

THE GLOBAL DIWAN'S

Newsletter

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LEADERS



Aspire Zone, Doha, Qatar

EDITORIAL

Entrepreneurship

Dear Friends of the Global Diwan,

For the past months, the Global Diwan has relentlessly pursued its mission to open new channels of communication between our continents. Our team and Advisory Board members had the honour to meet many foreign ambassadors in Paris to introduce our work and vision (see our [LinkedIn Company page](#)).

As many countries in Europe and elsewhere are entering a new lockdown period, we intend to make the most out of these exceptional times, by continuing the encounters and exchanges ought they be only virtual. Save the date for our next webinar on November 19 about *Strategic issues of fossile and renewable energies in the Middle East*. More details to come shortly.

In this November issue, our 800+ readers will get a deeper analysis in business environment

outlooks in the Emirates (article due to the brilliant start-up Jahan Info), Oman and Saudi Arabia, where women's impact in creating and developing successful businesses is ever growing.

You will also find the first part of an article on the pharmaceutical sector's perspectives in Maghreb (the second part on the Middle East to follow in December).

Our partner SSF presents a full portrait of sport diplomacy in the Middle East, where competition between countries is not always a fair play!

Enjoy the reading, circulate it and come back to us with comments and critics because we really appreciate your feed-back.

Éric Schell 
Executive Chairman

Women's autonomy in Saudi Arabia 2
by Soha Alharbi

The economic potential and opportunities in the EAU 4
by Farid Vahid

Could the Middle East be the next heaven for startups ? 6
by Hocine Malkia

Living 10 years in Oman 8
by Gilles Desorbay

Sport in the Middle East, between soft power and strategy for the future 10
by SSF

Pharmaceutical industry challenges in North Africa 12
by Bertrand de Lavenne

Women's autonomy in Saudi Arabia and the feminisation of the labour force

By Soha Alharbi 



AMONG THE MANY OBJECTIVES PUT FORWARD IN SAUDI ARABIA'S VISION 2030, THE KINGDOM'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROADMAP FOR THE NEXT DECADE, THERE IS A STRONG WISH TO INCREASE WOMEN'S SHARE IN THE WORKFORCE.

Women already represent more than half of university graduates and their share in the labour market went from 18% in 2017 to 31% today. It is a quick and profound evolution caused by economic and social imperatives, in a country with a strong demographic pressure — 70% of the population is under 35 — but also a will to align with international standards while Saudi Arabia assumes the G20 Presidency this year.

New and favorable legislations

Beyond discourses, Saudi Arabia provides new means of its ambitions by implementing bit by bit pieces of legislation that favor women's autonomy in the labour market. In 2018, an important first step was taken with the adoption of a law criminalising sexual harassment in the workplace. In September 2020, the particularly

symbolic resolution “Unifying the workplace” was issued, that implemented strict equal pay rights between men and women in the public and private sectors. But the most emblematic reform is without a doubt the August 2019 law that ended permanently males' guardianship system over women. Saudi women and international observers had been waiting for such a reform lifting the restrictions imposed on women for travelling abroad and choosing their place of residence and work, thus allowing them to leave their marital home at will.

A will to promote female entrepreneurship

Alongside legislative additions and reinforcement, Saudi Arabia has launched numerous projects specifically favouring women entrepreneurship. On the front

line, women's universities encourage an entrepreneurial culture more and more, offering programs to create new female entrepreneurs' communities to take part in the local economy's growth. Universities share these initiatives with other institutions such as the MiSK Foundation which launched the 2019 Entrepreneurship World Cup, or Tasamy, a not for profit organisation that facilitates the creation of innovative and sustainable business solutions in the social field.

The private sector also contributes to women's growing autonomy. There is no more distinction between sexes as to the access to financial services allowing women to freely manage their business without restriction. The Bab Rizq Jameel program, created by Saudi entrepreneur Abdul Latif Jameel, enabled job creation and proved to be a significant financial resource for women and the Saudi youth. It is the first company providing microfinance solutions in the kingdom to obtain a license from the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA).

In addition, Monsha'at — the General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises — sponsors the SME sector with the objective to increase business productivity and bringing the contribution to GDP from 20% to 35% by 2030. The

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number of beneficiaries of the Monsha'at Academy reached more than 208,414 individuals in 2020.

Incubator are multiplying as well, offering many services for more comfort and security for the launch of women initiatives. SheWorks, funded in 2014 by Maha Shira, was the first women's business accelerator approved by Monsha'at. More recently, WomenSpark, funded by Deemah Alyahya, is the first Business Angel group that positions itself specifically towards educating and training women in entrepreneurship and investment. Finally, even if there is still a long way to go, more and more women are being appointed to executive positions (in politics, business, law, sport and education) thus taking part in the decision-making process, showing professionalism and bringing positive change to Saudi's society.

“Realising opportunities of the 21st century for all”

This year, Saudi Arabia is hosting the G20, a first in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). During its presidency, the kingdom regards women autonomy initiatives, as introduced during the 2019 G20 in Osaka as a priority. The women engagement group (W20), presided over by Dr Thoraya Obaid and supported this year by the nonprofit organisation Al-Nahda, aims at standing for women's voice in front of the G20 leaders. Hence, Saudi women could fully take part in

the debates pertaining to problematics to which women are confronted in the whole of the world: economic, financial and digital inclusion, female entrepreneurship, women employment, gender equality and the Covid pandemic's impact on women's day-to-day lives.

Saudi women holding key positions in the G20

Many Saudi personalities illustrate the importance given to women for the 2020 G20 summit. Rania Nashar, CEO of Samba Financial Group since 2017 and listed twice among the world 100 most powerful women by Forbes, presides over the W20-B20 Women in Business Action Council. Dr. Hala Al-Tuwajjri, Secretary General of the Family Affairs Council since 2017, leads the women's autonomy team for the G20. Salma al-Rashid was appointed special advisor of the W20 while Lubna Olayan is Chair of the B20 Executive Committee on Trade and Investment.

The 2020 G20 under Saudi presidency turns out to be a formidable opportunity to put in the spotlight and accelerate Saudi women's autonomy.

Perspectives

A Forbes magazine study revealed that women in Saudi Arabia hold 20% of mutual funds and Saudi investments' capital, as well as 33% of financial intermediation institutions and 40% of family businesses.



A 2020 World Bank's report shows that Saudi Arabia has the economy where there is the most progress towards gender equality since 2017

During a Davos World Economic Forum's session, Iman Al-Mutairi, the Saudi Assistant Minister for Commerce and Investment, asserted that “women represent 20% of entrepreneurs and project promoters”.

The 2020 World Bank's report “Women, Business and the Law” shows that Saudi Arabia has the economy where there is the most progress towards gender equality since 2017.

TABLE 1.4 ECONOMIES THAT HAVE EXHIBITED THE MOST PROGRESS TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY SINCE 2017										
Economy	WBL 2020 score	Change in score	Mobility	Workplace	Pay	Marriage	Parenthood	Entrepreneurship	Assets	Pension
Saudi Arabia	70.6	38.8	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
United Arab Emirates	56.3	29.4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Nepal	73.8	18.1		✓	✓		✓			✓
South Sudan	70.0	18.1		✓	✓		✓			
São Tomé and Príncipe	86.3	11.9			✓		✓			
Bahrain	46.3	8.8		✓		✓				
Congo, Dem. Rep.	78.8	8.8					✓			✓
Djibouti	68.1	8.8		✓		✓				
Jordan	40.6	8.8			✓		✓			
Tunisia	70.0	8.8		✓		✓				

Source: Women, Business and the Law Database.

The economic potentials and opportunities in the UAE

By Farid Vahid 



THE HEALTH CRISIS WE ARE FACING TODAY IS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE GREATEST CRISES THE WORLD HAS HAD TO FACE IN SEVERAL DECADES. THE QUICK SPREAD OF COVID-19 SINCE LAST FALL HAS CAUSED THE DEATH OF MORE THAN ONE MILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE. A SEVERE ECONOMIC CRISIS HAS AFFECTED EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD AS A RESULT OF THE RESTRICTIVE MEASURES THAT STATES HAVE HAD TO TAKE IN ORDER TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS AND CONTROL THE DISEASE.

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The world GDP is now experiencing a drastic drop, international trade is slowing down and consumption is falling in many countries. As we face the second wave of the pandemic, we need to think now about the world to come, the economic recovery and the future of our economic model.

One of the countries that has proven efficient in controlling the pandemic is the United Arab Emirates. The country, which had not experienced a major crisis since the financial crisis of 2008, has indeed proved to be effective and pragmatic in managing the health and economic crisis. Although like other countries in the region, the United Arab Emirates are a major exporter of petroleum products, they have also been able to diversify their economy in a more concrete way than others. In particular, the Covid-19 crisis underscores the need for an ecological transition to a less oil-dependent economic model. During these last months, the United Arab Emirates has positioned itself as a model in the fight against Covid-19, particularly through new technologies and dematerialisation of administrative procedures. As underlined by the Minister of Economy, the UAE

The normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates perfectly shows the rationale and pragmatic vision of the Emirati officials. By creating a favorable geopolitical environment, the Emirates are increasingly positioning themselves as a reliable trading partner for Western countries.

has adopted a flexible and innovative model to bypass Covid-19. This has clearly contributed to reduce the effects of the pandemic and to preserve its position among the best economies, as well as living and investment destinations in the world.

The UAE in search of foreign investment

For his part, the Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises, Mr. Ahmed Belhoul Al Falasi, said: “Small and medium enterprises are the backbone of the UAE economy, contributing about 53% of the non-oil GDP, while the strength of these enterprises is developing as a major engine of the global economy.

In the current economic stimulus packages in the UAE, many measures are being taken to strengthen the country's economy and increase the Emirates' trade competitiveness. The Emirati leaders are indeed seeking to emerge from the crisis more powerful than before. There is now a real willingness among UAE's political and economic leaders to continue the country's

economic diversification by increasing foreign investment in industries such as telecommunications, artificial intelligence, robotics and renewable energy. While the current crisis has severely affected airlines, international trade and tourism, the United Arab Emirates, through the strength of their national reserve, are able to manage the crisis. The UAE is also among the top 20 economies in the world for foreign direct investment. Emirati officials are seriously thinking about the post-oil era and wish to develop new economic sectors. The UAE is also positioning itself as the main regional financial center for many multinationals.

This climate is therefore positive not only for large European companies, but also for SMEs and start-ups that develop and offer innovative solutions to meet technological, energy, health and aerospace challenges. Sectors such as artificial intelligence, financial technology (Fintech), paperless transactions (blockchain) or big data have

a particularly high economic potential in the in the years to come.

Expo 2020 Dubai: “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future”

The Expo 2020 Dubai, which was cancelled last year due to the health crisis, will finally take place from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022. Bringing together 190 countries from all over the world, Expo 2020 Dubai is an important moment for SMEs wishing to gain a position in the UAE. This event is indeed an excellent platform for exchanging the brightest and most innovative ideas. Each country will have the opportunity to present its latest innovations in its own pavilion. For Emirati officials, Expo 2020 Dubai is an important step in the development process of the UAE. It is therefore an important opportunity not to be missed for European companies offering sustainable development solutions and wishing to work in the region's countries.

This exhibition will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and international cooperation, and inspire a serious movement towards the achievement of sustainable development goals, in line with the slogan (Connecting Minds, Creating the Future).

A positive geopolitical environment

Finally, the normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates perfectly shows the rationale and pragmatic vision of the Emirati officials. By creating a favorable geopolitical environment, the Emirates are increasingly positioning themselves as a reliable trading partner for Western countries. Finally, we can say that the outcome of the US presidential election will not change the good dynamics in which the Emirates find themselves today. Unlike some countries in the region, the UAE is experiencing real political stability, which is of crucial importance for investors and economic players interested in the country.

Farid Vahid

is Product Manager at [Jahan Info](#),

a digital platform for strategic intelligence, based on artificial intelligence methods. Jahan Info's offer [lien] allows users to find the most relevant information related to their areas of interest, in order to facilitate their decision making. By analysing local sources in Middle Eastern countries, our group seeks to facilitate and encourage economic exchanges between Europe and the Middle East.

Could the Middle East be the next heaven for startups?

By Hocine Malkia 

WITH THE MASSIVE INVESTMENT EFFORTS REALIZED WITHIN THE REGION IN HIGH QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURES, THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT IN THE MIDDLE EAST FOR STARTUPS AND ENTREPRENEURS. THE AREA'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM WAS FORCED TO ADAPT TO MEET AN EVER-CHANGING LANDSCAPE. THE REGION REPRESENTS A MARKET OF 280 MILLION INHABITANTS WITH THE YOUTH ACCOUNTING FOR 60% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION. THE REGION IS CONTRASTED AS IT COMPRISES BOTH DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WITH A HIGH STANDARD OF LIVING AND CONSUMPTION, AND OTHER EMERGING ONES WITH GROWING DEMOGRAPHY.

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Today, more than 90% of the Middle East's population are online daily; that favours consumers eager for novelty and smart connected services.

An Entrepreneurship momentum

The area has high entrepreneurship potential, with fast-growing internet and social media penetration, and is quickly evolving as a digital-first region. The usage of online solutions has grown faster than predicted since the beginning of the pandemic. Today, more than 90% of the Middle East's population are online daily; that favours consumers eager for novelty and smart connected services. Opportunities will abound for companies in the coming years, especially in tech and digital, whether large groups, SME's or startups. Expertise is required to enable and support the growth of the region's flourishing startup ecosystem, and fulfill the specific needs in innovative fields like digital transformation of states and companies, teeming startup ecosystems, and development of venture capital.

Massive or smart funding?

Funding has specific characteristics in the region. Among them, the region's large savings, as a consequence of the existence of the oil & gas rent. This zone is divided into two blocks: countries with a large balance of payments surpluses and young countries, in need of investment, being

in a deficit. One of the major difficulties in terms of business creation in the Arab world lies in the lack of seed funding: early-stage startups struggle to attract funding. Private investors prefer to invest in mature startups, with a proven business model and growth/revenue metrics. Therefore, the state needs to invest in incubator programs and in seed funds to allow start-ups to grow and to scale-up. Only then will the private sector take over. According to a recent Forbes report "The Middle East's 50 Most-Funded Startups" have raised more than \$959 million in combined total funding so far this year. More than half of that funding was secured by the top 10 startups, amounting to around \$546 million. Among them, the U.A.E. has the most active startup ecosystem, with 33 of the 50 startups headquartered in the emirates. Saudi Arabia comes in second with seven startups headquartered there, followed by Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, and Lebanon. U.A.E.-based startup Pure Harvest Smart Farms tops the list after it secured \$135.8 million's funding. The most active investors in 2020 are 500 Startups fund from the US, the Saudi venture capital firm RAED Ventures, and Wamda Capital from the UAE, with investments in ten, eight, and seven startups, respectively.

Regulation

The fiscal regulatory framework plays a key role in encouraging entrepreneurship and supportive ecosystem for startups. In the Gulf, the fragmentation of the region makes regulation a central issue. Due to the heterogeneity of legislation, most entrepreneurs cannot access key markets, and remain confined to small-scale markets with limited possibilities of expansion. The problem is even more specific because of the marked disproportion between native and expatriate inhabitants (especially in UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain). Government funding initiatives are aimed at favoring locals, thus depriving expatriates of the funds they need. However, the “happy medium” is hard to find: legislation is not always desirable because it is often rigid and difficult to adapt to the real evolution of things. Moreover, as explained above, the States must propose a proactive policy in terms of funding, to compensate for the timidity of risk-averse private investors. It should be pointed out startups and entrepreneurs are facing a lot of obstacles: some difficulties to get vital equipment, penetrate new markets, and secure business licenses.

Education and youth

Reforms have been launched in the field of education, its accessibility, and the development of entrepreneurial culture. It aims to develop training offers in strategic fields (renewable energies, smart cities, aeronautics, etc.), to raise high school students’ awareness and encourage those who have gone abroad to realise their ideas in their countries. Beyond academic training, cultivating soft skills should be a priority, especially the “leadership spirit”. Numerous young investors are interested in the market of innovative companies but do not feel legitimate because they do not have the right academic background. If the interest for entrepreneurship did not exist at the beginning, the economic context has made it a necessity and the idea is widely developing today: training devices, coaching, reinforcement of accelerators/incubators... Several support structures are emerging, where the private model is privileged and where some of these structures are attached to small investment funds.

Adjustments are necessary to allow a real expansion of entrepreneurship, and increasing its impact on national economies. The region has underexploited its entrepreneurship potential: in a context of a 30% unemployment rate among young people and a total population expected to double by the end of the century, these actions appear pressing. Leaders should trust the younger generation in their capacity to find disruptive solutions to drive tomorrow’s economy. More than ever, the region requires creativity, innovation, and know-how to achieve the major projects that will be the key drivers of growth in the area, notably: Expo 2021 in the United Arab Emirates, Fifa World Cup in Qatar in 2022, new cities of NEOM in Saudi Arabia, and New Cairo in Egypt. Another major issue for decision-makers in the Arab world is to use the right mix of policies to train an efficient workforce and high-quality leaders. Among several topical issues for Middle East’s leaders, entrepreneurship is a key engine of innovation and economic growth, provided that they find a way to contain the impact of the pandemic, protests, political instability, and the economic crisis.

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Opportunities will abound for companies in the coming years, especially in tech and digital, whether large groups, SME’s or startups.

Living 10 Years in Oman

By Gilles Desorbay 



MY FAMILY AND I RECENTLY RETURNED TO EUROPE AFTER 10 YEARS IN OMAN. IT HAS BEEN A FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE OF DISCOVERY AND LEARNING WHERE WE HAVE LOVED THE BEAUTY OF THE LAND, THE OPENNESS AND WELCOMING SPIRIT OF ITS PEOPLE AND SIMPLY ENJOYED LIFE IN THIS AMAZING CORNER OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA.

Oman, a gentle Arabia. Despite the general hot desert climate, many regions in Oman offer a break from the harsh weather. Muscat and the coastal areas benefit from very pleasant winter temperatures for about 6 to 8 months during the year. Salalah in the South attracts many regional tourists during its summer rainy season, a western precursor to the monsoon that will later arrive on the Indian subcontinent. The altitude of the beautiful Hajar mountains offer much cooler temperatures all year long. The mountains are majestic, with fantastic cliffs and imposing canyons, naked, with no vegetation, whereas the flatter sand and rock plains are baked by the sun. In this environment where ochre - and its multitude of hues - is the dominant color, some bright green spots spring up in the form of oases, with date trees and gardens irrigated by an ingenious traditional water distribution system among the various lots. Or in the form of the stunning wadis, carving deep and narrow fertile valleys in this very mineral domain, with fruits, vegetables and hidden villages. In short, an extraordinary physical landscape which Oman Tourism has nicely summed up in their slogan: "Beauty has an address - Oman".

What is life like in Muscat as a western expat? In just a couple of words: easy and nurturing. I have

felt that Omanis are very proud of their heritage and culture and at the same time open and accepting of others. Part of it may come from their history, where Omanis have long been trading, working and living with other cultures particularly from the Indian subcontinent and Eastern Africa. Today a large percentage of resident expatriate workers in the Sultanate come from the Indian subcontinent and, to a much smaller extent, from the rest of the world. As European expats, our experience has been very positive and our family has been welcomed in various settings, be it at work, visiting remote villages and hiking, at school, shopping ... where a smile or a nice word is never far away ... Habibi!

Beyond its beauty, Oman has also been blessed with various underground resources. Although maybe not as much, or of the same quality, than some of its neighbors. Nonetheless, Oman currently extracts roughly 1% of the global oil production and holds approximately 0.3% of its reserves. Oil in Oman is mostly quite sticky and difficult to produce. This is partly why Oman generally needs a higher price of oil to be able to balance its annual budget compared to other countries from the region. Thanks to new technology, recent gas finds have also started to be exploited and monetized, not only contributing additional

revenues, but bringing additional feedstock for the ever-increasing electricity needs of the country and for unlocking new industrial developments.

The Omani authorities have recognized early on the necessity of economic diversification to attempt to not rely on oil-only revenues as a country and also create a broader economic base in order to generate more employment opportunities for its local workforce. The population is young and a large number of Omanis enter the labor market every year. Within this general environment, and given the current global slowdown and economic difficulties, the Omani government recently announced it will “prioritise the execution of essential projects that serve economic and social objectives”. Meanwhile the 2020 fiscal deficit is projected to reach 16.9% of GDP, the widest among its Gulf peers.

To foster industrial expansion, infrastructure development has remained one of the priorities as can be already noticed throughout the country. Oman has developed an extensive quality network of highways, recently opened up new and remodeled existing airports in Sohar, Salalah and Muscat, and continues to expand capacities in its 3 major industrial ports. Industrial estates throughout the Sultanate are also continuing to benefit from expansion and development.

How about working in Oman? I’ll give a simple example of a very dear story that remains

imprinted in my mind. Yousif, one of the “office boys” at a company where I was working in Muscat, was keen to acquire new skills and progress his career. In parallel to his full-time job and in addition to his evening and week-end taxi driving business, he diligently studied and ended up graduating with a business degree. The most telling moment, for me, was when the CEO of the company announced Yousif’s accomplishment and graduation to the team, he could not hold his emotions and his voice wavered. It was in itself what the system was meant to do: expose, create interest, develop and improve. In this moment, professional and personal dimensions united; it was a mix of respective pride, sharing, support and the fresh expectations of an improved career. Yousif still works today as an accomplished professional in Muscat. At a country level, the objective is that many similar stories become reality through education, support and creation of new business opportunities.

More specifically as a western expat, it was easy for me to integrate in the teams and carry on with business. Several administrative bumps here and there, but overall smooth sailing. Demanding boards of directors, stretched objectives ... nothing out of the ordinary!

And what if it is actually the real reason for feeling at ease in this region far away from home? That despite the apparent external differences, the fundamental reasons for being, living, working are indeed the same.

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Sport In The Middle East, Between Soft Power And Strategy For The Future

By Scutum Security First 

ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2020, DIA MOHAMMAD SABA, WHILE SIGNING A TWO-YEAR CONTRACT WITH AL-NASR CLUB IN DUBAI, BECAME THE FIRST ISRAELI FOOTBALLER HIRED IN AN ARAB COUNTRY. THIS TRANSFER HAPPENED A FEW DAYS AFTER ISRAEL, THE EMIRATES AND ALSO BAHRAIN HAD SIGNED ON SEPTEMBER 15 THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS IN THE WHITE HOUSE IN WASHINGTON, NORMALISING THEIR RELATIONS.

Relations between Israel and the Emirates remained discreet during decades until they appeared in broad daylight in October 2018 when Miri Regev, the Israeli Minister of Culture and Sports, made an official visit to Abu Dhabi, a first for an Israeli Minister. Not only could Miri Regev hear the Israeli anthem during a judo tournament — a first in an Arab country — but she even visited the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and her visit was followed by the ones of the Israeli Ministers of Communications and Foreign Affairs.

Hence, sport played once again an intermediate role in the preparation of the Abraham Accords between former foes. Without being as spectacular as the « ping pong diplomacy » that preceded the revival of the Sino-American relations in 1972, this event outlines the importance taken by sport in Middle Eastern societies.

From sponsoring to piracy war

Middle Eastern countries presence in sport has been a soft power tool for a long time. The Airlines companies from the Gulf could be seen on the shirts of the greatest European football clubs: Emirates,

Etihad, Qatar Airways. Times have changed and sport in all its political, economic, diplomatic and cultural dimensions has become central in the strategy of those countries that prepare the post-oil era. Even Saudi Arabia has stepped in the game, trying to attract international competitions and giving to physical exercise an important share in the Saudi Vision 2030, launched by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohamad Bin Salman in 2017. It is also a public health imperative since a recent WHO report showed that 40% of the population exercises while 60% are inactive and 68,3% are overweight or obese.

From simple sponsoring, the Gulf countries implemented more ambitious sport policies, such as attracting international competitions while providing high technology facilities : Formula 1 Bahrain Grand Prix since 2004, Abu Dhabi since 2009, World Athletics Championships in Qatar in 2019 and of course the FIFA World Cup in Qatar in 2022, or the 5 year partnership between Saudi Arabia and the Dakar Rally, etc.

Some recently unknown sports in the region are now coveted. At the 2020 Tour de France departure, the Bahrain

McLaren team, the Team Emirates and the Israeli team Startup Nation could be seen. It is worth noting that Israel managed to attract the first three stages of the Giro d'Italia in 2018, one of which in Jerusalem in homage to the Italian champion Gino Bartali, recognised as Righteous Among the Nations and honorary citizen of the city.

These policies are often boosted by members of the ruling families that embody these policies internationally such as Sheikh Mansour of the Emirates, Sheikh Nasser of Bahrain and of course Nasser Al-Khelaifi of Qatar.

The latter can be found on numerous fronts, standing in the terraces of the Paris Saint Germain club but also at the head of beIN Sport, the network born from Al Jazeera Media Network in 2011.

beIN Sport, that has bought the rights of the Olympic Games, Formula 1 and the English Football League among others, is now suffering from the geopolitical rivalries between Saudi Arabia and Qatar that led to a blockade put into place by the Kingdom and its allies in June 2017. Consequently, the selling of beIN Sport licenses and satellite receivers were forbidden in Saudi Arabia, resulting in a

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Soft power and geopolitical rivalries are not enough in sports. The organising countries also need to win with their own national athletes.

loss of 17% of subscribers and hundreds of million dollars.

This is how a 10-channel piracy network appeared in August 2017, which name, BeoutQ, leaves no ambiguity and that broadcasts all of beIN Sport programs via Arabsat satellite in the Middle East and North Africa. Qatar's many legal recourses to end the piracy were ineffective and BeoutQ is in 2020 the most powerful piracy network and has added to its satellite broadcast an offer for IPTV streaming (the free delivery of any television content over internet protocol networks).

Naturalise to win

However, soft power and geopolitical rivalries are not enough in sports. The organising countries also need to win with their own national athletes. A major challenge in countries where the practice of sport remains marginal.

Qatar surprised the handball world when it reached at home the Handball World Championship finals in 2015. Defeated by France, Qatar's team counted only 5 Qataris out of 16 players, the others came from France, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina or Cuba and had been naturalised for the sake of the competition. It wasn't the first nor would it be the last time Qatar naturalised world class athletes. In 2003, the Kenyan Stephen Cherono, under his new name Saif Saaeed Shaheen, became the 3000 metre steeplechase world champion while finishing ahead of two former Kenyan teammates. He

repeated this performance in 2005. His contract with Qatar would have earned him one million dollars as well as a lifelong annuity and the building of a new track in Eldoret in Kenya, the Kenyan athletes' training centre.

In February 2019, Qatar won the Asian Cup with 9 players coming from Africa, although some of them were born in Qatar among migrant families.

Qatar is not the only one using naturalisation or promoting athletes born elsewhere. Every country does it. The Minister for Sport Roxana Maracineanu, born in Romania, was naturalised the same year she won her first national swimming title. The Turk Ramil Guliyev, born in Baku, did a lap of honour with both Turkish and Azerbaijani flags when he won a 200 metre sprint world title in 2018. Bahrain won its first Olympic medal in 2016 at the 5000 metre race thanks the Kenyan Ruth Jebet; while another naturalised Kenyan, Eunice Kirwa, won the bronze medal at the marathon. And there is no shortage of examples.

After Covid

Like everywhere else in the world, many sports competitions in the Middle East were cancelled or postponed: Formula 1 Grand Prix, Motorcycle Grand Prix, bicycle races etc. There is a lot of uncertainty for the 2021 events, but the loss in revenue if there are few international spectators won't deter the region's countries to find solutions and maintain the events most

important to their image.

Meanwhile, rivalries will continue to develop in the shadows. Hence, it appears Saudi Arabia and Qatar are both greatly interested in acquiring the rights to broadcast the English Premier League, with an economic interest in mind but also a very symbolic objective. For Saudi Arabia, once its takeover of Newcastle Football Club is approved, the aim would be to win the prestigious UEFA Champions League.

Pharmaceutical Industry Challenges in North Africa

By Bertrand de Lavenne 

AS COUNTRIES DEVELOP OVER DECADES, NATIONAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AN AREA OF FOCUS AND CONCERNS. WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF GIVING ACCESS (IDEALLY FREE) TO NEWEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE TREATMENTS TO POPULATIONS, AND ENSURING BOTH DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES, AUTHORITIES OFTEN FACE COMPLAINTS OF ALL PARTIES. IT IS NOT EASY TO FIND THE CORRECT BALANCE.

Most developing countries do not find the solution. North Africa is a great example, where each country has taken different routes over the last decades. However, the key players in the region, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, are now looking at the same objectives to reach this balance, adding a layer of competition between them. Local players and multinational companies (MNCs) are looking at latest developments with scrutiny.

Healthcare systems differs from countries to countries

With doctors per 1,000 inhabitants from 0.79 in Egypt, 1.83 in Algeria, 1.27 in Tunisia to 0.72 in Morocco (source World Health Organisation), North African countries have developed over the years healthcare systems with a great variety of population coverage. Algeria's oil-based economy has allowed to guarantee free access to all healthcare facilities to its population while in Morocco access to treatments is based on a different medical coverage with one third of the population still not covered. Consequently for the market, consumption is much higher in Algeria and Tunisia than in Morocco. On the other hand, Egypt has very recently approved a universal health coverage to be implemented over the next decade. On a medical standpoint, those countries have shown over the past great results to protect their population by eradicating for example malaria, poliomyelitis and all such diseases. They are now tackling aggressively other diseases as well, such as Hepatitis C in Egypt with the Seha campaign, or cancer with a wide National Cancer Plan in Algeria for example. Today, mortality remains essentially driven by cardiovascular diseases (such as ischemic heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and obesity), Alzheimer's disease and cancer. Therefore, there are still needs for new and generic medicines from local players and multinational companies.

North African pharmaceutical markets show different levels of attractiveness for multinational companies

North African pharmaceutical markets are however perceived very differently when it comes to capturing opportunities for MNCs. While allowing the development of local players, the restrictions on importation in Algeria have somehow limited the entrance of MNCs' medications but allowed the building of local MNCs' plants and heavy investment in technology transfers in exchange of better conditions of importations. Joint venture has been the option for other MNCs. However, given the uncertainties on reimbursement in all countries, MNCs show difficulties to commercialise their therapies profitably in certain therapeutic areas. Those hurdles have been identified in the yearly report of the World Bank on "Ease of doing business" as they do not concern the pharmaceutical industry alone.

Economy rank	Doing a Business	Starting a Business
New Zealand	1	1
Singapore	2	4
Hong Kong SAR, China	3	5
Denmark	4	45
Korea, Rep.	5	33
Morocco	53	43
Tunisia	78	19
Egypt	114	90
Algeria	157	152
Libya	186	164

Ease of doing business (World Bank)

But setting up local operations is a big step for MNCs and some have not taken the risk due to the uncertainties of some North African economies. The Egyptian Pound’s recent devaluation has unfortunately confirmed this trend even if authorities have increased overall drug prices. In parallel, many MNCs have seen the relative open economy of Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia more in line with their international norms and have decided to establish their headquarters and plants there despite smaller market sizes (Algeria USD 4 bn, Egypt USD 3.8 bn, Morocco USD 1.17 bn - Source IQVIA). 80% of medicines commercialised in Morocco are produced locally. Similarly, Egypt produces 30% of all drugs consumed in the region. Strategically, Morocco positions itself as the crossroads between Europe and Africa while Egypt as the corner between the Middle East and Africa.

Future avenues for growth

The future developments of those markets probably rely on 3 pillars of equal importance. First, the administrative and regulatory ability of North African countries to carry-out international clinical trial locally to shift from just producing drugs to R&D. The strong academic networks particularly with France, Germany and the United Kingdom, together with large populations and low local costs should help and convince authorities to accelerate this move.

Second, is to give further access to their population to oncology (cancer) treatments and biosimilars (biologic products that have no meaningful differences in terms of safety and effectiveness from the reference product). This will depend on each country’s pricing policy and requirements on importations.

And thirdly, the ability to export local manufacturing to other countries: Morocco and Egypt paving the way of this commercial opportunity.

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