also shape both government policy and social attitudes. Yet, for civil society to play its role effectively, a critical mass of organizations and movements must maintain (or develop) the key aforementioned attributes of autonomy, liberal norms and values,

and a protective legal framework. It also needs to function collectively and build coalitions with other sectors and forces. Civil society's strength (within a fairly developed framework) lies upon certain features:

- civil associations are active in diverse geographic and thematic fields, which (can) cover almost the entire political and social spectrum;
- they enjoy a highly specialized knowledge of their field of action;
- most of the associations' members are *active citizens* rather than *passive voters*;
- they have acquired useful skills (including fund raising and project development skills), professionalism and effectiveness in contrast to those in the state-centred bureaucracy;
- they can mobilize a large segment of the population;
- their power lies in their collective presence, therefore no individual association can acquire a nationwide overriding and institutionalized influence.

The evolving setting is promising, notwithstanding the presence of obstacles, i.e. autocratic habits, ignorance and the predominance, among the Islamists, of non-liberal groups. In contrast, the global environment, especially the West, is highly supportive (even though the EU is currently experiencing serious internal constraints), less arrogant about its moral and political superiority and accordingly more knowledgeable of Arab societies, whereas the former Communist bloc carries a significant experience of political transformation which could be of relevance to the Arab states.

Hence, a set of ideas and suggestions that can be of interest to the interested parties is put forward here:

(1) *The states of the Arab world* should

- in terms of the functioning of civil associations,
 - acknowledge their importance and role in society at large and as partners in the ongoing political process, by incorporating their status in the new, restructured or revised constitutions;

- establish a protective legal framework, that will safeguard a secure and free from harassment environment for them to operate in, as well as simplify the procedures regarding their establishment;
- facilitate and secure their access to and use of the public space, for their activities as well as limit the barriers in their ability to access public media and to ensure secure access to information flows as well as the ability to disseminate their activities nationwide;
- reform educational policies and systems, towards more effective and democratically oriented ones, and invite civil associations to develop the 'informal' education track.¹²
- in terms of their funding,
 - where public funding is possible, establish *independent authorities*, linked to parliaments or other institutions that can safeguard the non-intervention of the state, as well as ensure transparency and the reliability of funding;
 - facilitate their private funding by establishing favorable tax exceptions for sponsoring and funding NGO activities as well as effective mechanisms to monitor such initiatives and their legality.

(2) *The civil associations* should

- form geographic, local and national, and thematic coordinating bodies within which a discourse should be advanced in order to bridge the gap between opposing poles around a set of widely accepted norms, values and aims;
- accordingly, develop and apply a code of conduct;
- establish *civil associations support centers*, i.e. well equipped, trained and supported by a nationwide network mechanism, that will be offering training, advice (legal, administrative, project related, funding, etc.) and information to interested associations;¹³
- maintain their autonomy – political parties in democracies are linked to state power, therefore, the relevant NGOs should maintain their autonomy not only vis-à-vis the state but also vis-à-vis the political parties – at least they should not be organically linked to them, without, at the same time, being isolated;

- be transparent – transparency should characterize their operations and funding (this should indeed be a requirement);
- join already operational and credible international networks¹⁴ as well as establish Arab and other regional networks; create a framework for cooperation; promote the exchange of ideas, common experiences, and know-how;
- establish, in particular, links with associations from states that have undergone such regime change, i.e. the countries of Eastern Europe, the Eastern Neighborhood and Southern Europe – although the Western and European experience offers another, more developed, paradigm – in order to benefit from their experience.

(3) *The international community* should

- in the case of international donors and other funding agents, resume and rationalize their funding policy, preferably based on specific projects of a multilateral nature;¹⁵
- work towards achieving a clear understanding of the nature of civil society in Arab countries by encouraging relevant initiatives and research projects;
- facilitate the communication between Arab associations and their European counterparts by funding mobility and other common projects, as well as training and skills development projects. This implicitly implies reforming the relevant regulations regarding visas. The civil associations support centers (proposed above) can and should be supported and funded;
- reinforce the civil society agenda at the diplomatic level, both by encouraging and promoting multilateral initiatives for cooperation while maintaining the monitoring of the process and keeping up the pressure on the relevant states;
- include clauses and relevant initiatives in the bilateral diplomatic track;
- stress the virtues of co-ownership. Co-ownership should guide the international initiatives by involving Arab civil associations in all stages of the process – from needs assessment and program design to evaluation.

Civil society as an integral part of democracies is both part of the process to achieve democratic rule and dependent on a functional democratic political system. Hence, the state of civil society is not static but in constant flow, reflecting, yet also influencing, the democratization process. Therefore, the framework and the existing mechanisms (i.e. policies, measures and structures) should constantly be evaluated and revised accordingly. Notwithstanding, it is imperative that a critical mass of citizens remains supportive of such a process and the civil associations, always in defense of universally accepted norms and values that embody the democratic process as opposed to a nominal civil associated space and structures. This approach is especially relevant for Arab civil society which is in flux and crucial for the democratization of the Arab states across the Mediterranean region.

Endnotes

- 1 For a short presentation of the discourse among Islamic thinkers, see Hanafi, 2002.
- 2 There is a sharp distinction between the public and the private sphere, with the government dominating the public political arena but largely ignoring the private sphere.
- 3 Saad Eddin Ibrahim reports that the number of Arab NGOs grew from less than 20,000 in the mid 1960s to about 70,000 in the late 1980s – and since then, their number continues to increase.
- 4 When Arab leaders boast of their countries' civil society, they are referring to organizations that are carrying out their own national development agenda.
- 5 This, according to Niblock, is an indication of the basic acceptance of the limited character of the government's power, the need for a reliable legal framework to protect civil associations, and recognising the need to work closely with civil society.
- 6 For a synopsis on the issue of Islam and democracy, see Kepel, 2002; Kramer, 1996.
- 7 On the future to come, with regard to Egypt, see Rodenbeck, 2010.
- 8 For a general overview, see Ottaway and Hamzawy, 2011.
- 9 Author's interview with Salam Kawakibi, Deputy Director of the Arab Reform Initiative in Paris, Nicosia, Cyprus, 10 November 2011.
- 10 For the Gulf area, see Colombo, 2012.

- 11 For an overall outlook of the area and the impact of the Arab Spring, see Ülgen et al, 2012.
- 12 With regard to the Arab educational systems and their reform, see Faour and Muasher, 2011.
- 13 As example of this type of institution is the NGO Support Centre in Cyprus. With regard to their relationship to the coordinating bodies, mentioned earlier, the civil associations support centers should be organically linked while maintaining their independence.
- 14 Like the Anna Lindh Foundation, one of the only surviving and properly functioning mechanisms of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and of the Union for the Mediterranean, i.e. an institution which promotes intercultural dialogue primarily by working through NGOs. See www.euromedalex.org.
- 15 Hawthorne offers a thorough presentation, review and proposals for US funding policy which can apply to other donors and institutions. See Hawthorne, 2004, pp. 14-21.

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The *Neighbourhood Policy Paper* series is meant to provide the policy, research and professional communities with expert input on many of the important issues and challenges facing, in particular, the Eastern neighborhood of the European Union today as they are written by relevant experts. The analysis provided along with the relevant policy recommendations strives to be independent and not representative of any one particular perspective or policy. Most of these papers are also translated into Russian so that they are accessible to the Russian speaking world in an attempt to enlarge the scope of the dialogue and input on neighborhood-related issues. The key priority is to maintain the focus of the policy debate on the Black Sea Region and the wider region including its interaction with the Mediterranean South.

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