The SDGs and the Arab World: Questions about Citizenship, Gender and Conflict

Abbas El-Zein, Professor, University of Sydney (corresponding author)
abbas.elzein@sydney.edu.au
+61-2-9351 7315
Civil Engineering, Building J05, Room 339
University of Sydney
Sydney, NSW 2006
Australia
Jocelyn DeJong, Professor, American University of Beirut
Nisreen Salti, Associate Professor, American University of Beirut

Abstract

The Arab World suffers from large inequities within and between countries, corruption and poor governance, high levels of unemployment and erosion (or absence) of social protection nets, gender discrimination with deep social and institutional roots, militarisation and armed conflict, and large numbers of internally displaced people and cross-border refugees. The paper discusses the extent to which the SDGs framework can help in addressing these problems and whether there is a risk it might lead to policies that might aggravate them.

Focussing on low female labour force participation, poor protections for non-citizens and high opportunity costs of militarisation, the paper argues that the SDGs do not draw sufficient attention to these problems. This is exacerbated by what seem to be opt-out clauses provided by the SDGs to governments reluctant to commit to specific targets, especially on issues of gender discrimination. As such, SDGs may constitute a missed opportunity for the Arab World. Furthermore, while issues of inequality, marginalisation and conflict are particularly stark in the Arab World, these challenges are in no way specific to the region. On the positive side, the emphasis on citizen rights and democratic and transparent government in the SDGs may help in fighting gender discrimination and the abuse of non-citizens, and in better addressing the human and ecological impacts of conflict and militarisation.

INTRODUCTION

New Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), formally adopted by the United Nations in September 2015, replace and expand on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), within a timeframe 2015 to 2030. The Arab world is one of a number of regions on the planet to suffer from problems of poverty, poor health and significant environmental degradation, i.e., the kind of problems targeted by the MDGs and the SDGs (AFED, 2012; UNDP and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, 2002; UNDP and Arab fund for Economic and Social Development, 2003; UNDP and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, 2005, 2006; UNDP and RBAS, 2009; UNEP, 2011). It is on average a middle-income region, but counts among its members some of the poorest and richest countries of the world.

The Arab world has achieved undeniable gains in human development over the last half-century, most importantly lowering child mortality and increasing schooling and life expectancy (Kuhn, 2012). Nevertheless, some of these gains have been reversed by war and conflict and, more generally, major problems remain such as the persistence of infectious diseases, in low and middle-income Arab nations, alongside rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases in all Arab countries (Mokdad et al. 2014; Abdul Rahim et al., 2014); poor access to safe water; high levels of unemployment, particularly among educated young people; violent conflict and chronic foreign interventions that have undermined governance in some countries; and high levels of social and political fragmentation (El-Zein et al., 2014). In Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, the collapse of the state due to conflict has led to downright breakdown of welfare provision and health systems (Dewachi et al., 2014). Many of these issues are shared by other parts of the world.

Three sets of indicators relevant for human development are strikingly extreme in the Arab region. The Arab world

a) harbours the largest per capita number of refugees at ten times the world average, the largest number of internally-displaced at 39 per cent of the world's total and, in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the highest number of international migrant workers as a percentage of the population, at more than ten times the world average (see Figure 1);
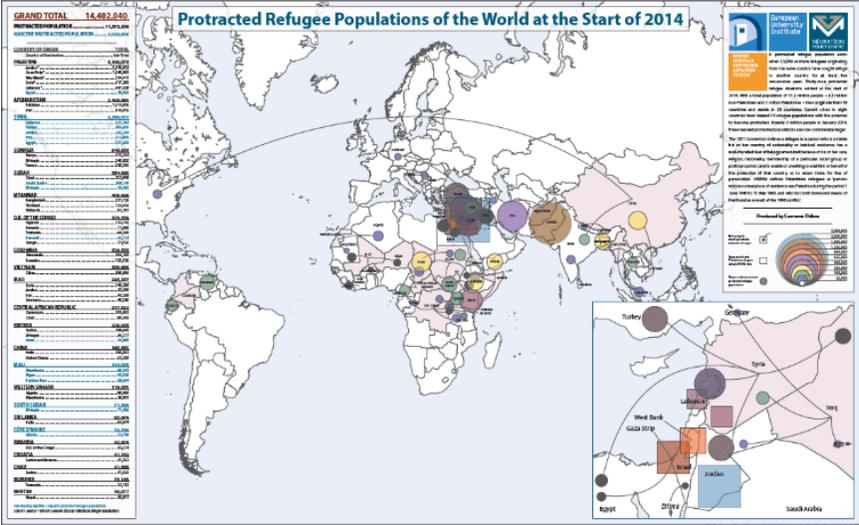

Figure 1. Global Refugees Distribution Map
(source:http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/Protracted-refugees-wall-map.pdf; based on World Bank 2015 data)

b) posts the lowest labour force participation rates for women, at less than half the world average (see Figure 2);

c) exhibits the highest levels of militarization and weapons imports per capita (at more than four times the world average), the lowest ratios of health to military expenditures (at less than a fifth of world average) and the lowest health expenditure per GDP (at less than half the world average) (see Figure 3).
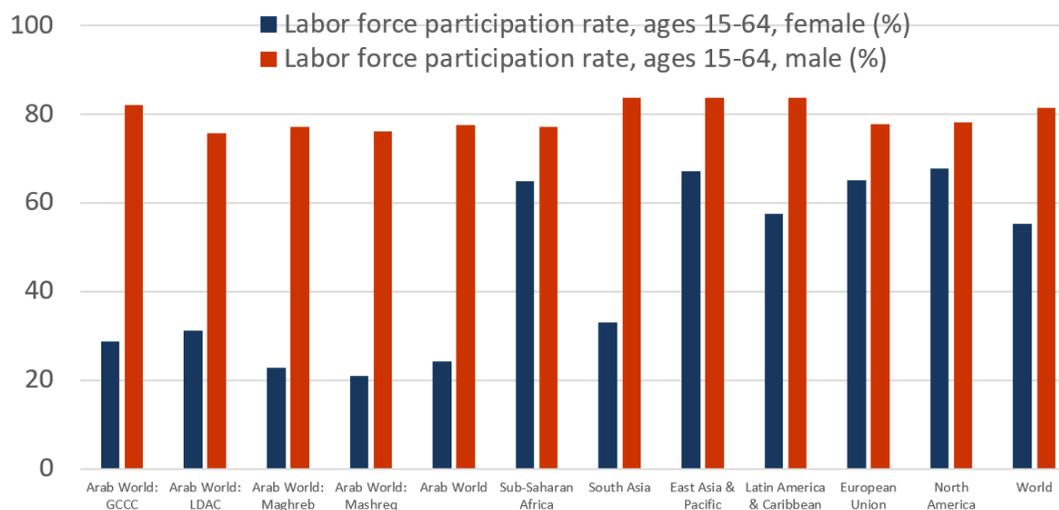
a) Male versus female labour participation rates
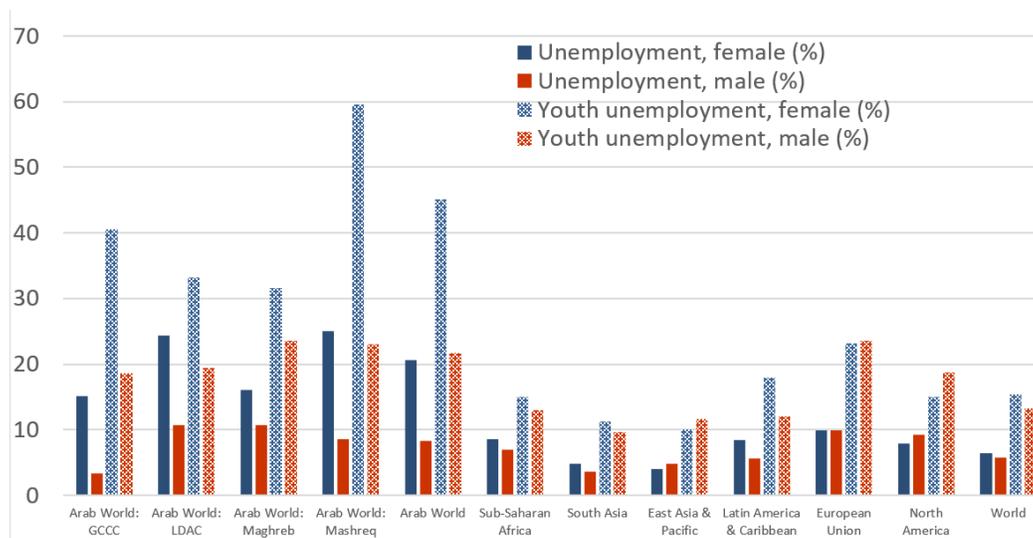
b) Male versus female unemployment rates

Figure 2. Regional Comparisons of Labour Participation and Unemployment Rates by Gender
(Source: World Development Indicators of World Bank on 6 and 7 April, 2015; unemployment data is average over the period 2008-2012; labour participation data is average over the period 2009-2013; Labour participation rate data is based on International Labour Organization modelling)
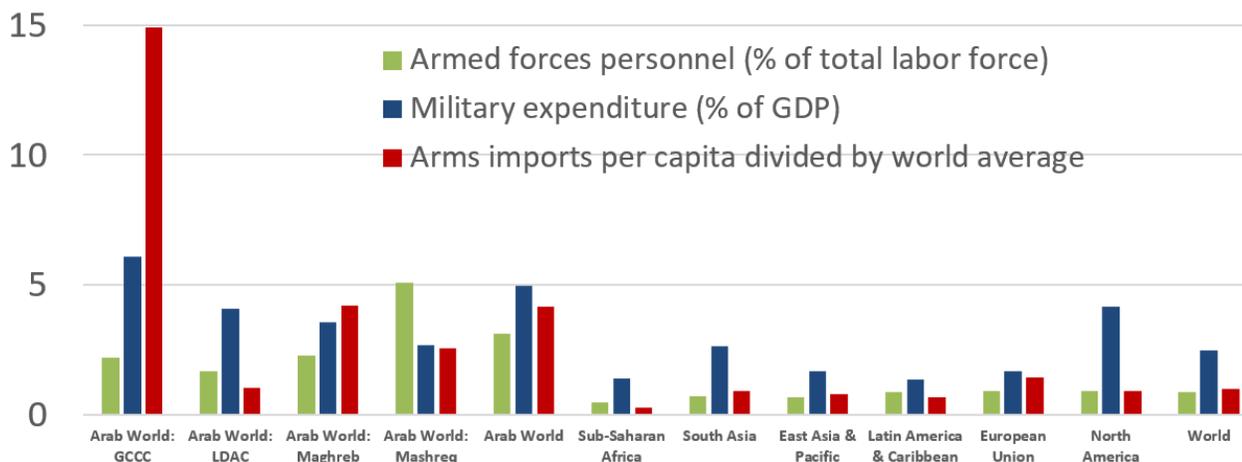
Figure 3. Regional Comparisons of Key Indicators on Militarization (source: El-Zein et al., 2016; based on World Development Indicators of World Bank on 6 and 7 April, 2015; data shown is average over the period 2008–12, except arms imports per capita which are averaged over the period 2009–13 and taken from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI; part of Egypt's military expenditure does not appear as imports because they are part of a package of foreign aid that Egypt receives from the United States as part of the Camp David accords);

The goal of this paper is to discuss a number of development issues, particularly relevant to the Arab world, that have not been adequately addressed by the SDGs. First, we analyse problems related to the rights of non-citizens, gender inequity and militarization in the Arab world – and some links between them – and assess their implications for human development. Second, we discuss the complicity of most Arab states in pursuing policies that are either certain, or likely, to hamper human development in the above three areas (El-Zein et al., 2016). We explore some of the structural, historical and ideological constraints that might prevent the Arab state from acting as the custodian of a sustainable development agenda. Finally, we discuss ways in which the SDGs can address these issues.

NON-CITIZENS: FOREIGN WORKERS AND REFUGEES

Eight million refugees and twenty nine million foreign workers are estimated to live in the Arab world today (El-Zein et al., 2016). The Gulf States are the top recipients of global migrants on a per-capita basis, and the third in absolute values, just behind North America and the European Union. Migrants to the Arabian Gulf have no legal prospect of citizenship. This applies to temporary as well as to long-term residents who include professional, manual workers and female domestic workers (De Bel-Air, 2014; Fargues, 2011). Out of the fifty one million residents in GCC countries, around twenty five million are non-citizens. Furthermore, non-oil Arab nations are the largest sources of labour outmigration on a per-capita basis and migrant remittances represent a significant share of GDP in these countries (e.g., remittances in Yemen in 2011 are worth US$1.4 billion, around 5 per cent of GDP) (OCHA, 2013).

In terms of refugees, the Arab world accounts for 45 per cent of all cross-border refugees worldwide (based on UNHCR 2014 mid-year trends) and 39 per cent of all internally-displaced populations. In 2014, the Mashreq region alone – Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza – is estimated to have harboured 42 per cent of all cross-border refugees worldwide and 29 per cent of the internally displaced, while accounting for barely 1% of the world population.

Palestinians fleeing wars in Iraq and Syria have become multiple-time refugees, as is the case for Somali refugees leaving Yemen – hence exacerbating their vulnerabilities and adding another layer of complexity to the problem.

Labour migration and war-driven displacement, combined with highly restrictive nationality laws, have turned the Arab world into a region where the vast majority of born-abroad persons and their offspring are non-citizens. States overseeing high intakes of migrant workers thus benefit from their labour while granting them very few social and economic rights. Hence, the region is an extreme example of a global, neo-liberal deregulation trend in which the state and its representatives have become less willing and/or able to take responsibility for the health and welfare of the labour force. This raises an urgent question as to whether the SDGs should be intended only for national populations or include non-citizens and, if only nationals, who is accountable for the well-being of those who reside outside their country of citizenship? As we discuss further below, neither the official MDG nor SDG documents address this question.

The very nature of the SDG process is likely to exclude foreign workers and refugees, since most nation states in the Arab world do not grant immigrants social or economic rights, usually excluding them from the welfare system – with the notable exception of Morocco which has voted a constitution granting foreign residents citizen-like rights and has passed a wide-ranging amnesty for illegal immigrants (MPC, 2013). One criticism levelled at the way progress on the MDGs was reported by governments is that it did not systematically include non-citizens even in countries with a high proportion of non-citizen residents. For example, a recent official synthesis report on progress on the MDGs made only passing mentions of foreign workers and refugees (ESCWA, 2013). Individual reports on MDGs submitted by individual Arab countries to the United Nations sometimes include non-nationals in the statistics (though not as a separate category) depending on the indicator in question. Often, it is difficult to establish whether or not they are included. For example, in Lebanon maternal mortality figures are reported irrespective of nationality; infant and under-five mortality, on the other hand, are based on multiple-indicator cluster surveys across Lebanese territories though not in areas with concentrations of non-nationals, such as Palestinian refugee camps (Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Statistics Division, 2014) (UNDP, Nada Dimachkieh Sweidan, Personal Communication).

The SDG document makes some mention of refugees, foreign workers and non-citizens in the preamble, but does not address these issues substantively in its goals (UN, 2015). Target eighteen of Goal Seventeen, which calls for disaggregation of data, does not mention the citizen/non-citizen divide. Non-citizens and the internally displaced constitute together more than 10 per cent of the populations of Arab states – with eight million refugees, twenty nine million foreign nationals, and fifteen million internally-displaced in nations where war-torn institutions have little capacity to provide for them (UNHCR 2015). The International Organization for Migration has called for a stronger articulation of the connection between development and migration, including targets on human mobility in the SDGs (The Population Council, 2014). Given the scale of international migration and the long-term, and possibly irreversible nature of many forms of displacement across international borders, non-citizens need to be an integral part of any serious sustainable development agenda, let alone one with the scope and ambition of the SDGs.

UNEQUAL CITIZENS: WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

A striking feature of recent development trends in the Arab world is the contrast between rapidly rising educational levels amongst women – with enrolment rates in many countries surpassing those of men at secondary and higher levels (ILO and UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2012) – and the lowest female labour participation rates in the world (28 per cent at half the world average and a third of Arab male labour participation; see Figure 2a). In addition, many Arab

countries are facing high levels of unemployment amongst the general population, but especially among the youth (see Figure 2b) and particularly for highly-educated economically-active women (Jelili, 2010; ILO and UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2012). In Tunisia, for example, 30 per cent of women with more than a secondary education are unemployed, at twice the rate for women with lower educational levels (Sayre and Hendy, 2013). More than half of female youth in the labour force are unemployed in every country of the Mashreq except Lebanon. Moreover, the number of women in vulnerable employment is among the highest in the world, and has increased in recent decades (United Nations and League of Arab States, 2013).

These outcomes must be understood in the context of evolving, yet persistently gendered, patterns of employment, in which educational level and marital status on the one hand, and market structures, working conditions and cultural norms about acceptable gender roles on the other, seem, together, to explain the extent of labour participation in individual countries. While many women leave or avoid the private sector upon marriage – hence pointing to the influence of culturally-conservative social norms – the effect is strongly mediated by market structures. Indeed, evidence from Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Egypt points to a number of factors constraining the availability of private sector jobs to female workers: incompatibility of longer hours with family responsibilities and reluctance to commute, reluctance of employers to bear the cost of training and maternity leave, in addition to cultural norms about appropriate occupations and behaviours (Sayre and Hendy 2013; Fakih and Ghazalian 2015; Assaad and Zouari 2003; Assaad and Arntz 2005; Assaad et al., 2012; DeJong et al., 2012).

High levels of forced and voluntary migration combine with women's low labour force participation to create mutually reinforcing effects on women's well-being. In conflict settings, women's economic and social vulnerability with the breakdown of law, order and communities puts them at risk of trafficking and sexual abuse and exploitation. Women migrant domestic workers are also particularly vulnerable due to the lack of regulations or public scrutiny over their working conditions (Abdulrahim and Abdul Malak, 2012).

Over the last decade, a number of Arab countries have amended family and personal status laws, which are usually in the jurisdiction of religious courts, particularly laws concerning divorce and custody of children (Mahjoub et al., 2010). Morocco in particular undertook in 2004 a major reform of its personal status legislation that has had far-reaching consequences for women (Charrad, 2014). Other countries have raised the minimum legal age of marriage and some finally accorded women the right to convey citizenship to their offspring (Mahjoub et al., 2010). Nevertheless, resistance to change is high. For example, in Yemen, the effort to set a minimum legal age of marriage for women has failed (Mahjoub et al., 2010). Discriminatory laws remain in all Arab countries which perpetuate women's status as inferior citizens to men. Women's autonomy in areas related to personal status legislation – such as the right to make an informed decision about marriage at adulthood, the right to ask for divorce and seek custody of children as well as to convey citizenship to children (particularly important if the husband is foreign) – are critical to women's mental and physical health and well-being, as well as to those of the next generation.

A big question mark persists over the willingness of states to pursue policies that go against conventional norms on reproduction, sexuality and family law, e.g., when they disrupt prevalent patriarchal power structures in the domestic sphere. On the other hand, the rift between secularist and Islamist political forces extends to gender relations. This tension is exacerbated by the widespread perception in the Arab region that the promotion of women's rights is little more than an instrument in the hands of self-interested and largely discredited, Western foreign policies in the region. The long history of focus by European knowledge systems on the veil as a symbol of the backwardness of Arab societies to justify colonial domination has its contemporary reflections in today's highly selective Western discourse about women in the Arab world (Abu-Lughod, 2013).

It is clear from the foregoing that rising levels of education for women – an MDG on which the Arab world has performed well – are necessary but not sufficient for removing gender inequality at home and in the labour market. This is an important fact for most parts of the world and not just Arab countries. Second, an SDG agenda premised on an expansion of the private sector may lead to larger rather than smaller gender disparities in the workplace. These observations are in agreement with suggestions that tackling the root causes of gender inequity requires far more than specifying technical goals pursued in sectoral silos (Sen and Mukherjee, 2014; Allotey and Reidpath, 2015). The SDGs do not, unfortunately, rise to the challenge. The gender equity goal is not given a deadline of achievement and its associated targets do not live up to its scope; when it comes to inheritance laws and women's access to ownership and economic resources, qualifying clauses allow states to opt out on grounds of what is vaguely referred to as 'national appropriateness' and 'compatibility with national laws' (UN, 2015). On the other hand, issues of data reporting, similar to those discussed in relation to non-citizens, are pertinent. For example. World Bank data on labour participation in Kuwait include both citizens and non-citizens, hence masking figures for female citizens since the vast majority of female migrants are expected to be in the job market.

Breaking what the 2005 Arab Human Development Report calls 'the symbiotic relationship between state authority and patriarchy' is essential not just for tackling the root causes of gender inequality but also for any sound long-term development agenda (UNDP and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, 2006).

SILENCED CITIZENS: CONFLICT, DEVELOPMENT AND THE WEAPONS TRADE

Over the last twenty-five years, close to half of all Arab countries – which together are home to more than half of total Arab populations – have experienced violent conflict, in the form of conventional or civil wars, or both (Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Kuwait, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, West Bank and Gaza and Yemen). Conflict has been shown time and again to slow down and revert human development traction (e.g., Dewachi et al., 2014; White, 2005; Lai and Thyne, 2007; El-Zein et al., 2014; Berman et al., 2013). The dramatic increase in the number of refugees in the region is clearly linked to militarization and the general rise in insecurity in the region.
Every Arab nation, with the exception of Tunisia and Libya, incurred significantly more military expenditure as a percentage of GDP, averaged over the period 2001–11, than the world average, with the mean rate for the twenty two Arab nations at more than double the world average (El-Zein et al., 2014). Moreover, military expenditure has more than doubled in constant US dollars in the decade to 2014 for Libya, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and trebled in Iraq and Algeria during the same period (SIPRI, 2015). Arms import by GCC countries have increased more than fourfold between 2008 and 2013. The danger that weapons might fall in the hands of non-state combatants was highlighted recently when part of the Iraqi army weaponry, supplied by the US, was seized by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014, helping the latter achieve its territorial expansion, perpetrate human rights abuses and put in place regressive social rules and laws which targeted especially women and minorities. Equally important is the extent to which commercial interests of weapon exporters are served by conflict. For example, Israeli arms exports have increased in the immediate aftermath of war in Gaza (Sadeh, 2014).

Other indicators of militarization paint a similar picture. Nine out of the top twenty countries on the 2012 Global Militarization Index (GMI) list are Arab, with Israel topping the list; by comparison, the USA is twenty eighth and Iceland last (BICC, 2012). The number of military personnel as a percentage of the labour force in the Arab world is 3.6 times the world average, as shown in Figure 3. Annual arms import per capita, annual military expenditure as a percentage of GDP and annual military expenditure per capita are, for the GCC countries, 14.9, 2.5 and 6.4 times their respective world averages (for 2009–13). By comparison, the government of every single one of

seventeen Arab states for which data is available spends less on health, as a percentage of GDP, than the world average, sometimes by factors of two or three. Similarly, eleven of these nations spend less on education, as a percentage of GDP than world average.

Overall, military expenditures by Arab countries between 2001 and 2012 reached $1.2 trillion, close to the yearly GDP of an advanced economy such as South Korea or Australia (World Bank, 2015). Average yearly Arab military spending over this period is equal to the GDPs of the five least-developed Arab countries (LDAC) combined (Yemen, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia and Comoros with a total population of more than seventy million). The opportunity costs of military spending have been shown by the authors to be extremely high (El-Zein et al., 2016). For example, at less than 10 per cent diversion from military expenditure, the governments of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Morocco could halve poverty headcounts in their respective nations while those of Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar would be able to put in place sustainable water management regimes.

Past and present efforts at constructing development goals have recognized the important role played by rich countries of the West. Global partnership – as reflected by SDG seventeen – is still viewed through the important but narrow lens of improved market access to countries in the global South and aid flows from North to South (OHCHR, 2010; Kharas, 2011; Sumner and Lawo, 2013; WRR, 2009). However, the high level of military spending in the Arab world places a question mark on the relative significance of the flow of aid from North to South when financial flows from the Arab region to the West are much bigger. For example, in 2011 alone, Saudi Arabia purchased $44 billion of weaponry from the US, an amount one and a half times greater than the entire foreign aid budget of the US for that year, the US being the largest donor worldwide in absolute terms. Going beyond weapon purchases and examining total financial flows, the GCC countries have tripled their foreign assets to $1 trillion between 2002 and 2009. In the five years, between 2002 and 2006, 57 per cent and 19 per cent of total expenditure by GCC countries took the form of investments in the US and Europe, respectively (Achcar, 2013).

As our analysis of militarization in the Arab world has shown, Western powers play a critical role in perpetuating practices that constitute formidable obstacles along the path of human development and yield, at the same time, some benefits to Western taxpayers, governments and corporations (WRR, 2009). It is worth noting here that the geopolitical dimensions of development are often neglected in a large section of the development scholarship that tends to focus exclusively on problems and pathologies pertaining to individual nation states (see for example Kuhn, 2012).

The new Arms Trade Treaty, which has come into force in January 2015, is an important and long-overdue achievement which withdraws international legitimacy from international weapon transfer to parties that violate human rights. On the positive side, the treaty has been ratified by five of the ten nations that are the biggest producers of weapons as well as a large number of Arab countries. Nevertheless, five major exporters, including China, Russia and Israel, have not signed it and, crucially, the US Congress has not yet ratified it. Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether exporters will use wide latitude in their interpretation of the constraints on weapon sales in the treaty. One recent example of the exercise of such discretion is the decision by the US government not to refer to the ousting in 2013 of the elected president of Egypt, Mohammad Morsi, as 'a military coup', despite strong evidence to the contrary, including deadly violence against civilian protesters. This has allowed the US to go ahead with weapon sales to Egypt which would have been illegal under US law had a coup been recognized (Aziz, 2013). Equally important is the fact that the Arms Trade Treaty is concerned with transfer of weapons and not with militarization per se. The SDGs make no mention of militarization: there is a single reference to the important issue of illegal arms transfer, but none to official   weapon sales.

Critical for the Arab world is the lack of political space for debating fundamental questions of fiscal priorities and the role of the military in public and economic lives. As a result, far-reaching, long-lasting decisions are made by small, unelected elites, often with the tacit or explicit support of Western governments eager to boost their military exports. Another effect of the non-democratic context of militarization is that it makes it difficult for independent researchers to build an understanding of the political economy of militarization, i.e., who makes the decisions, who benefits from them, what are the processes followed, what role is played by defence firms in the West and so on.

STATES AND CITIZENS: CAN THE ARAB STATE ACT AS A CUSTODIAN OF THE SDGS?

Is the nation state in the Arab world the right custodian for the SDGs? States such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, Somalia and Yemen are in such a condition of flux and collapse—having lost control over vast swathes of national territory to non-state actors or occupiers, and either unable or too corrupt to provide basic security to their citizens or actively engaged in persecuting them—that they may simply not be in a position to act, even remotely, as custodians of SDGs or indeed of development in general at this stage. It is estimated that up to 4.5 million people in Syria are difficult to reach, including nearly 400,000 living in 15 locations that are under siege, where critical food and medicine supplies are in acute shortage (El Hillo and Kennedy, 2016). In 2014, the five above-mentioned countries, alongside Sudan, have been ranked in the top twenty nations with the most corrupt public services – with Somalia on top, Sudan third and Iraq sixth, most corrupt (Transparency International, 2015). From a practical viewpoint, given the many inadequacies of the state in the Arab world and parts of Africa and Asia, it is important to ask whether there are ways of bringing about change, *in spite* of the state's disposition, at least when it comes to issues in which pursuing a given SDG runs counter to the interests of the state. We suggest three possible answers to the question that are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

First, countries should be required to report separately on their citizen and non-citizen populations for all relevant SDGs. The case of countries bordering Syria, with massive inflows of refugees, is instructive here. On the one hand, failing to include refugees in reports on progress towards globally monitored goals underestimates the health, educational and social burden placed by these refugees on development in the host countries and may overestimate progress. On the other hand, including them may disguise prior progress made on key indicators before the massive refugee influx. Moreover, in the case of long-term economic migrants, who in most Arab countries have few prospects of securing citizenship, these individuals are effectively not 'counted' towards the SDGs.

Second, for this to happen, long-term financial support to help countries with disproportionate shares of refugees should be put in place. While working towards political solutions that ultimately enable refugees to return home to their own countries, the international community (and especially countries involved in the wars producing refugees) have a moral obligation to assume responsibility for war-driven refugees. The unfolding global ramifications of the Syrian refugee crisis should compel European, North American and Arab countries to develop joint policies on sharing refugee burdens and integrating non-citizens in host societies, through new, effective multi-lateral institutions (ESCWA, 2014; Salama et al., 2004). Furthermore, in today's interconnected world, the global dimensions of development, finance and health and the need for 'global public goods' in fighting disease, violence and environmental degradation are critical though often overlooked (Kickbusch and de Leeuw, 1999). Indeed, a recent United Nations report on global aid and humanitarian assistance suggested a number of ideas, such as micro-levies on corporations and Islamic *zakat* tax, to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of this vital system (High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, 2016).

An effective 'global partnership', conceived precisely to tackle the structural and geopolitical constraints we have discussed in this paper, can be advocated and put in place. Any global partnership that aims to address militarization and the refugee crisis in the Arab world must a) be based on the rights of all populations not to be subjected to violence and abuse and b) bring some accountability by governments and corporations – in the North as well as in the South – for actions that lead to large-scale suffering. Such a partnership can only emerge through concerted global action by civil society and should be seen as part of a wider effort to address 'systemic global governance dysfunctions' that reinforce global power asymmetries and inequities and, in the Arab world, a state of quasi-permanent warfare (De Bel-Air, 2014).

Goal sixteen on the promotion of peaceful societies, which calls for eliminating violence, establishing the rule of law and participatory government, and building accountable, transparent and effective institutions, can be used as a starting platform for addressing militarization, e.g., by advocating for limits on ratios of military to social spending, caps on weapon sales to the global South, and protocols for more transparency on military budgets and sales. Attempts at placing constraints on national military budgets would no doubt be met with fierce resistance by powerful exporter and importer governments and interests. Only strong advocacy and coalition building involving non-exporter countries would give such an agenda the serious consideration that it merits. Actions which encroach on the fiscal sovereignty of nation-states are not without precedent: in 1995, heads of states at the World Summit of Social Services agreed that 20 per cent of foreign aid should be matched by 20 per cent of national budgets of aid recipients to be spent on social services – although this agreement was never enforced.

CONCLUSION

The United Nations has declared that the SDGs aim to 'leave no one behind' (O'Donovan, 2015; UNA-UK, 2013). However, we have argued that some of the most disenfranchised individuals, communities and groups around the world – refugees and international migrant-workers, especially women amongst them – are at serious risk of being left out of the SDG process.

States, in the global South and North, are often complicit in devising policies that run counter to sustainable development. In today's globalized world with vast flows of people, capital, technology and weapons across national borders, an exclusive focus on goals which nation-states are asked to follow fails to take into account powerful, political and economic pressures and interests. Such a focus may either impose unrealistic demands on dysfunctional and/or corrupt states, or fall on deaf ears, especially when vested local and global interests coincide. The Arab world brings these dilemmas into sharp relief. Unless these issues are foregrounded in the post-2015 debate and a real global partnership that commits to addressing them is developed, the new SDGs will have little chance of success.

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