

THE GLOBAL DIWAN'S

# Newsletter

CONNECTING  
EAST-WEST  
LEADERS



Doha, Qatar

## EDITORIAL

### The best is yet to come...

#### Dear Friends of the Global Diwan,

Egypt is not only a strategic country at the crossroads of Maghreb and Africa, it is also the host of the next COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh in November 2022, hence the need for a special focus provided here by the Egyptian diplomat Karim Wissa.

In this issue, we are proud to present our new sponsor and partner Jolt Capital, as well as the startup Hoppen that is successfully operating in health services and technologies in the region.

Our platform of cultural and business exchanges will celebrate its second anniversary in March. We are just starting to hold in-person meetings, such as the Diwaniya around former Ambassador Michel Duclos and his latest book which

review you may read in these columns. Our friends from ACSIA provide us with an analysis on food security in Qatar that prepares our future forum in Nice that we anticipate as a defining moment.

We have the pleasure to introduce our friend Khalifa Al-Yaqout, a distinguished Kuwaiti lawyer that will animate the Friends of the Global Diwan Circle, a way for each and every one of us to commit and support our motto: Connecting East-West Leaders!

**Éric Schell**   
Executive Chairman of  
the Global Diwan

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# Sheikha Intisar meets Sheikha Mozah at the WISE



“Putting ‘fun’ back in curriculums leads to better academic achievement,” pointed out HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah, chairwoman of The Global Diwan Advisory Board, an entrepreneur, philanthropist, author, film producer, and

columnist, and princess of AlSabah, the ruling family of Kuwait, at the Opening Plenary Session of the WISE Global Summit 2021, December 7 - 10, Doha, Qatar.



HH Sheikha Intisar was invited to take part in the renowned event in her capacity as the founder of [Alnowair](#) and [Bareec](#), Kuwait-based non-profit organisations creating positive social behavioral change through educational, workplace and community programs and campaigns. HH Sheikha

Intisar was also given a private audience with HH Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development.

## INTRODUCING OUR NEW SPONSOR

# Jolt Capital, a passion for scaling responsible tech companies

By Jolt Capital 

JOLT CAPITAL IS AN INDEPENDENT PRIVATE EQUITY FIRM BASED IN PARIS, LAUSANNE, AND COPENHAGEN, INVESTING IN EUROPEAN B2B TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES WITH REVENUE OF OVER €15M, AND GOALS SET TO SCALE GLOBALLY.



We take significant minority positions and proactively support the growth of our portfolio companies, working closely with management teams and other shareholders. During a holding period that usually lasts between 4 and 6 years, our team designs ambitious strategies to profitably scale them to sales in excess of €100m.

May it be software or hardware related, we are ready to invest in and support companies with top-tier technologies and teams, in sectors that offer good exit potential such as cybersecurity, sensors, photonics, industrial processes, new energy systems, applied AI, or robotics.

Jolt Capital rigorously adheres to an ESG policy that goes well beyond a basic “exclusion list” (non-ethical, dangerous, or controversial activities) to implement a

thorough “positive screening” (proactive selection of impactful technologies).

From our inception over 10 years ago, our initial convictions ring truer than ever. Firstly, technology is increasingly responsible for redistributing economic fortune to innovators and is set to be the centrepiece in solving the most pressing societal challenges (health, climate, food). Secondly, Europe has an unparalleled engine of intellectual property creation that should be better monetised thus benefiting the various laboratories, universities, and local economies. Of course, this goes along with exceptional top decile performances for Jolt Capital funds for our investors.

We think that excellence in private equity investing is



highly correlated with deep operational insights in order to support management teams and have sufficient legitimacy to drive key initiatives. That's why most of our directors and senior advisors have an engineering background and have served as CEOs of technology companies in the past. Logically, we foresaw that artificial intelligence was set to revolutionise private equity processes and practices. This is why we've been developing our AI platform since 2016. This AI platform, Jolt.Ninja, continuously crawls the web assessing signals and looking for investment targets, provides new insights on innovation ecosystems, and serves as a tool for customised portfolio monitoring and deal flow generation and management.

As of early 2022, Jolt Capital currently holds 11 portfolio companies across Europe and Singapore, is actively deploying its 4th generation growth fund and has reached the €500m mark for assets under management.

Jolt Capital is now developing an interest for the MENA region. The reason can be summed up in two words: climate change.

IPCC data has shown that the Middle East was currently warming twice as fast as the rest of the world, with obvious dire consequences. In the coming years, temperatures could reach 60°C on a regular basis and a sea level rise of 1.5m would threaten a significant part of low-lying coastal zones. To address some of those pressing issues, the first ever MENA Climate Week will be held at the end of February at the Dubai Exhibition Centre.

At Jolt Capital we strongly believe that some of the key emerging technologies we have helped develop in the past decade will prove invaluable in the fight against climate change. Cities of the future should not be just "smart", but also sustainable and resilient. Smart water management, energy frugal cooling systems, precision fermentation for food production, innovative materials, and devices for

improved buildings are a must in our vision of the future. Some of our current portfolio companies can already offer off-the-shelf solutions and are ready to develop new pilot projects or factories to roll out customised systems, ranging from vertical farming, wood construction or EV charging platforms.

Another consideration is the lack of interest from technology companies to address the GCC market. Simple strategies such as using GCC as a platform to manufacture, sell to local markets, and ship to other destinations such as the US are almost never explored by technology companies. We believe that tax free access to the US market, low-cost shipping because of empty freight, and business-friendly local environment (attractive tax systems, incentive policies, network of local investors) will generate significant opportunities.

As we climb the Maslow hierarchy of needs, the density of acclaimed unicorns undeniably increases (gaming, marketplaces, fashion, or entertainment), but the same way it could melt the ice caps, global warming may soon eat away at these shallower levels of the pyramid to take us back to the physiological and safety needs that constitute its base and in which deeptech will indubitably play a crucial role. New generations of investment funds will be raised in the near future to address these global challenges. When this time comes, private equity firms like Jolt Capital and countries from the MENA region will be at the forefront.



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Visit us at [www.jolt-capital.com](http://www.jolt-capital.com)

## BOOK REVIEW

# FRANCE IN THE MIDST OF GLOBAL UPHEAVAL

By Anne Gadel 

Michel Duclos, Special Adviser for the renowned French think tank Institut Montaigne and former Ambassador to Syria (2006-2009) has recently published a new opus which focuses on French foreign policy in a changing world: *France in the midst of global upheaval*. As in any pre-electoral period in France, it is customary to see assessments and recommendations flourish, even though international issues unfortunately do not have the attention they ought to in the electoral debate.

So why read Duclos? This book is not just another attempt at a diplomatic inventory. Its essential value lies in two qualities of the author. Duclos is a former diplomat with real influence in the intellectual and political scene in France. As a practitioner of international relations, his insights offer an appreciable perspective sustained by rare literary quality. The historical depth and precise analysis of Macron's mindset in the international game is priceless to shed

light on the last five years and to make actionable recommendations. The author is also a committed European and an advocate of liberal democracy. Resorting to the Gramscian narrative may seem hackneyed, but one cannot deny that our political model and values are profoundly disrupted by the crisis and that in this in-between two worlds, the monsters that can emerge are numerous.

## Reading Duclos can also help make sense of three challenges:

First, making sense of the so-called "Macron Doctrine". Since the Fifth Republic seems to be moving inexorably towards personalisation of power, which translates into a marginalisation of traditional diplomatic circuits to the benefit of reduced chains of command held «in short reins», it is essential to understand who the resident of the Elysée is. We pay tribute to the acute psychological depiction of our "think tanker in chief"<sup>1</sup> who still needs to translate his analytical finesse into diplomatic gain, which offers an astute description of France's strategic solitude. This is particularly true in the Middle-East, where Macron's style and sometimes bold endeavors have had mixed results, and where the author advocates a more balanced and inclusive policy.

Second, making sense of the new global "mental map" in a world where alliances are less reliable, the transactional way prevails, peace is no longer the horizon of our defense strategy<sup>2</sup> and where it is vital that geo-economics are articulated with geopolitics. By tracing the thread of a foreign policy that we would now have dropped, we are reminded that its most



*France in the midst of global upheaval,*  
Michel Duclos,  
Editions de l'Observatoire, 2021.

constant line through time and successive heads of State has been the European project. Saluting the President's early flair for the need to think about European sovereignty not only in geopolitical terms but also in technological and industrial terms, the author stresses the urgency of giving it substance in his recommendations.

Which leads to the third challenge: making sense of the future. The book does not only give a lucid glance at the real place of France which "has the means to act alone only exceptionally" in a world where the cards are reshuffled, it also seeks to give substance to "strategic realism".

But most of all, reading this essay invites us to ask ourselves what power means in the wake of the "clarifying virus".

Let us make no mistake about it: the ideological and political refoundation that the author calls for is not about power for its own sake, but it is about remaining a "great country in a world where there are only relative powers", in order to protect what we believe in.

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(...) in the Middle-East, where Macron's style and sometimes bold endeavors have had mixed results, and where the author advocates a more balanced and inclusive policy

<sup>1</sup> To paraphrase a Senior foreign correspondent of *Politico* in Paris, Rym Momtaz.

<sup>2</sup> Refers to Jean-Dominique Merchet's "L'armée française renonce à la paix" in *l'Opinion*, December 23rd 2021.

# Introducing our partners:

## The Brussels Global Review

THE MEA REGION AND THE EUROPEAN UNION WILL PROGRESS BEST, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS STRATEGIC NEIGHBOURS, WHEN ESTABLISHING DEEPER TIES BETWEEN ONE ANOTHER.

[WWW.BRUSSELSGLOBALREVIEW.COM](http://WWW.BRUSSELSGLOBALREVIEW.COM) 

Brussels Global Review is a Brussels based company specialised in Sustainability reporting, ESG strategy and impact mentorships for organisations across the MEA (Middle East and Africa) region. We work with organisations striving to improve their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance and provide guidance through our mentorship program. Our 360° approach is designed to spread a positive narrative about African and Middle Eastern actors while enhancing sustainable business growth.

Our sustainability reports showcase ESG (environmental, social and governance) strategies being implemented in organisations, sectorial analysis based on the regional sustainability agenda, and recommendations based on our thorough research in the different countries. In addition, our digital content hub is challenging the misconceptions about organisations' standards in the MEA with success stories about sustainable development within various industries in the region. Brussels Global Review believes in global partnerships towards a sustainable future where no one is left behind.

We believe in the need for different stakeholders to engage in dialogue, leading to brighter and more innovative solutions to our most pressing issues. This is why we organise events, webinars, and discussions to create further collaboration from stakeholders ranging from business leaders to industry experts and politicians. This is where our 360° approach takes shape: in addition to providing authentic information, we create spaces for the different actors to meet, exchange and share the information themselves. We empower our clients, partners, and individuals involved with our mission to tell their own stories. More so, with the help of our international experts, we encourage individuals to achieve

sustainable growth through our mentorship programs. Brussels Global Review upgrades business development and guides to acquire a conscious work culture leading to economic growth. We form alliances and collaborations with different stakeholders with a shared vision to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals at a global level.

The MEA region and the European Union will progress best, individually and as strategic neighbours, when establishing deeper ties between one another. To the present day, there are still significant gaps between the two due to their complex history—from colonialism to unification. However, one thing is clear: it is in both regions' interest to collaborate to enhance business development, trade relations, and sustainability. As a company based in Brussels, The European Union's capital, Brussels Global Review believes in creating synergies between people across borders and that this is key for a prosperous global economy.



## HEALTHCARE

# Digitalisation of healthcare facilities in the Gulf States: the example of Hoppen

By Hoppen 

LEADER IN THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF HEALTHCARE FACILITIES, HOPPEN OFFERS TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS AND SERVICES TO DIGITALISE THE ENTIRE PATIENT JOURNEY. FOUNDED IN 2011, THE FRENCH COMPANY DEVELOPS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TOOLS AND SOLUTIONS FOR HOSPITALS, FROM ONLINE PRE-ADMISSION, BOTH ADMINISTRATIVE AND STAY-RELATED, TO CONNECTED ROOMS, ENTERTAINMENT AND MULTIMEDIA, E-CONCIERGE SERVICES, AND MORE.

Hoppen's strength lies in its ability to offer software solutions backed up by physical presence. Expert of the patient experience in Europe, through its own on-site teams who can take care of patient arrivals or admission, for example, and also accompany them throughout their stay, Hoppen helps also hospitals to implement the right eHealth tools, complementary to their own organisation.

Every year, 5 million patients benefit from the services provided by the company. Today, Hoppen equips more than 600 hospitals in Europe and the Middle East (especially with references in Unit Arab Emirates and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and intends to significantly speed up its expansion and operations in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf States.

## Post-Covid: eHealth growth in the Middle East and the Gulf States

The Covid-19 pandemic revealed the importance of healthcare systems and the advantages of hospitals digitisation. Therefore, almost all the Gulf States

decided to invest in digital tools that enable to improve healthcare pathways, upgrade patient experience, and take some administrative weights off caregivers.

In a phase of significant growth, the healthcare sector is emerging as a priority for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries as they work to diversify their economies away from a reliance on oil production. Thus, like many other countries as Qatar, Oman, Kuwait's healthcare targets for 2035 include the increase of bed capacity in hospitals.

Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic showed the health stakes all over the world. HOPPEN noticed an ever-increasing awareness of the advantages of digitalisation in the healthcare sector, which is believed to improve the industry growth, while many nations, including the Gulf States, are now striving to build more resilience and efficient digital mature healthcare systems.

At HIMSS21 (Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society) Middle East Conference, Waleed AlBahli,

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In a phase of significant growth, the healthcare sector is emerging as a priority for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries as they work to diversify their economies away from a reliance on oil production.

General Director of the National Health Information Center (NHIC) (KSA), explained that “COVID-19 has been a catalyst for change”. Indeed, Healthcare is one of the main focus areas of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, a blueprint for the transformation of the Saudi economy away from its overreliance on

oil and the public sector, and the Saudi National Transformation Plan (NTP). It particularly plans to increase the focus on digital healthcare innovations. In addition, the Government of the UAE provides excellent support to local and international eHealth market players with developing IT infrastructures and the advancement in telemedicine. Only over 55 % of hospitals in the UEA use digital healthcare media.

The European healthcare system has been particularly impacted by the pandemic and eHealth solutions have been quickly and widely deployed into this area during

the last two years in order to face the Covid-19 challenge. French companies like Hoppen are now a step ahead and can provide industrial solutions to other areas like the Gulf States. This growth of the eHealth market in the Gulf is conspicuous at the 2020 World Exposition in Dubai, which takes place from 1st October 2021 to 31st March 2022. The French expertise in the healthcare sector is represented at this event since Hoppen is taking part in the French pavilion stand run by French Healthcare, the innovative public-private initiative aimed at bringing together under a single banner all the players in the

French healthcare ecosystem to jointly promote their expertise, technologies, and innovations internationally.

Alongside the World Expo, another event, more health-centered, will occur in Dubai: [Arab Health](#) ▾

## Arab Health: The annual Healthcare Congress in the Middle East



The 47th edition of Arab Health 2022 will be held from 24th to 27th January 2022 in Dubai World Trade Centre (and from 31st January to 10th February online). In June 2021, HOPPEN's International Development team introduced visitors of Arab Health to its Connected Room digital solutions.

Since 1975, Arab Health is the leading medical equipment exhibition and healthcare conference in the Middle East. Focused on technology and innovation, the event will present an exceeding range of healthcare products and services showcased by more than 3.500 exhibitors from

60 countries and across 8 product categories. Arab Health 2022 is expected to bring together more than 56.000 healthcare professionals eager to learn, network, and trade. Furthermore, attendees are looking forward to this congress to discover and source new products and connect with suppliers.

**HOPPEN:** <https://www.hoppen.care/en/>

**Arab Health:** <https://www.arabhealthonline.com/en/Home.html>



## LAW

# The pandemic pushing digitisation in the legal profession

By Khalifah Al-Yaqout 



We, attorneys, have seen 2021 pushing the trends brought on by remote work even further, with AI and analytics continuing to grab attention.

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Law firms need to leverage legal tech to stay competitive

COVID-19 accelerated the use of collaboration tools, cloud technologies, video conferencing platforms and more to unforeseen heights.

Law firms need to leverage legal tech to stay competitive.

Emerging legal technology dynamics bring along issues of managing risk, technology prioritisation, and in-line evolutionary needs associated with these new technologies, all of which can greatly impact the pace and delivery of legal services today.

With COVID forcing lawyers to move virtually overnight, legal technologies have been evolving for many years, but the past 18 months have seen exponential growth in adoption in which we see the fastest technological shift for the legal profession in recent history.

However, several issues must be taken into consideration and developed in the GCC

legal framework to keep up with other more developed legal systems in Europe and in the US.

## 1 - Virtual conference technology

While video calls were not new when the pandemic struck the world, the widespread use of Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and other video conferencing technologies both within law firms and with clients has exploded with the pandemic forcing everyone to work from home.

In addition to meetings, proceedings have moved online, with even high-profile trials taking place over Zoom. With courts adopting virtual hearing software like CaseLines, the trend of virtual hearings will no doubt outlast the pandemic.

## 2 - Digitisation of documents

As law firms and legal proceedings went remote, so did documents, and law firms spent vast amounts of time and money in 2020 to digitise their paper-based systems.

## 3 - Cybersecurity

While cybersecurity has been the leading concern to law firms well before the pandemic or at least should be, the move to remote work forced every lawyer to think more seriously about their role in fighting cyber attackers.

## 4 - Data privacy

Along with the practical concerns about data security are the ever-evolving privacy

considerations for managing raw data. Data privacy has never been more critical for law firms and their clients. There are many factors to consider especially in relation to attorney-client privilege.

## 5 - Data analysis

While there was a rush to digitise everything as firms remote worked when COVID hit, there are many more benefits to digitising for firms and in-house legal departments than easy access. This includes gathering data analytics and optimising the operations of law firms in providing their services to their clients

## 6 - Artificial intelligence

While artificial intelligence has been a trendy topic for several years, skepticism set into the legal profession that it would not change anything right away. Like it or not, artificial intelligence is here to stay. And it can be a boon or a bane for lawyers, depending on whether they embrace it.

## 7 - Digital marketing

With everyone online and dispersed, law firms that were falling behind on their digital presence are no longer able to ignore the basics of maintaining their website, social media channels, and regular content updates.

These are just a few ambitious next steps that I wanted to share as they could be beneficial to Kuwaiti and GCC law firms.



FOCUS ON

# Egypt

## Interview with Karim Wissa

FORMER DIPLOMAT, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE FRENCH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IN EGYPT 



### Could you please introduce yourself to our readership?

I've been an Egyptian diplomat for 30 years. I served my country at the embassies of Egypt in France, the UN in New York, and my last posting was as Egypt's executive director to the World Bank Group in Washington.

After leaving the diplomatic service, I joined the French law firm Gide Loyrette Nouel helping open their office in Egypt in 2018. After the pandemic broke out in 2020, I continued teaching at the French ESLSCA Business School on their MBA program. I joined the Chamber (CCIFE) in 2021.

### What is the role of the CCIFE (French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Egypt)?

The French Chamber of Commerce is mainly concerned with promoting French and Egyptian business ties. The chamber has been functioning in Egypt since 1992, bringing together members of the French business community, French companies with a presence in Egypt and Egyptian companies looking for business in France. Locally, we organise partnerships through a series of roundtables where we invite Egyptian officials, CEOs and notable personalities in the business community to talk about recent legislation or room to do new business in the country.

Our main interlocutors in France are the CCI

Internationale, the MEDEF, the CCFA and the Global Diwan. Together, we collaborate to promote Egyptian French business ties, highlighting the areas for investment and business opportunities and creating a large network among our members.

### What is the economic situation in Egypt?

Egypt, as you know, is the sixth largest country in the Arab World in terms of size and by far, the largest in terms of population (104 million), which is growing at 2.5% annually, a rate that is undoubtedly alarming from a demographic point of view, but one that could represent a growing economic opportunity if framed within the right developmental approach.

Since the 1960s, Egypt has adopted a socialist centrally-planned economic model. In the early 1970s, under President Sadat, a new direction was adopted both politically as well as economically. A new "open-door" economic policy was declared whereby Egypt would gradually return to a free market and private sector-led growth. President Mubarak's regime would follow for thirty years, the first two-thirds of which were a continuation of the same slow and mixed economic progress under a system that failed to develop into a full free market place or maintain the social welfare benefits of the socialist era. Only by mid 2000s did a government, with a clear free market approach, came into place. Thus, between 2004 and 2009 the Egyptian economy grew at an average of 6%, FDI climbed to 13.8 billion USD in 2008.



FOCUS ON

# Egypt

After the events of 2011, President El-Sisi was elected in 2014 and a new Parliament put in place. Thus, a new stable regime was in place and its objective was to take Egypt on a path of stability and growth. Challenges, however, would persist, local as well as regional ones, especially the economic and security challenges. It is in this context that the Government of Egypt decided, in 2016, to implement an ambitious economic reform program.

In 2016, Egypt concluded an agreement with the IMF, in which it was granted a 12 billion US dollar Extended Fund Facility. The loan was considered at the time of conclusion of the agreement as not merely a source of relief for Egypt's tight foreign currency reserves, but more importantly an opportunity to introduce the necessary structural changes and to undertake the fiscal and monetary measures needed to bring the economy back to relative equilibrium and regain investor confidence. In fact, by the time the IMF Agreement was concluded, the Egyptian economy had been under significant stress. This was the result of several years of political instability following the January 2011 Revolution, the tense security situation due to the continuing confrontation against terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula, and economic policy challenges.

In late 2016, serious and bold measures were taken by the Government with a view to addressing the long-term imbalances, prior and following the conclusion of the IMF Agreement. A new Value Added Tax Law was issued, a significant reduction in the fuel subsidy bill was introduced, and most importantly a near-complete floatation of the Egyptian Pound was announced in order to close the widening gap between its official price and that at which it had been trading on the black market.

The results of these measures on the macro economy were swift and quickly recognised. Egypt had managed to resolve foreign exchange shortages, regain investor confidence, and increase private sector remittances and portfolio investments. However, there still remained a lot to be done. Structural reforms needed to be made on the ground in order to allow Egypt to benefit from the improvement in the macro economic outlook, especially in the areas of export, tourism, SME activity, employment, and inflation.

Since the start of the reform, a flurry of commercial legislation was issued by Parliament. The issuance of new laws: Investment and Bankruptcy, the Companies and the Capital Market Laws. Collectively, these developments brought about the most comprehensive change since the

1980s in the laws governing the way that companies are established, managed, and liquidated in Egypt. Viewed separately, they would come across as mere procedural and mechanical in terms of their subject and scope. However, when considered in their totality, there is no doubt that they provide a much-welcomed reform and modernisation of the legal and regulatory framework for corporate behaviour, one that brings about a simplified investment environment, improved corporate governance standards, and better doing business ranking that Egypt deserves.

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(...) deepening political and economic ties between Egypt and France are auguring for a “French moment”, when for the first time, France is very present and aggressively interested in the Egyptian market.

GDP growth followed suit and it was largely due to the following key sectors:

- Gas exploration discoveries, particularly from the “Zohr” mega gas.
- The continuing drive by the Government to upgrade its roads, bridges, tunnels, sewage, and water infrastructure.
- The continuing public investment in transport, especially the completion of the Cairo Metro, and the modernisation of the ancient railway system, and the establishment of ports and dry ports.
- The completion of the public-sector investment in power generation, increasingly in the renewable sector, as well as in nuclear plant on the Mediterranean Sea.
- The completion of an ambitious plan by the Government to build a new generation of cities, including the New Administrative Capital east of Cairo.
- Private sector investment is encouraged – and expected – to be active in specific sectors, primarily textile, auto part manufacturing, electronics and electrical goods, food manufacturing, and financial services.
- Tourism which has reached pre-2011 levels.



FOCUS ON

# Egypt

**Could you tell us more about the French economic presence in Egypt?**

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Its Vision 2030 outlines ambitious goals to nearly triple GDP growth to 12 percent, reduce unemployment to 5 percent and advance within the list of top 30 countries in terms of doing business.

Allow me to give you a little bird's eye view of the general picture of the companies working in Egypt:

The Egyptian economy, while diverse, is strongly supported by five main sectors: industry, energy, agriculture and retail. The largest portion of FDI inflows in Egypt have been coming from the EU since 2011. The next largest source of FDI comes from Arab countries. The US is the other major provider of FDI.

This implies that more global and multinational corporations are coming to Egypt in order to take advantage of the economic opportunities and grow their operations in the country. Oil and gas net FDI, which is the second largest direct investment sector in Egypt, stood at 1.6 billion dollars in 2016. France was the fifth highest investor country with investments amounting at EUR5 billion, and mutual trade reached EUR3 billion.

In recent years, Egypt has become an increasingly important investment destination and trade partner for France. During a visit to Egypt, President Emmanuel Macron pledged U.S.1.1 billion in financial support covering infrastructure projects for the new administrative capital, electric vehicle production, education, economic and social development, healthcare, culture, women's empowerment and energy.

There are approximately 160 French companies in Egypt with a total workforce of 30,000 people. Among the 160 companies implanted in Egypt, we note that most of the CAC 40 companies are present in the Egyptian market.

**How attractive is the Egyptian market for French companies ?**

Allow me to say a brief word about the two African Free trade agreements, French investors in Egypt can benefit from:

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (1994), headquartered in Cairo, was established as an agreement between its member states to form a large economic and trading unit in order to overcome the barriers faced by its individual states. The organisation aims to achieve trade promotion, liberalisation, transport and communication in order to ease the movement of goods, services, and people between the countries. Egypt benefits from giving the country access to a market size of more than 400 million consumers.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a free trade area founded in 2018, which entered its operational phase in July 7, 2019 is the largest in the world in terms of the number of participating countries since the formation of the World Trade Organization. The agreement initially requires members to remove tariffs from 90% of goods, allowing free access to commodities, goods, and services across the continent.

In conclusion, deepening political and economic ties between Egypt and France are auguring for a “French moment”, when for the first time, France is very present and aggressively interested in the Egyptian market, whose economic resilience stood out during the pandemic. While COVID-19 sent most global economies into havoc, Egypt has managed to keep growing despite the fact that its vital tourism sector was very badly hit. A government-sponsored emergency package of fiscal, monetary and social measures absorbed some of these negative impacts.

Egypt presents French companies with a compelling investment opportunity: strong population growth, a strategic location, a growing economy, an educated workforce, favorable government policies and substantial natural resources are all a potential to attract more untapped French investments. Egypt's growth story is now anchored by a robust commitment to delivering price, fiscal and currency stability, a policy which will be a catalyst for future expansion.

Its Vision 2030 outlines ambitious goals to nearly triple GDP growth to 12 percent, reduce unemployment to 5 percent and advance within the list of top 30 countries in terms of doing business.



## FOOD SECURITY

# Qatar: Economic patriotism, a double-edged sword

By Khalid Marafi 

## Background

Qatar's sovereignty has been instrumental and vital to the advancement, development, and growth of the nation. Under the leadership of HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and the continued leadership of HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Qatar has developed and progressed to become an independent nation state that has its own foreign policy. This foreign policy, as well as its sovereignty, has been tested, challenged, and intervened through neighboring countries in the past (Gause III, 2017).

In 2014, a diplomatic rift took place where Saudi and UAE withdrew their ambassadors due to conflicts arising from Qatar's interference in their affairs (Smith, 2017). Qatar's dependance on these neighbors was apparent from its geographic condition of being a peninsula that had land, water, and air borders with its neighbours. To protect its sovereignty, Qatar planned ways of achieving security through various means: such as creating a military base for Turkey in Qatar, supporting the US military base in Qatar, planning ways to achieve food security through its own farms as well as supplies from Iran and Turkey (Gause III, 2017). On June 5th, 2017, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt severed ties with Qatar and enacted a blockade (Smith, 2017).

Ever since, Qatar has taken a series of critical decision to maintain its security and sovereignty, and my goal here is to

offer a brief analytical piece on Qatar's local economy and the ways it changed in respect to food security given the threat against its sovereignty.

## Political Strategy of Food Security

The blockade of Qatar from 2017 to 2021 pressured the nation to gain food security to protect its sovereignty. To be free of external pressures and control, Qatar would need to stop being reliant on its neighbours for food solutions. Upon hearing the news of the blockade, many supermarkets and grocery stores found themselves being flooded with people buying certain products that were usually sold by the blockading countries (Foxman, 2021).

The most famous of which was Saudi's Almarai goods, well-known for its dairy products. Qatar immediately enacted plans to overcome this obstacle which included the famous story of the creation of Baladna, which translates to "our nation", that was created in response to the dairy demand caused by the blockade. Baladna's famous bovine airlift of 165 Holstein cows via a Qatar Airways Boeing 777 freighter arrived in Hamad International Airport on July 11th, 2017, a month after the blockade.

Qatar did also have temporary alternative milk solutions such as Turkish dairy goods that were flown in to meet the demand, but the cost was not pragmatically feasible for a long-term solution. The new company

would be Qatar's first attempt post-blockade to gain self-reliance and self-sufficiency in the wake of the siege.

The next attempt was a Qatar National Food Security Strategy that was developed by the Food Security Department within the Ministry of Municipality and Environment of Qatar for 2018 to 2023 (Food Security Department, 2020). The core pillars for this initiative were based on diversifying risk exposures and creating contingency plans that would efficiently move food from port, field, or reserves to table (Food Security Department, 2020).

The four pillars are: international trade and logistics, domestic self-sufficiency, strategic reserves, and domestic markets (Food Security Department, 2020). This embedded strategy has also been aligned with Qatar's 2030 National Vision where it aligns with both economic development and environmental development (Government Communications Office, 2016).

## National Products: To Support or Not to Support?

Baladna's success was evident throughout the blockade due to social media presence, initial public offering success, and financial success.

The first factor is the various memes posted across social media pages, such as Twitter and Facebook, which reflected support for a national product created in

Qatar and promoted the product given its symbolic representation of patriotism. Memes reflected many interpretations across various targets from proponents of Baladna complimenting the quality of the product in comparison to its previously used substitute, Almarai.

Memes also circulated from proponents of Almarai suggesting that residents in Qatar were missing the Saudi based dairy products. The consistent theme across social media posts during the blockade was the support for Baladna given that it is a locally based company that was providing dairy solutions for the whole country. The name of the company itself promoted this idea and as a result, the company's foundation was built on the idea of patriotism and nationalism.

The second factor is that of the success behind the initial public offering which saw 25% of the company remain to the founders, 23% to go to strategic investors

which are General Retirement and Social Insurance Authority (GRSIA), Hassad Food Company Q.P.S.C. (Private), Al Meera Consumer Goods Q.P.S.C., Qatar Ports Management Company (Mwani Qatar), and Widam Food Company Q.P.S.C.) and the rest being allocated to Qatari investors and companies (Baladna, 2019).

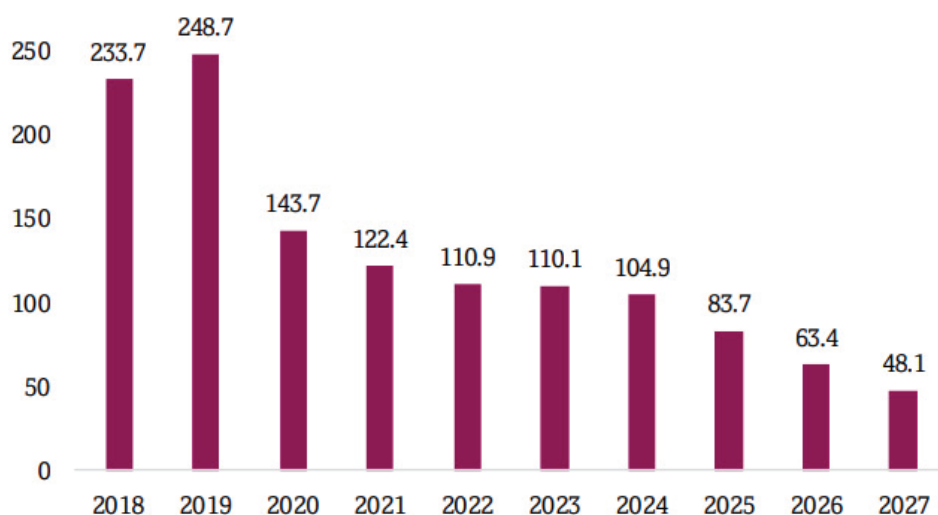
The successful completion of the IPO, with an oversubscription from Qatari investors and companies, demonstrated both the support of Qatari investors and faith in the company's vision and success.

The company's valuation has also increased as the company has a total of 1,901,000,000 shares which were issued at 1.00 QAR each from the IPO (Aksoy & Sarkar, 2020). As of January 10th, 2022, the value of 1 share of Baladna is at 1.518. This means that the market capitalisation of the company, at IPO, was 1,901,000,000 QAR.

The current market capitalisation of the company is at 2,885,718,000 QAR (792,562,000 USD). This demonstrates a 51.8% increase. This financial success has also led the stock to be included in the Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) Emerging Markets Small Cap Index in May (Aksoy & Sarkar, 2020).

The last factor considered is the financial strength of the company. It should be noted that the company does have subsidies and support from the government through its allocated farmland as well as a Support Agreement between the Government of Qatar and Baladna Food Industries W.L.L. (BFI) where BFI is entitled to QAR 1.27bn over a 10-year period (Aksoy & Sarkar, 2020). The graph below shows the way the payments will be split, and the condition is that BFI meets volume targets and aims to reduce debt while expanding (Aksoy & Sarkar, 2020).

***Baladna's State Compensation (In QRmn)***



Source: IPO Prospectus

The company's financial strength is addressed through its positive and increasing net profits, its increasing product diversity, and its majority share of the market, where it supplies 85% of Qatar's fresh milk (Aksoy & Sarkar, 2020). This market share coupled with its approach in diversifying its product range from milk to other dairy and non-dairy related products such as laban, yoghurt, custards, creams, cheese, ghee, labneh, juice, meat, and fertiliser also signal its intention to continue its expansion (Baladna, 2019). This aligns with its goals of increasing shareholder value as well as growing through quality and innovation (Baladna, 2019).

### What happened to Baladna after the blockade?

Baladna attempted to diversify and create new product lines as they increased their dairy supply. Diversifying and creating new product lines fulfill the Qatar's 2030 National Vision and are aligned with the Ministry of Municipality and Environment of Qatar's Qatar National Food Security Strategy; however, many citizens did not appreciate how the country's approach would affect their choices. National products were heavily promoted and subsidised, however, price and marketing are not the only determinants of demand.

Consumers who preferred a different taste would opt for different products from

different companies. Many products were being removed from various supermarkets and grocery stores. The fact that these products were in direct competition with Baladna made many point fingers at both the company and the government.

This started a debate across Twitter where many argued that Baladna was becoming a monopoly and that they would no longer support the products.

People within Qatar appreciate the ability to choose their products and did not appreciate restrictions removing options from them. As a result, a debate has started regarding the idea of supporting national products. Should there be government intervention in supporting these products? If so, where should the support end? Why does one company appear to be benefitting more than others?

### Benefits and Cons of Baladna Case Study

The result of the case study on Baladna is that it was successful in achieving the target of food security in extreme circumstances. Not only was this beneficial for the people of Qatar during the blockade, but the company's own achievements and success has prompted countries like Malaysia and Ukraine to seek their expertise to fulfill their own food security shortages related to dairy (Foxman, 2021). The benefit of supporting one company is that the goal

is clear and focused; however, it does raise an issue of becoming a monopoly.

As we take the Baladna story of success, we can see the local reaction of how powerful it has become due to it being more favorably supported by the government. In a competitive market, companies would compete for market share and the one with better quality, pricing, marketing, and other determinants would win.

Government support should extend to other SMEs to support them in competing with Baladna to ensure all companies are motivated and pressured to improve and grow. It should be noted that Qatar has already started initiatives to start this through collaborations between the Ministry of Economy and Commerce (MEC), Al Meera Consumer Goods Company and Bedaya Centre for Entrepreneurship and Career Development (Qatar Intensifies Efforts to Promote National Products, 2017).

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