

THE GLOBAL DIWAN'S

# Newsletter

CONNECTING  
EAST-WEST  
LEADERS



EDITORIAL

## Welcome

**Launched on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, The Global Diwan entered a “lockdown” period a week later!**

We took advantage of these two challenging months to set up a [website](#), a [LinkedIn page](#) and prepare two webinars until the summer. Furthermore, the many established contacts with our supporters and partners have driven the team and laid the groundwork for the project and its promising perspectives.

The Global Diwan is a unique pan-European business club open to all its neighbouring continents and to our friends from Maghreb and the Middle East to start with.

The issues of our bi-monthly newsletters will see experts and personalities giving freely their opinions and analyses.

Come and join us in a spirit of dialogue and openness to better understand an ever-changing global world. A warm welcome to all of you around our Diwan!

تفضلوا وشاركونا في إطار روح النقاش والانفتاح من أجل فهم أفضل للعالم دائم التحولات تحيات عطرة لكم جميعا من أسرة الديوان

Venez nous rejoindre dans un esprit de dialogue et d'ouverture afin de mieux comprendre un monde global qui se réorganise. Bienvenue à toutes et tous autour de notre Diwan !

Wenn auch Sie diese sich ständig ändernde globale Welt besser verstehen wollen, heißen wir Sie herzlich willkommen in unserem von Offenheit und Dialog geprägten Diwan.

**Éric Schell** 

Executive Chairman

### The Diwan's Motto

Connecting East-West Leaders

2

### Why the Diwan?

2

### Call for Partnership

Diwan Leadership Program

2

### The Interview

Maurice Gourdault-Montagne

3

### Tourism in the COVID's Aftermath

Hervé Novelli

4

### A Geopolitical Overview

by SSF

5

## THE DIWAN'S MOTTO

# Connecting east-west Leaders

Alexandre Houssard  Managing Director

OUR MOTTO EPITOMISES OUR WILL TO BUILD BRIDGES ACROSS CIVILISATIONS AND CONTINENTS. IN OUR VISION, GENUINE AND RECIPROCAL INTEREST IN THE OTHERS' CULTURES AND THE DESIRE TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER IS THE BEST WAY TO BUILD STRONG, LASTING AND REAL BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS.

The club will gather distinguished personalities in business, politics, academics through on invitation only events designed to enable privileged business connections. As soon as the situation returns to normal in regards to the COVID-19 global pandemic and international flights resume, thematic lunches and conferences will take place several times a year and be open to membership. In the meantime, the

Global Diwan will host webinars featuring international experts on a regular basis.

The Global Diwan's events will be held in Paris, London and Berlin and beyond in Moscow and Istanbul. Crossing the Mediterranean to North Africa, the Middle East Arab capitals and further East to Iran and India, the club will stand by its global ambition.

## Why the Diwan?

Shathil Nawaf Taqa  Middle East Advisor

THE DIWAN IS THE PLACE WHERE THE ARABS MEET AND DISCUSS THEIR BUSINESSES, BUT ALSO WHERE THEY LISTEN TO MUSIC, POETRY AND PARTICIPATE IN LITERARY EXCHANGES. A DIWAN ALSO MEANS A COLLECTION OF POEMS. "POETRY IS THE ARABS' DIWAN" AS THE SYRIAN PRINCE AND POET ABU FIRAS AL-HAMDANI PUTS IT. EACH ARAB HAS HEARD IT ONCE IN HIS LIFETIME.

Poetry is the mirror of the Arab thought. One that allows the Arabs to remember their cherished values to better understand the world and the different lifestyles they have chosen, their ideas of love, pain, pride, honour and pleasure. It represents an immutable part of the history of the Arabo-Muslim civilisation.

"Poetry is the mine of knowledge of the Arabs and the book of their wisdom, the archive of their history and the treasure of their epic days, the wall that defends their

traditions, the trench that preserve their glories, the impartial witness for the day of judgement, the decisive argument when the debate arises." Quoted from the Book of Poetry and Poets, Ibn Qutayba, Irakian author of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Our Diwan is global to replace the Arab world at the heart of History, the hub around which Europe, Africa and Asia revolve.

## Call for partnership

**Youth and women empowerment are at the heart of the Global Diwan's priorities and activities through its flagship project "The Diwan Leadership Program".**

As part of its mission, the Global Diwan has created a platform dedicated to women and young leader entrepreneurs to foster and facilitate entrepreneurship spirit in the region and enable access to high profile personalities, companies and incubators.

Knowing that 60% of the population in Arab countries are under 25, The Global Diwan wants to support their ambitions and help them building their careers.

The Diwan Leadership Program aims at empowering youth capacities offering trainings and career development programs in a variety of fields to develop their skills, expertise and expand their network.

We believe in the energy of the rising generation in the Arab World and our commitment is to contribute to creating a wide and rich network of future leaders and entrepreneurs from the region while building strong bridges with western countries.

Through our platform, our mission is to shed the light on individuals and projects with high potential and support them to find the right partnerships. We are glad to count among our first partners the MENA Department of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs who welcomed the initiative and offered its support for the growth of this project.

**Contact us and let's explore your interest in becoming a privileged partner to take part in the success of the Diwan Leadership Program.**

[contact@theglobaldiwan.org](mailto:contact@theglobaldiwan.org)

## THE INTERVIEW

# Maurice GOURDAULT-MONTAGNE

MAURICE GOURDAULT-MONTAGNE, CHAIRMAN OF THE GLOBAL DIWAN'S ADVISORY BOARD, FORMER GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE FRENCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE, SETS OUT THE GOAL AND VISION OF THE GLOBAL DIWAN IN THESE EXTRAORDINARY TIMES.

***Are we witnessing a paradigm shift with the Covid-19 pandemic? A temptation to national withdrawal?***

Years of excessive and outrageous globalisation have brought a standardisation of the world often resulting in the negation of cultures, hence causing fragmentation in reaction. Consequently, some countries are tempted by isolationism as illustrated by the action of some leaders, or by some often violent communities' choices, be they national or not.

***Indeed, one can't help noticing the failure of intergovernmental organisations and international institutions...***

As we witness the disengagement of some actors of multilateral rules which regulate the international stage and as we face protectionism and withdrawal of major international treaties which guarantee security and stability, one shall not stand idly by while peace is at stake. The most cynical even imagine a deglobalisation. It is true national egoism has strengthened this impression since the COVID-19 global health crisis.

***Is protectionism on the rise?***

I believe the world will remain globalised because of the driving forces of our mutually dependent development and our societies' well-being. But the world will continue to reshape itself following the evolutions that preceded the crisis. To this end, we ought to define an appropriate model that fits the people of the world's dignity. Hence the need for different methods of comprehension.

***The Global Diwan initiative appears to be timely...***

Absolutely, The Global Diwan can play its part. It's about creating a meeting venue, a place to listen and exchange views on

“

We must move on  
from the debate about  
having to choose  
between one big  
international patron  
against the other. In  
simple terms, choosing  
between China and  
the United States.

the world as it is, while considering its evolution thanks to a better knowledge and respect of one another's differences. Let us contemplate the world's geography with a different perspective.

***Is it the decline of Europe and the Western world?***

The Western world is no longer the world's lecturer. Admittedly its civilisation and values have been influential in the past and still are a frame of reference. Yet today, the world breathes and transforms itself through different sources. The world's people dive into their own culture to draw their own *raison d'être* and to express it with their own voice and language. No one can ignore the networks and influences that followed the path of ancient civilisations. To a certain extent, no region is the centre of the world anymore. We must move on from the debate about having to choose between one big international patron against the other. In simple terms, choosing between China and the United States.

***What a challenge indeed for The Global Diwan of which Advisory Board you chair...***

The Global Diwan is relevant to provide a new understanding of the world. The Middle-East, the Maghreb, the Mashriq and the Gulf countries are at a world crossroads. Historically, it is a region of transmission of knowledge and cultural exchanges. Thus, the idea of the Diwan, a traditional circle of power but one with a global purpose.

***This is where the Global Diwan stands out: it offers the access to meetings in Paris, London and Berlin, but also in other European, African and Arab capitals***

The Global Diwan will shape opportunities to meet, exchange, to listen and get to know one another. Leaders from business, politics, culture and academic circles of the region will connect with their European counterparts, from France, Great Britain or Germany, meeting the minds of other executives that have their own knowledge and world experience, coming from India and its subcontinent, from Turkey and Iran, from Russia, Central Asia but also from Africa and the Far East.

***A Gaullist and Non-Aligned vision in some way?***

To understand the world as it is and favour its stable and prosperous course, one has to step out of conventional frames. Let us make an appeal to the history and culture of each of us. Let us adopt a broad view and be open to diversity. This is why we must get to know one another, we shall meet, introduce ourselves and listen to each other. In this way, the fatal pitfall of national withdrawal will be prevented, and harmonious and renewed partnerships will be fostered.

## THE ANALYSIS

# Tourism in the post-covid context

**Hervé Novelli** 

is a member of the Global Diwan's Advisory Board and a former French Secretary of State for Commerce and Tourism.

## THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC HAD A DRAMATIC AND BRUTAL IMPACT ON THE TOURISM ECONOMY.

GLOBALISATION AND ITS MOST PERFECT EXPRESSION – TOURISM – WENT THROUGH A SUDDEN HALT SINCE LAST FEBRUARY. THE COMPLETE TIGHTENING IN DEMAND HAS MET THE SUPPRESSION OF SUPPLY IN ALMOST EVERY COUNTRY: CLOSURE OF RESTAURANTS AND BARS, VOLUNTARY CLOSURE OF HOTELS ETC.

The collapse in supply and demand has disastrous consequences in countries where tourism represents a considerable share of wealth creation. Tourism in the EU accounts for 10% of GDP, 8% in France, 13% in Italy, 15% in Spain and 20% in Greece. The latter figure is, in rough estimates, similar to Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.

“Interior tourism” refers to nationals traveling within the borders of their own country. In regard to that phenomenon, the numbers mentioned above depict disparate realities. Indeed, while tourism consist almost exclusively in foreign visitors in Morocco, it is substantially completed by nationals in countries like France and, to a lesser extent, in Italy and Spain. If foreign visitors are not to come back this summer, the season will be modest in France but catastrophic on the other shore of the Mediterranean.

At the time of writing, the support plans implemented in many countries have limited the crisis. Guaranteed loans by the State to compensate nonexistent cashflows, partial unemployment subsidies and the reduction in payroll costs have prevented the worse, but the gradual lockdown easing where it has been carried out will open up to new realities and challenges:

### • Will foreign demand come back?

So far, halts in travelers' inflow were caused by specific events (terrorism or social unrest) and lasted for short periods of time. Today, uncertainty prevails as

the economies dependent on these inflows will be particularly weakened in the aftermath of the crisis and perhaps on the longer term.

If the demand progressively returns in 2021 and 2022, new considerations in regards to the tourism industry will have to be taken into account as the preexisting tendencies have been fostered by the crisis.

### • What tourism for tomorrow?

Some significant trends were already at work before the pandemic and were structuring demand: split and shortened visits; the rise of “thematic tourism” (ecological, event driven etc.) in addition to an appeal to cultural and identity discovery; critic of overtourism and the rise of “slow tourism”.

Far from disappearing, it is my conviction these trends will be accentuated by the crisis.

The skewed analogy between pandemic and globalisation will further exacerbate the critics towards it, including arguments used in the name of the fight against climate change. Responses such as protectionism and an “every man for himself” sort of attitude will have to be all the more contested.

It is only through multilateral and pluralist approaches that global challenges as the one facing the tourism industry will be overcome.

The Global Diwan's initiatives may hopefully lay a path in that direction.



# A geopolitical overview

by [SSF \(Scutum Security First\)](#)

## Pandemic and resilience

Some were predicting a human disaster in Africa and in the Middle East but one has to admit the region not only resisted but demonstrated, up to now, a remarkable ability to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On May 24, 2020, according to the WHO (World Health Organisation) there were 402,919 confirmed cases and 10,806 deaths for the East-Mediterranean zone (that extends from Morocco to Pakistan, with the exception of Algeria – that is for sensitive diplomatic reasons tied to Africa, and Israel to Europe). It is worth noting that on the total number of cases and deaths, a vast amount (131,652 including 7,300 deaths) were counted in Iran that proved to be the epicentre of the regional pandemic.

One can hardly explain the reasons of this resistance while certain countries – like Egypt – combine a high population density and a relatively weak health system. The influx of refugees has been very destabilising in Lebanon and some countries have their hospitals and other medical facilities regularly targeted by fights as in Syria, Libya and Yemen.

If the health infrastructures are fairly good in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, it is not the case elsewhere and one could assume quick decision making on closing the borders along with protective measures and population youth could explain this enviable situation compared to much of Europe.

## Popular demands continue during confinement

Algeria is confronted to a deep political, social and economic crisis. The present context ensued in a short halt of the Hirak

protest movement that had been troubling the country for more than a year. Indeed, from May 10 protests resumed despite the ban. First in Kabylia, while President Tebboune was introducing his early propositions of constitutional revision.

In Lebanon, where public debt amount to 170% of GDP and where banks are almost closed, protests have resumed at the beginning of May in Beirut and Tripoli, leading to the army's intervention that opened fire causing at least one death and many casualties.

All countries of the region are affected by plummeting oil prices and especially by the decline in demand that followed a drastic reduction in economic activities. In the Gulf, the GCC countries have announced support measures for the economy as well as significant cuts in public spendings. In this way, Saudi Arabia declared on May 2 public spending reductions for the coming months while Bahrain announced a 30% cut of the ministries' and public organisations' budgets.

## Iran – Irak – Syria, "The Great Game"

The COVID-19 epidemic occurred while tensions between Washington and Tehran were at an all-time high since the death of Pasdarans' (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) Major General Qassem Soleimani, killed by an American drone strike on January 3, 2020. The pandemic has added to a profound popular anger against the regime's dignitaries since the violent repression of the protest movements during the last quarter of 2019. With more than 131,652 cases and 7,300 deaths officially confirmed on May 24, Iran is the most severely affected country in the Middle East. However, figures should be viewed cautiously as they are disputed by both population and political and scientific authorities in the country.

Although the officials accuse American sanctions to be responsible for Iran's great fragility facing the virus, Iranians rise up even more against the stranglehold the religious institutions tied to the regime exert on entire parts of the economy, but also against the massive financial and military support of the Pasdarans to the Lebanese Hezbollah and its militias fighting in Syria alongside Bashar al-Assad's forces.

In Iraq, pandemic or not, Teheran, Washington, but also Riyadh and Beirut compete to control the Iraqi power structure which resulted in the nomination of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi on May 6.

There wasn't any government in Baghdad since the resignation of Adil Abdul Mahdi in December 2019, following weeks of violent riots causing hundreds of deaths. Albeit al-Kadhimi's nomination filling the void since the resignation of his predecessor, and although his early decisions to release people arrested during the riots have mollified some of the popular anger, it is a fair bet to anticipate that this nomination won't satisfy any of the foreign powers involved in Iraq.

Former head of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS), Mustafa al-Kadhimi was indeed supported by Washington and Riyadh owing to his supposed independence towards Tehran. Yet, he went to Beirut to meet Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the Hezbollah, as a last endorsement to his nomination. "They're celebrating (this nomination). When will they ever understand Iraq?" as an Iraqi official confides to The Guardian.

On the Syrian scene, Moscow appears to distance itself from Bashar al-Assad while the reigning family's dirty laundry is exposed to the broad daylight on social networks and Russian television. It all began with Facebook posts from Rami

Makhlouf, Bachar's cousin, and one of Syria's richest man ("the Assads have the power and the Makloufs the money"), asking his cousin not to let "the others" squander the money intended to the poor. According to Firas Tlass, the son of a former Defense Minister, interviewed on the Muscovite television channel Russia, when Rami Makhlouf talks about "the others", he refers to Bachar's wife Asma and to his brother Maher.

Besides, Firas Tlass alludes to the possibility of a regime change in Damascus any time now and accuses Bachar al-Assad of having divided even the Alawi community: "He managed to create an Assadist army. They are not only Alawis, but they come from all communities".

## Business as usual after COVID-19?

Although the region adapted relatively well to the context shaped by the first wave of the pandemic, most of the problems that have to be addressed in the region remain untackled: the problematic dependency to oil prices, the economic and social crisis, the schooling, education, training and employment of a young population, etc.

It is worth paying attention to the evolution of external stakeholders in the regional political game: the more or less voluntary withdrawal of the USA; Russian and Turkish repositioning and of course, China's actions.

China is the first global oil importer and gets 40% of its supply from the Middle East. Although Beijing ensures it keeps an equilibrium between its suppliers despite the regional oppositions (mainly Saudi Arabia and Iran), certain substantial projects tied to the OBOR initiative (One Belt, One Road) could be suspended or delayed like Silk City in Kuwait or else investments on the Red Sea ports.

Yet, the reinforcement of the Chinese presence in Algeria or in Iran for example, indicates that this slow economic period is also for Beijing an intense diplomatic time. The help and propaganda around COVID-19 enabled China to strengthen its influence in the region.

SAVE THE DATE

# Webinars

You will receive an invitation link to save your seat. The speakers will be announced shortly.

## *The post-COVID investment perspectives of the Gulf countries in Europe*

**Thursday, June 25**

11 am GMT + 2 — Paris Time

## *Turkey: a bridge between Europe and the Middle East*

**Thursday, July 9**

11 am GMT + 2 — Paris Time

12 pm GMT + 3 — Istanbul Time

THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF SSF



[www.securite-sf.com](http://www.securite-sf.com)

Established in 2000, Scutum Security First (SSF) is a security company specialized in risk management and prevention for international businesses. SSF is a leading provider of security and safety information. SSF secures the operational development of its clients, large companies as well as small and medium businesses and provides them with competitive intelligence.



**THE GLOBAL DIWAN**

CONNECTING EAST-WEST LEADERS

**Responsable de la rédaction**  
Vincent Tabourdeau

**Directeur de la publication**  
Éric Schell

[contact@theglobaldiwan.org](mailto:contact@theglobaldiwan.org)

[www.theglobaldiwan.org](http://www.theglobaldiwan.org)