



The
BRITISH UNIVERSITY
IN EGYPT

Centre for Egypt and Middle East Studies Journal (CEMES)

Fifth Edition / December 2022

In this issue

- 2 The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Addresses Major Climate Changes in the Region
by H.E. Ambassador Nasser Kamel
- 7 Establishment of the United Nations and the Proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Historical background
by Dr. Afarin Shahidzadeh
- 14 The Pivotal Role of Human Capital for Developing Countries in the 21st Century
by Professor Constantine Passaris
- 24 Student Research Paper: Mill's Notions in Analyzing Egyptian Women's Attempt to Seek Freedom of Action and Freedom of Expression
by Meryl Sherif Safwat, Political Science Student, Faculty of BAEPS at The British University in Egypt

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Addresses Major Climate Changes in the Region

*By H.E. Ambassador Nasser Kamel
the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)*



The Union for the Mediterranean alongside the United Nations and several expert institutions and scientists have declared the Euro-Mediterranean Region one most at risk of adverse climatic changes and its detrimental effects. These climatic changes bear a myriad of repercussions that can include increased average temperatures, water scarcity, rising sea levels, irregular weather conditions, aridity, or drought. The Euro-Mediterranean Region will see these consequences affecting biodiversity, food production, health, urban planning, tourism, and land use. The international community is compelled to take drastic actions in hopes of mitigating the effects of climate change with unprecedented urgency. While keeping that in mind, the actions taken must gauge all angles of governance and development to tackle the negative impact of this phenomenon efficiently and effectively.

This region has already suffered from widespread climate change while continuing to do so today, which indicates that forecasts for both short and long terms are not optimistic without a coordinated and enforced action based on regional integration. The Union for the Mediterranean serves as the starting point for a common axis of action. Addressing climate change has therefore become a top priority for the UfM, and we are pioneers in promoting this conversation among our member states. The objectives set out in the Paris Agreement as well as in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals are paramount to alleviate the situation that thousands of citizens in the Euro-Mediterranean region are currently enduring.

From the UfM, our Senior Officials Meetings, as well as our Ministerial Meetings, enable us to address these pressing issues at a high level to ensure the most effective action and implementation. With a Division within our Secretariat dedicated exclusively to these issues, the Energy and Climate Action Division of the UfM serves as a facilitating body for the study and identification of projects aimed at the rapid and effective mitigation of climate change in the region.

For example, on 4 October 2021, the 42 member states of the UfM adopted the 2nd Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action, with all ministers agreeing to unify a single climate agenda to address these growing obstacles. The agenda in question is



titled "Towards 2030: Agenda for a Greener Med - Contributing to Achieving the Environmental SDGs in the Mediterranean" and includes expectations to address climate action through a wide range of policies on agriculture, energy, industry and transport among others, always taking into account green transition policies.

The region will experience unprecedented impacts, which can already be seen today, but the situation will rapidly worsen and will continue to do so for decades to come according to predictions following current trends. If we combine climate change itself with current megatrends such as demographic changes, migratory shifts, urbanization changes, and pandemics, the challenges become considerably more severe. In the case of the recent Covid-19 pandemic, it has proven to be the ultimate evidence that climate change is directly related to our health, as well as to the condition of where we live. The risks increase dramatically for the Euro-Mediterranean region because, as determined by the United Nations at the time of establishing the urgency margins of climate change, it was considered a phenomenon that affects, above all, human security. Another case would be the water crisis in the region. The Middle East and North Africa region has been identified by the World Bank as the most water-stressed region in the world. North Africa in particular will be especially vulnerable to drought and the impact on its agriculture as it is highly dependent on rainfall for its crops.

The institutions involved in the Mediterranean, as well as the member states and their Environment Ministries, are increasingly determined to take strong measures to address the consequences of climate change, which are becoming more and more evident and stronger. One of the most discussed and already imple-

mented measures is a green energy transition towards renewable energies. The region has undeniable potential, but without regional cohesion it is not reaching its full potential. The region's total energy demand is expected to increase substantially in the coming years, which will not be achieved efficiently if the starting point - regional integration - is not prioritized first. The process of decarbonization of the region can be achieved through its strategic location, which would allow it to become self-sufficient in the near future. The recent conflict in Ukraine demonstrates the urgent need for the region to diversify its imports. With Russia supplying 35 percent of the natural gas coming into Europe, alternative measures are being implemented. On the other hand, as wheat prices reached their highest level since 2008, as well as oil and gas, this phenomenon produced a major trade instability, leading to a significant crisis in the supply chain within the region. Moreover, this forced governments to find other options to achieve energy security, while encouraging more sustainable implementations. It was reaffirmed during the conflict in Ukraine that fossil fuels markets are vulnerable and unpredictable in the face of events of this magnitude, which is further pushing these countries to diverge and use low-carbon options. This brings us back to the establishment of coherent measures within the

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region's policy framework, in order to reverse the current trends as best as possible, always taking into account the particularities of the region of course.

Further to consider is the potential emergence of conflicts of major social importance based on the assertion that the elements of climate change aggravate the living conditions of populations in cases of extreme temperatures, water scarcity, rising water levels, aridity, crop failure, among others, which foster food insecurity, poverty, or forced mobility, for example. The World Food Programme estimated that food insecurity and water crises would increase, and that crop yields would decrease by about 30% over the next 30 years due to drought alone. It should also be noted that the communities most severely affected by these phenomena will be rural regions, as well as those communities that depend solely on agriculture for their livelihoods. These situations influence the activity and socio-economic situation of states, where economies and political stability are usually severely affected. Therefore, our objective must also include elements of mitigation and avoid at all costs the recurrence of the adversities that the region faces.

In view of all these trends and confirming that the mission of the UfM is to act as a coordinating body, one of our main priorities is to encourage and provide spaces where these issues can be debated among experts in the sector, policymakers, think tanks, ministries, our partner organizations and civil society. It is only together that we will achieve substantial change. By analyzing the reports and studies already available to us, knowing where we need to act more quickly and addressing which issues, we can establish the best plan of action, especially by drawing on the mutual experiences of the

countries in the region. Hot days in the southern Mediterranean region have doubled in the last fifty years and are predicted to continue increasing until there are deaths directly related to high temperatures. As our colleagues from the Mediterranean Experts on Environmental and Climate Change (MedECC) address in their report "Climate and Environmental Change in



the Mediterranean Basin": although the Middle East and North Africa will face greater challenges arising from climate change than other parts of the Mediterranean, they are limited in terms of distributing resources and monitoring the needed parameters to establish concrete analysis. Therefore, considering adaptation and mitigation as essential elements to tackle climate change is vital, especially for cities, as they are the ones that will receive the highest percentages of overpopulation. All these are issues that need to be addressed at local, national and international levels, as in the case of the COPs, in order to strengthen the expected and necessary results for the region.

We are presented with the perfect opportunity to address all these issues at COP27, the United Nations Climate Change Conference. Following the commitments made by all countries to pledge to adopt the 1.5 degrees in the Paris Agreement at COP21 in 2015, the previous COP26 in Glasgow was the moment for countries



to update their national action plans to reduce emissions. Looking at the data from the countries last year, it was determined that in the remaining years until 2030 more drastic measures must be taken and efforts must be strengthened if we want to reverse the effects of climate change. The points recommended for last year were: accelerating the elimination of coal, reducing deforestation, encouraging the switch to electric vehicles, and stimulating investments in renewable energies.

This month's COP27, taking place on 6-18 November in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, is more decisive than ever. It is intended to reaffirm the agreements, decisions taken, and commitments made from the 1992 Rio Summit to the most recent one last year. This year's talks are focusing on the implementation of the agreed pathways, rather than on the arguments per se, promoting mitigation, adaptation, finance, and collaboration. COP27 is providing a space for countries to deliver on their pledges and implement what was agreed in Glasgow. Political will must be very prominent at this summit to demonstrate that adaptation plans are already being implemented to prioritize the most at-risk communities. In terms of financing, transparency must be prioritized to promote a realistic action plan and to be able to contribute and help developing countries. To achieve consensus, it is always necessary for all participants to be systematically active in discussions, events, debates, and meetings in order to achieve inclusive and appropriate decisions for all.

The fact that this COP27 is taking place in Egypt paves the way for greater interest in approaching the Mediterranean region, an opportunity that cannot be overlooked, with Egypt being a clear bearer of the consequences of climate change in the region. Sharm el-Sheikh is

currently providing an opportunity for attendees to be surrounded by protected areas and to reflect on the hardships that will soon become dominant in the region. It is a country with a predicted rapid population increase, which is directly related to an increase in urbanization, which will affect, among other things, water supply to the population. According to the Middle East Policy Council, climate change is predicted to be responsible for raising the level of the Nile River substantially, doubling the likelihood of droughts and floods, catastrophically affecting the economic, agricultural and livelihood situations of the Egyptian population. It should be noted that Egypt is a country with a clear intention to mitigate the effects of climate change, being a leader in its energy transition towards renewable energy. It aims to establish itself as a leading regional energy player, pioneering self-sufficiency in natural gas, as well as being a potential exporter to Europe, which is trying to move away from fossil fuels and towards alternatives such as importing natural gas from the Middle East and North Africa. Earlier in June 2022, the European Union, the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the State of Israel signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation related to trade, transport, and export of natural gas to the EU, from Israel and through Egypt. This signifies that holding COP27 in Egypt is a breakthrough for the country and for the southern neighbourhood, creating a more specific framework for the region.

This raises the question of the role that the UfM is playing at COP27 in 2022. A Mediterranean Pavilion is being held for the first time, led by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean together with the United Nations Environment Programme - Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP-MAP) and the PRIMA Foundation,

with the support of a coalition of entities involved in climate action in the Euro-Mediterranean region. This Pavilion aims to highlight on the one hand the obstacles that the region is facing, but also to address the mitigation elements and solutions that are being implemented. The main objective is to insist on the special position of vulnerability that the Mediterranean region is experiencing. The Mediterranean Pavilion includes the MedECC as an independent expert council taking part in the events as an advisory group. This is allowing for a wide range of experts to meet in order to build resilience and reflect on their studies being presented during the activities carried out in the Pavilion.

From the Union for the Mediterranean, we remain positive about future predictions of the effects of climate change. Especially, being part of the institutions leading the efforts to mitigate the effects of this phenomenon in the Euro-Mediterranean region. We intend to continue to

act as a coordinating and mediating actor between our member countries, taking forward projects together with our partner institutions. We count on a great team in our Secretariat, striving to promote sustainable, inclusive and beneficial policies, approaches and activities for the whole Mediterranean community. Moreover, we are aware of the great need to implement the necessary actions to prevent a potential regional crisis aggravated by climate change, and fueled by political instability, economic insecurity, social unrest, disease transmission, lack of food and water, energy crisis, forced migration, among many possible outcomes that are being experienced and will continue to worsen across the region. We continue to work to foster the implementation of regional strategic cooperation, with a strong conviction that our initiatives, such as the Mediterranean Pavilion, will foster the integration necessary to significantly alleviate the consequences of climate change.



Ambassador Nasser Kamel

A career diplomat for the Egyptian government, Nasser Kamel held the position of Ambassador of Egypt to the United Kingdom from 2014 to 2018. He was also Ambassador to France in the period 2006-2012, during which he took part in the drafting of the Joint Declaration of the 2008 Paris Summit that marked the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean. Furthermore, between 2012 and 2014, he was Assistant Minister for Arab and Middle Eastern Affairs. From 2004 to 2006, he was the Director of Egypt's Public Information Service. Prior to this position he served in various embassies, including Washington (1984-1988), Lisbon (1990-1994), Tunis (1994-1998), Brussels (1999-2001) and Paris (2001-2004). Mr Kamel studied Political Science at Brussels University (1977-1979) and Cairo University's Faculty of Economics and Political Science, obtaining his bachelor's degree in 1981. He graduated from the Diplomatic Institute – Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Cairo (1981-1982) and the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) in Paris (1982-1983). He holds the title of Grand Officier de l'Ordre National du Mérite of the Republic of France and has also received decorations from the Kingdom of Belgium and the Republic of Portugal.

Establishment of the United Nations and the Proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Historical background

By Dr. Afarin Shahidzadeh

1) Peoples' fright from the rise of racism and the horror of the war

“WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small...”¹

This is what people of more than 50 nations proclaimed at the end of the World War II. A declaration, which reveals the inestimable pain and agony that people of these nations had endured during the war. This attestation is the testimony of their desire to prevent any such situation in the future.

The fact that the United Nations Charter has these strong words and the peoples' desire and commitment as its preamble describes the mandate and the reason for which this Organization was established. To avoid any such experience in the future was the purpose for the nations to join together and unite to create an Organization of the United Nations.

Every war is a catastrophe, both for the people, worried for their safety and life and most importantly their future, and is disastrous for the belligerent countries. Happiness and laughter are replaced by sorrow and tears, as well as a lot of human and natural energy, time, work and financial resources are wasted for a negative and destructive cause. Industries instead of concentrating on producing for peoples' welfare and daily life, use their potentials to produce more and more sophisticated arms and weapons. Thus, the gross national products (GNPs) decrease, resulting in sharp fall of global economy and the rise of inflation and poverty in all countries affected by the war. People are demoralized by the recession and the decline of their life quality as well as



■ The United Nations General Assembly adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Palais de Chaillot in Paris, 10 December 1948. Photograph: STF/AFP/Getty Images

¹ *United Nations Charter*, The Preamble, 24 October 1945.

from the news coming from the war front with martyrs' list becoming longer. People live in danger, frightened of what the next day can bring to add to their existing distress.

War is even more pernicious when it spreads out in many countries and takes on world dimension, as the rate of life losses and destructions unfortunately rise drastically and misery and poverty trespassing frontiers, cover everywhere. Neighbouring countries cannot help as they are themselves victims of the same disaster. Years pass and unfortunately the war continues.

In addition to these calamities, the essence of the World War II was based on racism, targeting innocent individuals of a single origin and race. This hunt for innocent civilians beyond national frontiers had created phobia in all societies, even among those who were not targeted. Faces that one saw regularly in the neighbourhood, would from one day to another disappear. Compatriots were disaggregated by their ethnic and religious origins and today's friends would become enemies of tomorrow. Suspicion and mistrust took over friendship and conviviality, as anyone could be agent of the enemy. Any contact far or close with the targeted population could become a risk. Some citizens from the non-targeted group saw their fellow countrymen as the reason for the war and occupation by the enemy and thus created a rejection toward these compatriots. As a result, friends of yesterday became strangers and the category to avoid. Thus, this war was not conducted at the front, but in the cities and in each neighbourhood.

Therefore, the World War II was not a classical war with the ambition of enlarging the territory by pushing the borders further in the neighbouring country. It was a war of a repressive and racist ideology against the fundamental rights of one population, regardless of where they lived.

2) Growing realization of the correlation between peace and human rights

Human being, the rational animal² in possession of the capacity to think and to reasoning had to find a solution to stop the inhumane behaviour of one group toward another group. The only acceptable option was to restore the rights of the persecuted people. Thus, the termination of the war and reinstatement of peace depended on the proclamation of fundamental rights of every human being. Consequently, on 6 January 1941 President Roosevelt announced four freedoms as fundamental rights to be enjoyed by "everyone in the world"³. They were Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. The fact that these freedoms were to be enjoyed by everyone everywhere confirmed their universality. It also required that they be protected to allow everyone to enjoy them. In order to do so, there was the need for a global structure ensuring respect for peoples' fundamental rights.

Consequently, President Roosevelt presented a project and together with Stalin, Churchill and China, represented by its Ambassador in Soviet Union, declared in 1943 "That they recognize the necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date a general international organization, based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all peace-loving states, and open to membership by all such states, large and small, for

² *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle, 1.13, ~340 BCE.

³ *President Roosevelt's State of the Union address before the US Congress*, 6 January 1941.

the maintenance of international peace and security.”⁴ This was confirmed by the Declaration of the Three Powers⁵: “And as to peace-we are sure that our concord will win an enduring Peace. We recognize fully the supreme responsibility resting upon us and all the United Nations to make a peace which will command the goodwill of the overwhelming mass of the peoples of the world and banish the scourge and terror of war for many generations. With our Diplomatic advisors we have surveyed the problems of the future. We shall seek the cooperation and active participation of all nations, large and small, whose peoples in heart and mind are dedicated, as are our own peoples, to the elimination of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance. We will welcome them, as they may choose to come, into a world family of Democratic Nations”.

For the Americans, once the Nazis were defeated, the only global danger would come from the socialist-communist bloc. Therefore, President Roosevelt wanted absolutely to engage with the Soviets for the participation of the Soviet Union in the future international organization. The British, being the strongest European ally of the United States were invited in the negotiations to support their position. China also at war with Japan, was considered an ally by the Americans only during the preparatory stage.

The Chinese, counting on the American forces for the capitulation of the Japanese army were ready to participate in the elaboration of the American dream of such an Organization. For the British, this was another opportunity to be side by side with their big ally. However, Stalin, who knew that once the war was over, he would be considered as an opponent, decided to join in order to use the future Organization for his own purposes: where the Soviet Union would be recognized as a big power and to use it as a tribune for Soviet propaganda. During the preliminary meetings, Stalin made it clear that the only mandate of the future Organization was to prevent/stop wars and to punish the aggressor through embargoes and termination of diplomatic relations, etc. He refused to grant competency in relation to economic, social and cultural affairs, which for him constituted national affairs and were to be dealt by each sovereign state as domestic matter. Like the other three, he did not want a future supranational Organization and agreed with them that each state had to keep its sovereignty. Stalin also knew that Roosevelt wanted the presence of the Soviet Union in the future Organization. Therefore, during the Yalta Conference⁶ using the pretext that British Commonwealth states were all granted voting rights, Stalin tabled the right to vote for the sixteen Soviet republics. Finally, although a federal state is internationally recognized as one state, Stalin succeeded in getting two voting rights for Ukraine and Byelorussia (today Belarus), which with the Soviet Union’s made it three.

After three years of preparations and negotiations, on 5 March 1945, the United States of America, on behalf of the Four inviting powers invited states that had declared war against Germany and/or Japan to a meeting in San Francisco on 25 April 1945 to finalize the text of the Charter of the United Nations. Austria, Ireland and Switzerland did not participate due to their neutrality status. Even though Poland was not among the 50 nations in San Francisco, it signed the Charter along with the other 50 states on 15 October

⁴ *Declaration of Four-Nation issued at the closing of Moscow conference, 30 October 1943.*

⁵ *Declaration of Three Powers signed by Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill at the closing of Tehran Conference, 1 December 1943.*

⁶ *Yalta Conference, 4-11 February 1945.*

1945. The texts were adopted by two third majority vote. The majority of the invited states wanted to see the General Assembly, where all member states were equal and had one vote, granted with more power than what was presented to them by the Four. They were also of the opinion that the Court of Justice was not given the importance and the power that such an instance had to incarnate. Not only did they want to see the rule of law and justice more preponderant, but also insisted that the Organization needed to be active in economic and social domain, even though this had been refuted by the Soviets. Finally, the compromise was to adopt the following text “With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote: a. higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; b. solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation; and c. universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”⁷ With regard to the Security Council, the position of the Soviet Union was that any matter needed prior approbation of the permanent members before being inscribed on the Security Council agenda. The others, including the USA delegation considered that the right to veto could not apply to procedural matters. At the end, Stalin gave the instruction to the Soviet delegation to drop its proposal and accept the right to veto only for decision making process at the Security Council. The other states accepted the right to veto with the prospect of amending the Charter sometime in the future to abolish this prerogative for the five states. However, the Four, the first drafters of the text, had foreseen that at some point in time, the majority of the member states would go for revising the Charter and thus had phrased the amendment process as “Amendments to the present Charter shall come into force for Members of the United Nations when they have been adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly and ratified in accordance with their respective constitutional processes by two-thirds of the Members of the United Nations, including all permanent members of the Security Council”.⁸ This basically means that the five permanent members of the Security Council will continue to keep their right to veto as long as the United Nations exists.

The final text was adopted and signed by the 50 states participating in the adoption process and Poland on 25 June 1945 under the name of the United Nations Charter. It entered into force on 24 October 1945, after having been ratified at the national level by the five permanent members of the Security Council and the majority of the 50 states. The United Nations Organization was established “...based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.”⁹

3) The need for a Universal Declaration on Human Rights

In its first Article, the United Nations Charter presents the *raison d'être* of the Organization. It starts with “*The Purposes of the United Nations are: 1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that*

⁷ *United Nations Charter*, Article 55, 24 October 1945.

⁸ *United Nations Charter*, Article 108, 24 October 1945

⁹ *United Nations Charter*, Article 2(1), 24 October 1945

end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace... ”¹⁰. It continues in enumerating the purposes of the Organization “To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and 4. To be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends. ”¹¹.

A very ambitious mandate, which at the time of the signing of the Charter probably assured the world population that there would be no more wars as this new global Organization would prevent them from happening by promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. President Truman stated “Under this document we have good reason to expect the framing of an international bill of rights, acceptable to all the nations involved.” ¹² Pending the entry into force of the Charter, the signatory states decided to establish “...a Preparatory Commission of the United Nations for the purpose of making provisional arrangements for the first sessions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, ..., the secretariat and for the convening of the International Court of Justice.”¹³

The Preparatory Commission recommended the establishment of a Commission on Human Rights under the Economic and Social Council “to assist the Council to carry out its responsibility under the Charter to promote human rights”. In particular, the work of the Commission might be directed towards the following objects: (a) formulation of an international bill of rights; (b) formulation of recommendations for an international declaration or convention on such matters as civil liberties, status of women, freedom of information; (c) protection of minorities; (1) prevention of discrimination on grounds of race, sex, language, or religion; (e) any matters within the field of human rights considered likely to impair the general welfare or friendly relations among nations. 18. Studies, recommendations and provision of information and other services would be made at the request of the General Assembly, or of the Economic and Social Council, whether on its own initiative or at the request of the Security Council or of the Trusteeship Council.”¹⁴

At its first session, the General Assembly accepted the establishment of a Commission on Human Rights. Consequently, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution for the establishment of such a Commission on 12 February 1946. Subsequent to a letter from the Commission on Human Rights to the Economic and Social Council dated 27 March 1947, a drafting committee for the bill of human rights was constituted, comprising eight members from different countries: Australia, China, Chile,

¹⁰ *United Nations Charter*, Article 1(1), 24 October 1945

¹¹ *United Nations Charter*, Article 1(3) & (4), 24 October 1945

¹² *President Harry S. Truman’s address at the closing of United Nations Conference in San Francisco*, 26 June 1945.

¹³ *Interim Arrangements concluded by the United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco*, Article 1, 26 June 1945.

¹⁴ *Report of the Executive Committee to the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations*, Section 4 (Organisation of Economic, Social Council), paragraph 16 (Commission on Human Rights), 12 November 1945.

France, United Kingdom, Lebanon and the Soviet Union. At its second session (2-10 December 1947), the Commission on Human Rights, reviewed the proposals of the drafting committee, including whether the bill should be in the form of a declaration or convention and examined the respective drafts. The Commission on Human Rights requested the drafting committee “in revising the Draft Declaration on Human Rights in its second session, to make it as short as possible”. It also requested the secretariat to share the draft declaration with member states for their views before 28 April 1948. The third session of the Commission on Human Rights (24 May-18 June 1948) had before it the revised draft declaration submitted by the drafting committee, which it adopted by 12 votes in favour, none against and four abstentions and submitted it to the Economic and Social Council. The Economic and Social Council at its seventh session (25-26 August 1948) adopted without vote the resolution 151(VII) on the draft international declaration of human rights and submitted it to the General Assembly. Subsequently, the Third Committee of the General Assembly was seized of the matter, which reviewed and discussed the draft declaration during 81 meetings. In December 1948, the Third Committee adopted the text as Declaration with 29 votes in favour, none against and 7 abstentions, forwarding it to the General Assembly plenary of 58 member states for adoption. Finally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly (resolution 217A(III)) on 10 December 1948 in Paris, with 48 votes in favour, 8 abstentions and no against. Honduras and Yemen neither voted nor abstained.

The thirty articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were further expanded and developed in what is referred to as core international human rights instruments, including the two international Covenants on political and civil rights (and its Optional Protocols); on economic, social and cultural rights (and its Optional Protocol); the international Conventions on the Elimination of all Racial Discrimination; on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (and its Optional Protocol); against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (and its Optional Protocol); on the Rights of the Child (and its Optional Protocols); on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (and its Optional Protocol); on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Together, they constitute the international human rights law. The international human rights law is constantly progressing, as new rights are recognized as human being’s fundamental rights, which need to be respected by the duty bearers for the benefit of the right holders.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has also become a reference for all subsequent human rights manifesto. As an example, at the regional and cross regional level, the Europeans on 4 September 1950 declared “Considering the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10th December 1948; Considering that this Declaration aims at securing the universal and effective recognition and observance of the Rights therein declared.”¹⁵ The same applied to African States, members of the Organization of African Unity declaring in their Charter which entered

¹⁵ *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, Preamble, 4 September 1950.

into force on 21 October 1986 “...having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”¹⁶ Members of the League of Arab States, in their Charter which came into force on 15 March 2008 declared “reaffirming the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”¹⁷.

4) Conclusion

The United Nations Organization has established an order in international relationship between its members. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a milestone in recognition of fundamental and innate rights of all human beings, regardless of gender or origin. What started seventy-seven years ago is an on-going process, progressing over the years, which will undoubtedly continue with a view to improving everyone's life and therefore the world situation.



Dr. Afarin Shahidzadeh had a distinguished career at the United Nations, and she is an expert on international human rights law. She served as Deputy Chief, National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section, at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (1992–2002). Her functions included conducting visits to member States to collect first-hand information on the human rights situation in the member States and submit recommendations to governments to address the identified shortcomings and providing technical support and advisory services through training sessions to member States in building and strengthening their promotion and protection mechanisms, by providing training on the international human right law to government officials and civil society organizations on: political, civil, economic, social, cultural and environmental law, The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), their benchmarks, indicators and targets; The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and to businesses their social responsibility; Women's rights, child's rights, rights of persons with disability, rights of migrants, etc.... She also conducted needs missions to member states to provide technical cooperation programmes to all national stakeholders, including government institutions such as the Ministries, law enforcement officials, detention centre guards, parliamentarians, and the judiciary; engaged with civil society organizations and non-governmental organisations to build and strengthen their capacity to collaborate with the government in ensuring that human rights are promoted and protected.

Previously, Ms. Shahidzadeh held the position of Deputy Director of the American-European Academy of International Relations and organised an international post-graduate study programme (1991–1992) at the **Centre International De Formations Européennes**, and she was a legal writer (1987–1991), preparing legal drafts and studies in connection with the IFC, IMF, World Bank, and other international financial institutions about post-conflict development assistance and humanitarian aid. She received her doctorate degree from the University of Nice, France, on June 30, 1987, in philosophy of law.

¹⁶ *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, Preamble, 21 October 1986.

¹⁷ *Arab Charter on Human Rights*, Preamble, 15 March 2008.

The Pivotal Role of Human Capital for Developing Countries in the 21st Century

By Professor Constantine Passaris

Introduction

The 21st century has spotlighted the foundational role of human capital in creating a pathway for sustainable development for the developing countries of the Global South. In particular, the creation and development of human capital in the global south has emerged as an essential prerequisite for economic success in the new global economy of the 21st century.

The new global economy of the 21st century has transformed the economic landscape in a profound and indelible manner. Never before in human history has the pace of structural change been more pervasive and global in its character. The new economy has become a catalyst for geopolitical symbiosis, economic integration, trade liberalization, technological change, and financial interconnectedness. Furthermore, the signature mark of the new global economy is new ideas, new technologies and new directions.

The new economy is composed of a trilogy of interactive forces that include internetization, trade liberalization and the information technology and communications revolution. Internetization is a new word and concept that I have coined to describe the international outreach and electronic empowerment of the new global economy of the 21st century (Passaris, 2021). Free trade has enhanced global economic integration and extended the economic governance architecture. The Information Technology (IT) Revolution has made geography and time irrelevant. All these pillars of the new economy are driven by the spectacular feats of innovation in a virtually borderless world with a tremendous capacity for electronic connectivity.



The first three decades of the 21st century have recorded a cataclysmic trifecta. Starting with the global financial crisis of 2008 which adversely affected our financial institutions. This was followed by the protracted Great Recession which triggered a rapid decline in economic growth accompanied by high levels of unemployment. In the third decade, COVID-19 created a tsunami of economic devastation with far reaching and global consequences. All three cataclysmic events created economic shock and awe around the world and especially in the developing countries of the Global South.

In the process of building back better and ensuring a more robust economic future, we need to learn from the lessons of economic history and be mindful of the Chinese word for crisis. In the Chinese language, the word for crisis is composed of two characters. One denotes danger and the other opportunity. In effect, the Chinese word for crisis signals that there are opportunities after every crisis. This should be the context for creating a more effective and resilient template for sustainable development in the Global South. An economic model that will serve as a catalyst for eliminating the economic disparity between the Global North and the Global South and propel developing countries towards economic prosperity in the remaining decades of the 21st century.

Human Capital

On the contemporary economic landscape, a country's human capital endowment has emerged as its most valuable economic asset. Indeed, the transformative changes that have taken place on the economic landscape have underlined the evolution of the wealth of nations from the resources under our feet to the resources between our ears. As such, human capital, more so than natural capital or physical capital have emerged as the economic superstars of the 21st century. In short, human capital has become the pivotal economic asset for developing countries in the new global economy of the 21st century.

The term human capital describes the levels of education, workplace skills, and technical competencies that the workforce brings to the economy. It is worth noting that, human capital is demonstrably distinctive from physical capital, natural capital, and social capital. Furthermore, the word capital is purposely designated to convey the conceptual context that it is an asset that generates value into the future. In consequence, expenditures in creating human capital are noted as an investment that will provide future dividends and economic benefits. In short, economic history reveals that national economies have periodically transitioned from valuing the resources under our feet, towards embracing the machines in our hands, and ultimately placing a premium for the resources between our ears.

The concept of human capital was first introduced in the 1960's, by two American economists Theodore Schultz (1961) and Gary Becker (1965) who pointed out that education was an investment that could enhance

productivity in the workplace. More specifically, they identified that a higher level of education contributes to higher productivity and is rewarded with higher income and salaries. In turn, higher salaries trigger higher aggregate demand and induce higher levels of consumption which create the momentum for economic growth.

In the ensuing decades, the composite of what constitutes human capital has changed and evolved. In effect, because of structural changes on the economic landscape, the introduction of new products and services, and the evolution of the workplace, the concept of human capital has expanded to include a longer list and a modern array of workforce features that are required by employers for achieving the effective integration of human labour in the production function.

In consequence, a deep dive into the human capital profile of developing countries will ascertain that the composition of their human capital requires significant remedial action, instant recalibration, and a realignment with the structural changes precipitated by the new global economy of the 21st

century. There is an urgency to this exercise since the potency of their national economies will depend on building a better educational infrastructure and a more responsive platform for acquiring contemporary skills and competencies.

Job Analytics

The journey of human capital reflects important mileposts in structural changes that have occurred on the economic landscape during the unfolding of economic history. The world of work has evolved and experienced transformational change over the centuries.

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Three types of skills are increasingly important in labor markets: advanced cognitive skills such as complex problem-solving, sociobehavioral skills such as teamwork, and skill combinations that are predictive of adaptability such as reasoning and self-efficacy. Building these skills requires strong human capital foundations and lifelong learning.”

(World Bank, 2019:3)



Indeed, there has been a marked evolution of the desired educational outcomes and required skill set from the foundational 3R's of reading, writing and arithmetic to a more complex and integrated skill set and competencies. The modern array of desired educational outcomes includes scientific, technological, and financial literacy, global and cultural awareness, leadership and entrepreneurial skills, social and civic responsibility, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication and cross-cultural collaboration. Furthermore, human capital has a profound and direct impact on productivity in the workplace through education, experience, training, intelligence, energy, work habits, trust worthiness and innovative initiatives.

There is no denying that advances in science and technology are constantly reshaping the skills and competencies that are required in the workplace. In addition, the efficacy of these agents of transformational change are contingent upon embracing a combination of technical know-how, problem solving, and critical thinking, as well as soft skills, such as perseverance, teamwork, and creativity.

Another transformational change that is occurring on the contemporary economic landscape is the introduction of accelerated automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI) in the production function. In consequence, the composition of human capital, workforce skills and technological competencies will require a realignment with these new agents of production in the contemporary workplace. Furthermore, the ascent of the knowledge economy and the IT sector will require a more intensive and more focused human capital content and composition.

The World Bank has concluded that "Three types of skills are increasingly important in labor markets: advanced cognitive skills such as complex problem-solving, sociobehavioral skills

such as teamwork, and skill combinations that are predictive of adaptability such as reasoning and self-efficacy. Building these skills requires strong human capital foundations and lifelong learning." (World Bank, 2019:3).

For the developing countries of the Global South this represents an imperative course correction that requires an alteration in the traditional educational model and the process for creating human capital. In effect, it requires investing in education, harnessing the empowerment of internetization, facilitating virtual and lifelong learning, enhancing the electronic infrastructure and making the Internet more affordable for the citizens of the Global South. All of this for the purpose of charting a new pathway towards sustainable development for the Global South.

In the pursuit of sustainable development and the domestic creation of employment opportunities for the Global South, the ultimate destination should be positioning human capital to economic advantage. In effect, creating a trajectory for growth and sustainable development in the Global South. Furthermore, the pathway towards achieving sustainable development and domestic economic opportunities for the Global South runs through enhancing the creation of human capital. In this manner, positioning human capital to strategic advantage in creating the momentum for economic growth and prosperity for the developing countries of the Global South.

Robotic Future

There is no denying that COVID-19 has redefined the nature of work. The impact of lockdowns, medical absences, and self-isolation have forced structural changes on the role of human labour in the office space and the factory floor. Furthermore, the coronavirus pandemic has underlined the importance of electronic connectivity, reconfigured the workplace and created a work-at-home default environment.

The role and functions of robots and AI have witnessed rapid growth during the last few decades. Indeed, the breadth of the services performed by robots is beginning to span a large scathe. More precisely, robots are performing multiple tasks on the factory floor, precise industrial functions in the workplace as well as performing household functions and managerial services.



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In effect, robots have alleviated many household tasks such as household surveillance, mowing lawns, watering the grass and the plants as well as all forms of tedious functions such as house cleaning and vacuuming. Foremost in the long list of tasks for the modern robot is their role as a companion and playmate for young children as well as their educational mission in the modern classroom. Robots are also playing an essential role in providing health care services and performing hospital tasks. They are also present in the transportation sector in the form of unmanned private vehicles and mass transit. Clearly, robots are replacing human labour for workplace tasks that are dangerous, dirty, and undesirable. In essence, robots are replacing human labor in performing tedious and routine manual tasks.

In the provision of products and services, robots have captured a strategic position in the contemporary workplace. Robots are present to fill Amazon's retail orders, perform self-checkout services, manufacture products on the

factory floor, perform planting and harvesting tasks in the fields and orchards for the agricultural sector, and help on construction sites. In effect, robots already have a significant presence in a long list of economic sectors including agriculture, mining, retail sales, industrial production, and transport. We can expect this list to grow through the inclusion of additional economic sectors in the very near future.

In effect, the role of robots and AI on the contemporary economic landscape have become increasingly more important and will continue to evolve in the next few decades. Modern robots are performing the tasks that human labour finds burdensome, distasteful and prefers not to perform. In short, modern robots are designed to perform repetitive, unpleasant, tedious, dangerous, and complex functions. Furthermore, modern robots are the medium of choice through which AI integrates with the contemporary labor force and the world around us.

All of this necessitates extending the traditional production function to include the new agents of production. In consequence, the traditional factors of production such as land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship no longer capture the full extent and contemporary evolution of the modern agents of production that have emerged in the last few decades. As such, I propose that we need to add to the conventional list of factors of production a new agent and more precisely that of AI which has a significant presence on the contemporary economic landscape and is likely to grow in importance in the ensuing decades. In this context, human labour should carve a different and more specialized niche of engagement in the production function alongside robots and AI.

Knowledge Economy

The ascent of the knowledge economy has elevated human capital to an iconic position. It



has also redefined the appropriate human capital composite that is congruent with the new global economy of the 21st century. Indeed, the restructuring of the workforce has been precipitated by supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, production bottlenecks, work skills deficiencies, gaps in technical competencies and the labour supply ravages of COVID-19.

The knowledge economy is driven by human capital and requires a highly educated, technologically savvy, appropriately trained, and competent workforce. In this context, higher levels of education are a necessity rather than a luxury. The knowledge economy also requires constant realignment for mid-career workers through access to periodic up-skilling and re-skilling. In short, the efficacy of the workforce of the future will depend on lifelong learning.

For developing countries, building a modernized approach to higher education and providing opportunities for workforce development such as the periodic re-skilling and up-skilling of the labour force has become a necessary and essential prerequisite for economic success in the 21st century. This will require careful planning and a focused commitment to providing adequate resources.

First and foremost, developing countries should ensure financial accessibility for students and workers to acquire the appropriate levels of education and essential workplace skills. They should encourage institutions of higher learning to expand the delivery of high-quality accredited programs in new ways, especially on digital platforms. The private sector and employers should become more acutely engaged in investing in the skill-development of their workers to meet the changing needs of the labour market. In essence, future streams of workers should be equipped with the necessary human capital assets that will ensure their successful entry and efficient integration into the labour force of the new economy.

There is no denying that employment opportunities and career pathways are going to look different in the future. The types of education, abilities, skills, and experiences that employers seek are evolving amid a confluence of forces reshaping the nature of work around the world. Disruptive technologies such as AI, robotics, unmanned vehicles, and the Internet of Things are contributing new products and a growing share of knowledge-based services, as well as the rise of technology-enabled platforms. All of this will reshape labour force careers and require lifelong learning.

In this journey, the core skills required to perform most jobs will be similar regardless of how the work is undertaken. For example, success in the new economy requires workers to have the capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems. These contemporary skill requirements are more important than the job specific skill set which are changing rapidly in sync with the structural changes on the economic landscape. Automation and new technologies are opening doors for many new employment opportunities. However, a large number of actively engaged workers are also finding that their education, skills, and experiences are less in demand. In consequence, the contemporary restructuring of domestic economies has triggered an evolution in the labour market.

All of this, creating many new job opportunities, but also leading to stagnating employment opportunities or indeed the obsolescence of some other occupations. In this context developing countries have an obligation to take stock of their human capital assets. In addition, they should become actively engaged in labour force planning. This may take the form of identifying new job opportunities, discrepancies in educational attainment, and gaps in desired skills and competencies of their contemporary workforce. All of this for the purpose of conducting a purposeful and proactive process of

labour market planning. In short, what is required is a labour force plan to ensure that a country's work force has the educational levels, contemporary skill set, and the technological competence that will prepare them to fill the jobs of the new economy.

Digital Transformation



The ascendancy of the Age of Internetization has demonstrated that we live in a largely digital, technology-driven knowledge economy. The most significant driver of change leading to this radical transformation is the rise in the importance of human capital. Intellectual capital in the form of productive innovation like AI capabilities, specialized algorithms, electronic software, patented technology, proprietary business processes, brands, and trademarks, have overshadowed and are now vastly more important business assets than plant, equipment and machinery.

More importantly, widespread network connectivity and digitization are revolutionizing the economic landscape and generating new strategic imperatives for business success. Gone are the days when a successful industrial company focused on developing physical products while maintaining high-profit margins and market share. Today, the most successful companies focus on services, building networks

of value and cutting marginal costs to increase their market share.

In effect, the digital economy has altered the conceptual framework for assigning value on the economic landscape. More precisely, it has changed the traditional economic laws of scarcity, supply, and demand, and significantly altered the elements of production. For example, it was commonly accepted by economists that commercial value is generated when capital is combined with labour in a market economy. For almost two centuries, capital has been defined by economists as all the physical manufactured factors of production such as machinery and equipment that are involved in the factory model of production. Labour was simply the means to mobilize physical capital for productive purposes. This fundamental conceptual framework was derived from practical experience during the industrial era and has been a foundational assumption of neoclassical economics since the 19th century.

Structural changes and advances in technology have precipitated a markedly different economic landscape. In the intangible and virtual economy of the 21st century, new ideas, economic outreach, and social network connections have become major drivers of value. This value revolution has elevated human labour from being mere appendages to the industrial machine to a principal source of value creation. In consequence, human capital has emerged as a vital contributor and driver of the modern economy. Furthermore, it has also affirmed that the knowledge economy requires a different set of work skills and aptitudes than the industrial landscape of the previous century.

Contemporary Labour Market

The advent of economic structural change in the form of industrialization, manufacturing and more recently the information technology and communications revolution are reshaping the

economic landscape and the modern workplace in a profound and indelible manner. It is evident that no economy is immune from structural change.

Old products have lost their consumer appeal while new products emerge as the preference of contemporary shoppers. Old jobs are disappearing, and they are being replaced by new jobs. In effect, the new global economy of the 21st century is redefining the world of work and speeding up the integration of state-of-the-art electronic hardware and software. In some instances, this is happening by design and in others it is happening by serendipity. Job realignments are happening by necessity because of the need to hire new workers with the skills to produce the new products that are in demand.

A few years ago, occupations such as big data analysts, computer programmers, software developers, AI specialists, robotics engineers, specialists in machine learning, and nanotechnologists did not exist. Today these professionals are in high demand and are paid high salaries. Furthermore, all these new professional occupations are the byproduct of the knowledge economy. In this context, human capital, which includes educational attainment, workplace skills and technological competence, has emerged as the foremost economic asset and the signature mark of the new economy.

One thing is clear, employers are very clear about the human capital assets that they require in the contemporary workforce. More specifically, the traditional 3R's of reading, writing and arithmetic are simply not enough for new hires. Employers have raised the bar with respect to the modern job profile. They are looking for prospective employees with considerably more than a high school diploma and preferably post-secondary educational degrees. They are also looking for a different set of workplace skills such as technological competency, cultural sensitivity that will facilitate working effectively

within a multicultural workforce, and fluency in several international languages that will open doors for successful business initiatives around the world.

The success of creating and nurturing the human capital that is a good fit for the new global economy of the 21st century will require a realignment with our educational institutions. It may also require a new curriculum and pedagogical model. In effect, we need to connect the modern mission of education with the transformational change that is occurring on the contemporary economic landscape. This includes the rapid pace of automation, the introduction of robotics and AI in the modern workspace, the need for our labour force to possess hard and soft skills, rounding up the required contemporary human capital composite with a global mindset and an entrepreneurial frame of mind.

In all of this, the custodians of society's mandate to create human capital bear a huge responsibility. I am referring to our post-secondary institutions, including private and public universities as well as community colleges. They need to refresh their curriculum and realign their academic mission with the structural changes that have emerged on the new economic landscape. The new template for creating human capital should start with a collaborative formula between the institutions of higher learning, government, and the private sector.

Global Mindset

One of the foremost human capital assets for the new global economy of the 21st century is a global mindset. The reason being that the new economy has embraced global outreach as its destination and is propelled by global economic and financial engagement. The global context of the new economy is manifested in global human mobility, global financial transfers, foreign direct



investment, global supply chains, global outsourcing, global free trade agreements, and countless other global economic engagements. In consequence, nurturing and deploying a global mindset in a country's workforce has become a strategic imperative. A good start is the recognition that the rest of the world does not conduct its economic, financial, and business affairs as we do in our respective domestic economies. In effect, the new global economy of the 21st century requires a global mindset, an international competence, global outreach, cultural empathy, and a new interpersonal skill set to successfully navigate the new global economy.

Workers need to be fluent in the modern languages of the new economy. These new linguistic capabilities can take different forms. Nurturing a multicultural linguistic capacity for overseas communication has become one of the operational imperatives for ensuring a seamless global outreach. This requires a proficiency in multilingual capacity of the spoken languages around the world.

In addition, there are several new languages that are associated with the Internet and the digital software that has emerged from the new technologies. In effect, advances in digital technology have precipitated the new illiteracy of modern times in the professional world, and

increasingly in our daily living. Furthermore, the contemporary workforce needs to learn the language of globalization and the ability to communicate effectively with empathy, sensitivity and diplomatically across diverse cultures. In most cases, this embraces cultural and religious sensitivity in the new work environment that consists of a multicultural workforce.

A global mindset is also an essential precondition for effective economic governance and the conduct of multilateralism. Indeed, the modern face of economic governance should have a pronounced global mindset. International economic events have national repercussions and national economic policies trigger international consequences. Global economic interdependence is a fact of life in the 21st century and our institutions of economic governance need to adapt and evolve to embrace it rather than ignore its existence.

In this journey, collaborative multilateralism is the pathway that will resolve our contemporary hot button issues which are global in character and composition. These include the post COVID-19 economic recovery, the adverse economic effects of climate change and developing a sustainable development plan for the developing countries of the Global South. In this regard, we need to elevate operational multilateralism on the fast track of international governance. Only then can we develop an economic governance multilateral framework and a strategic implementation plan that deploys new economic, social, and environmental governance initiatives for the purpose of achieving sustainable economic development for the Global South. In short, acknowledging our global interdependence is a precondition to the resolution of the contemporary challenges facing humanity.

Sustainable Development

requires a course correction that is congruent with the new global economy of the 21st century. In effect, what defined a nation's economy in the 20th century was its natural resources. Fast forward to the contemporary economic landscape, and increasingly the future potential of the new economy in the 21st century is being empowered by the strategic deployment of a country's human resources and their human capital.

In consequence, developing countries require a reorientation and a realignment towards the creation and the strategic deployment of human capital. This is an essential and necessary prerequisite since human resources and more precisely human capital have emerged as the center piece and the driver of a country's economic growth, development, and prosperity. Furthermore, the efficacy of a country's human resources requires a retrofit regarding their levels of education, workplace skills and technical competencies. All of this has been necessitated by the profound structural changes in the new global economy, the lessons learnt from the preceding three decades encompassing the cataclysmic trifecta of the 21st century and the spectacular advances in science and technology.

The process of realigning a country's human capital endowment with the requirements of the new economy should start by articulating a purposeful vision for the foundational role of human capital as the driver of the national economies of the Global South. Subsequently, it should develop a purposeful action plan that facilitates the acquisition of the educational requirements and job specific skills of the contemporary profile of human capital. Third, it should proceed to articulate a focused strategy that empowers young women and men in the developing countries of the Global South for success in the new global economy of the 21st century.

In effect, the process of retrofitting human capital for the new global economy of the 21st century requires an element of multitasking. More precisely, it requires realigning the core curriculum that is taught in our post-secondary institutions for the purpose of achieving a better fit with the microeconomic forces that are redefining the new economy. Furthermore, static education that has a terminal timeline should be transformed into lifelong learning. In addition, those already in the workforce, will require

The developing countries of the Global South have a unique opportunity to bridge the economic disparity between the Global North and the Global South by creating a pathway towards sustainable economic development through a focus on their human capital.

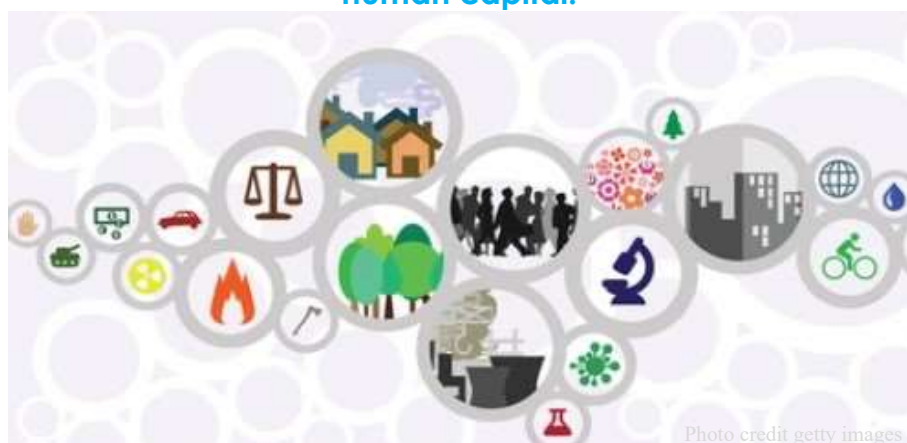


Photo credit getty images



periodic re-skilling and up-skilling to better align their human capital assets with the new production function and the new technologies that have been incorporated in the workplace.

The creation of the human capital composite for the modern economy is truly a collective responsibility that requires a coordinated effort. It starts with a collective call to action by the government to the private sector and employers, all levels of the public sector, the social and volunteer sector, and the public and private universities including the community colleges. Everyone has an important role to play and shoulders the responsibility for the success of this mission. In effect, this journey starts by embracing the modern principle for economic success which is not about adapting to change but leading it. It requires an overhaul in the scope and substance of the way we prepare the work force for engaging, rewarding, and fulfilling careers in the years ahead. Embracing a mindset that we are in a comfortable place, and we do not need to change is a journey to failure in a world where constant and rapid change is the new normal.

The contemporary economic landscape is defined by multidimensional labour market challenges. These include the digitalization of the workplace, the emergence of labour shortages, production bottlenecks due to demographic shifts, structural changes to the economic landscape, and technological advances. The latter take the form of intensive automation, robotic assisted production lines, and the prevalence of AI in the workplace.

In consequence, to successfully navigate these disruptions and create opportunities for developing countries in the 21st century, we must realign their human capital profile with the labour force requirements of the new global economy of the 21st century. This will require investing in the development and renewal of lifelong skills and competencies for the workforce of the developing countries.

Furthermore, the creation and strategic deployment of human capital assets should embrace a proactive mindset for the purpose of confronting the present and future economic challenges. In short, sustainable development for the developing countries of the Global South can only be achieved by embracing a new economic development model that has human capital as its core enabler.

Conclusion

The new global economy of the 21st century has transformed the economic landscape in a profound and indelible manner. Indeed, the ascent of the new economy on the cusp of a new millennium has resulted in the fundamental restructuring of the economy and revealed the fault lines in sustainable economic development for the developing countries of the Global South. More specifically, the wealth of nations has witnessed a transformational shift from the resources under our feet to the resources between our ears. In this context, human capital has emerged as the most valuable economic asset for economic growth and development.

In effect, human capital is the contemporary catalyst for economic growth. It can serve as the great equalizer in eliminating the economic disparity between developing countries of the Global South and the advanced countries of the Global North. It can also serve as an enabler for a new economic model that will create a pathway for developing countries in engaging the new global economy and contributing to their sustainable development.

The developing countries of the Global South have a unique opportunity to bridge the economic disparity between the Global North and the Global South by creating a pathway towards sustainable economic development through a focus on their human capital. It is worth noting that the concept of human capital has evolved over time in response to structural changes on the economic landscape and the transformational

forces of the production function. In consequence, the composite of human capital has changed to embrace higher levels of education, product specific workplace skills and technological competencies. Furthermore, it has contributed to acknowledging the importance of lifelong learning.

The new global economy of the 21st century requires an educated, technologically knowledgeable, and skilled workforce. While automation and AI are reducing some employment opportunities, nevertheless, people, ideas, and innovation are becoming more important than they have ever been in the past. There is no denying that automation, robotics, and AI will continue to revolutionize the workplace. During this transformative journey the role of human capital is growing in importance and its economic impact on sustainable development will increase significantly during the remainder of the 21st century.

In this context, the developing countries of the Global South should implement a visionary plan to equip their young women and men with enhanced educational opportunities, appropriate work skills, and technological competencies. In addition, they should provide the necessary platforms for their mid-career workers to update and upskill their human capital. All of this will

require a new investment in resources and finances to prepare their workforce for economic success in the new economy. At the end of the day, investing in human capital is an essential precondition for developing countries to achieve sustainable development in the new global economy of the 21st century.

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Student Research Paper

Mill's Notions in Analyzing Egyptian Women's Attempt to Seek Freedom of Action and Freedom of Expression



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Egyptian women have led a long path of activism seeking many rights and equality with male peers. They have majorly contributed in Egypt's social variables. That is why this paper will apply the principles of John Stuart Mill of liberty on women within the Egyptian society. The paper is questioning the application of Mill's principles of liberty on the Egyptian women. This paper will discuss the aspects of freedom of action and freedom of speech according to the case study of Egyptian women. Furthermore, it argues that liberty of individuals is beneficial for the society, as a diverse society is a strong one, and that the collective beliefs are prone to changing, thus, there is no ultimate truth, however, if individual liberties are extremely opposing to the society's collective beliefs, the society will backlash in its own ways, such as stigmatizing. The paper will be divided into three sections. The first section will elaborate Mill's main principles throughout his famous essay "On Liberty", giving a brief example on the importance of women's contribution in the Egyptian society. The second section will discuss the example of the activist, Nawal El Saadawi, on freedom action and women's right to self-autonomy, elaborating how the public opinion is changeable. Lastly, focusing on freedom of expression, the third section will elaborate Mill's belief that an individual is free to do what they desire as long as they do not harm others, using the example of Aliaa Elmahdy. However, if these desires are extremely opposing to the society, the society will impose its penalties on that individual, as in the case of the conservative Egyptian society.

Mill's "On Liberty"

The struggle between authority and liberty has been one of the most prominent dilemmas through history. Authority is not only represented in governmental entities, but societies can resemble a form of authority as well. Mill, in "On liberty", believes that society may represent some form of tyranny to those who are not



willing to abide by the societal norms and traditions, and by society it is meant the collective whole of the society over the individuals composing it separately. He illustrates that society has its own type of mandates and has its own means of executing such mandates. Furthermore, it may sometimes practice this tyranny more formidably than different kinds of political oppression. However, although it does not usually uphold extreme penalties, yet the individual might find it very hard to escape such tyranny, as it enslaves the soul. An example for this would be further discussed in the last section. According to Mill, the collective majority of the society would not accept the formation of individuality that is not in harmony with the collective beliefs of it, and will attempt to prevent it (Mill and Himmelfarb, 1974).

When speaking about liberty, Mill states that the society does not have the right to enforce what is collectively believed to be right and what is believed to be wrong, but must accept the possibility of an individual being diverse, and not committing to the collective opinions and norms within the society. Moreover, he believes that the legitimate, collective interference of a society with the individual independence should be limited, and that protection from the tyranny of the majority is necessary as it is as dreadful as other political tyrannies. Yet, he claims that the individual and the society exchange benefits, as the individual may enjoy the protection offered by the society, as long as individuals show respect for their fellow members of the same society (Mill and Himmelfarb, 1974).

Furthermore, Mill states that an individual is absolutely free to do what they desire, as long as it does not harm anyone else. An individual is only accountable to society when their actions concern the reality of others; however, an individual's independence is absolute when their actions only concern themselves (Clor, 1985). He also rejects the different attempts to compel people to commit certain behaviours or deprive them from their right to have independent beliefs and opinions, either through legal means or social pressure (Mill and Himmelfarb, 1974). This will be illustrated in the third section regarding Aliaa Elmahdy's example.

Throughout his essay, "On Liberty", he tries to prove that liberty is beneficial for the society, claiming that the more diverse a society is, the stronger it is. On the other side, the more the society is unaccepting to different opinions of individuals, the weaker the society. In other words, he believes that liberty has a significant positive impact on the society. (Mill and Himmelfarb, 1974).

Mill states that an individual must enjoy his or her rights to express themselves within the society and act freely due to three main reasons. First of all, sometimes the public or collective opinion of the majority is wrong, and may change by time. This has been shown throughout history multiple times, and will be clarified through the example of women labour in the first section. Thus, it is not fair to punish an individual for his or her opinions as they may turn out to be right or beneficial. Second of all, the public opinion may be represented as the truth, so, it ought to be discussed, as, without discussing and analyzing what is claimed to be "the truth", this public opinion may become dogma, and be inherited by generations without being truly understood. Mill believes that it is necessary for individuals to be familiar of the different sides and aspects of the truth. He believes in the importance of the existence of opposing opinions, as stated before, he claims that a diverse society is a strong one. Third of all, since most truths have more than one side, he claims that different aspects or partials of the truth help the society to reach a more evolved and genuine truth (Mill and Himmelfarb, 1974).



This paper will be applying Mill's notions on the case of Egyptian women as they resemble a vital component in the Egyptian society, especially due to the involvement of their social and political role in Egypt during the past decades. For instance, women have played an essential role in ending Mubarak's 30-year regime, as 20-50% of the revolutionaries in the uprising in 2011 were women. This reflects the significance of the role of women in modern Egyptian society, and the increase of their contribution in the political and social variables. However, the events following the uprising in 2011 show that despite their major contribution in the massive event, they were not as equal to such contribution represented due to patriarchal sociocultural reasons. They were still socially compelled in multiple forms. (Hafez, 2012) This is one reason why the case of Egyptian women is appealing.

Freedom of Action

According to Mill, individuals have the right to freely act, experience the different aspects in life, experiment what life is about and take chances in life as long as they do not harm or hurt anyone, as mentioned in the first section (Mill and Himmelfarb, 1974).

Early feminists in Egypt mostly belonged to upper middle class and upper class, and many of them were wives of politicians. They were mostly concerned with freedom of women and common nationalist issues in times when Egypt was undergoing significant nationalist events like wars. However liberating women was their main concern, as even women of upper middle class were only allowed little freedom by the society, yet, when it came to women of lower middle classes, efforts were directed more towards charitable work, to economically empower those women, not radical change. Nevertheless, their methods did not bring major changes to the table and did not have great impacts (Graham-Brown, 1981).

Nawal El Saadawi, a famous Egyptian feminist and activist, has been advocating the empowerment of women since the 20th century along with other activists. However, El Saadawi was less privileged and came from a rural background. Furthermore, through her own efforts she managed to become a professional woman and upgraded her social level status from belonging to lower class to belonging to middle class and moving to the city. This transition was common not only for El Saadawi, but also for other women with similar circumstances too. By this transition, more rights were sought after. Male peers of women seeking to be equally employed were not very accepting to this competition, as the collective norms of the society opposed such liberation (Graham-Brown, 1981).

Moreover, rural women who belonged to families that did not own land were starting to leave the village among their families and seek work. Women started to have a say in their lifestyle seeking more freedom of action. It was not strongly accepted by the societies and their families though, although this freedom of action was not harming anyone as Mill stated. On the other hand, this actually benefited the society, as the more the educated people the more the developed the society becomes, which brings us to Mill's concept that states that the public opinion is changeable and might turn to be even wrong by time. Furthermore, customs and traditions in the Egyptian society, especially in rural areas have started to change by time, and the major belief of women not engaging in practical life has started to change with the change of social and economic



circumstances. Poor families that left the village and started seeking work in more developed cities, started to encourage the education of women and their involvement in practical life as it gave them a new status in an attempt to upgrade their social status to middle class (Graham-Brown, 1981).

More women have started to seek autonomy over their life decisions. According to the literature, autonomy is represented in a couple of factors, including, mobility, control over various resources, and the role of women in household decision-making. Moreover, some Egyptian women, especially from the middle class and the upper class, have started to take the decision to control the rates of giving birth to children according to what suits their life circumstances (Amin and Lloyd, 2002). This is another example of how individuals' decisions can benefit the society as whole, as Egypt has been suffering from overpopulation, and the rise of birth rates is not compatible with the country's resources and economic capabilities.

Freedom of Expression

In the third chapter, Mill states that man should be free to possess independent opinions and act upon them, even if these opinions are unfamiliar to the society. He adds that an individual should not be faced with discrimination or social stigma or legal punishment (Mill and Himmelfarb, 1974). However, according to the literature, the Egyptian society is patriarchal in general due to different historical, societal and religious factors. The society does not usually accept breaking the social and religious norms, and whoever does not abide by the collective traditions is stigmatized and would face social penalties (Wassef, 2001).

Nude protesting has never been a mean or form of demonstrating that the Egyptian society has experienced before. However, in 2011, Aliaa Magda Elmahdy, an activist and a blogger used nudism as a means of protest for the first time in Egypt. She posted a nude photo of her as a form of rejecting the social stigma of the Egyptian, conservative society of female bodies and sexual freedom, in an attempt to promote secular and liberal feminism. She later on allied with Femen, an international feminist organization that aims to fight patriarchy and dictatorship. She believed that by this act, she was challenging the conservative traditions, and social, political, and artistic constraints. By this act, she led a virtual coup within the sociopolitical climate in Egypt, while promoting the autonomy of women over their bodies and sexual lives, and liberation from patriarchal constraints in a conservative society as the Egyptian one. Also, she rejected the act of people denying her freedom of expression on her blog (Eileraas, 2014).

However, although this form of cyber activism did not direct violence or forms of harm towards other people in the society, she was reported to the general prosecutor by a group of Islamic law graduates, demanding her punishment according to Sharia. Moreover, she was reported by another lawyer with the accusation of spreading immorality. Furthermore, she was described as a mentally disturbed girl and was stigmatized, so not only did she face governmental authority, but was also punished by the society for her acts (El-Gundy, 2011). The Egyptian society does not accept severe or critical violations to the society norms and traditions. Milder liberation may be accepted; however, sudden extreme movements of liberation are faced with social stigma and disapproval.



Furthermore, in Egypt, censorship is applied on art and artistic work, due to the sanctity of the social and religious norms. As for instance, criticism of heavenly religions and social traditions is prohibited, thus, art work, such as filmmaking, requires authorization not to exceed the previously-set social limits. Artistic freedom is not only constrained by governmental and official mechanisms, but also by societal pressure. Most artistic works that do not respect the conservative character of the Egyptian society face societal backlash that may even include systematic campaigns by religious activists. For instance, discussing socially sensitive issues such as rape, prostitution and women sexual liberalization has been at the center of criticism by religious activists, including movies directed by Youssef Chahine and Khalid Youssef, two controversial directors (Schwartz, Kaye and Martini, 2013).

Another example is women playwrights, as in the 70s of the past century, women playwrights started to tackle for the first time socially sensitive issues such as female genital mutilation in the Egyptian society and its long-term psychological effects, marital rape, and domestic violence in an attempt to shed a light on women's sufferings, as well as, expressing women's demands and objections freely (Selaiha and Enany, 2010).

To conclude, according to Mill, liberty of an individual is essential, as the society should not force its collective beliefs on the individual, preventing him or her from having independent beliefs and principles. On the other hand, society should accept such individuality, as long as, it is not harmful for the society. Moreover, liberty and individuality lead to social progress, as diversity helps a society to reach a more accurate truth using the various partials of the truth. As discussed in the first and second sections, the truth is not constant and can change by time and circumstances, so that, what have been socially regarded as a negative issue, may turn by time to be conceived as a positive issue that would even be encouraged, such as the case of woman labour in the second section. As for the third section, it has been clarified that extreme social change is not very acceptable within the Egyptian society, as the case is in the Aliaa Elmahdy's situation, as the society would face such extreme differences with its own type of punishment, like stigmatizing and non-acceptance.

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CEMES Journal Editorial

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