Transcript

Middle East and North Africa Policy Forum with Young Arab Analysts

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International

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Claire Spencer:

May I invite you all to take your seats, please, my apologies that we are starting late…microphone please. It apparently switches on automatically, is that working now? Good.

Good afternoon and welcome, everybody. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here. This is, if you like, the public launch out of three days of events we are hosting here with the Young Arab Analysts Network International, YAANI. You will be hearing quite a lot this afternoon about YAANI, so I won’t go into details now, but it is an initiative that we here at Chatham House—my name is Claire Spencer, Head of the Middle East and North Africa programme for those who don’t know me—we have been involved with the British Council in response to the events you are all very well aware of last year, in putting together a network of young policy analysts with a view to discussing and empowering them in many ways to engage in the policy debates that are facing them in the countries of the region. Now, the initial group—this has been the pilot phase—we started with some workshops in January in region, so in Morocco, we also went to Tunisia, we were in Jordan. The nationalities involved are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan at this stage, that is not to say that the network won’t enlarge, but that is the group, and we are very privileged to have the whole network—I think it is 37 members strong at this stage—who are with us. They have been here since yesterday having discussions, we will continue tomorrow, and we are hoping very much that this afternoon is something that you as the network, if you like, of Chatham House, as invited guests, can participate in fully, not just in this plenary session where we will hear comments on the region from our speakers, our invited guests who are here this afternoon, but also from three representatives, if I may describe them as such, they are representing themselves primarily, but they are members of the YAANI network, so you hear about their experience. And we hope to conclude the introductory comments within an hour to give you the chance to comment, react, ask them questions afterwards. Then we will have half an hour’s coffee break, I understand not all of you can stay all afternoon, but after the coffee break we will then have the different YAANI members in thematic groups, which we will describe at the end of the meeting, that we would love you to join in to hear what they have been working on in terms of policy analysis and preparing policy briefs and thinking about in specific terms in different areas of policy in their region.

So, I will stop at this point to invite—where is he? Oh, sorry, on the front row, I am so sorry—to invite Jim Buttery, who is the regional programmes director of
Jim Buttery: Thank you, Claire.

Claire Spencer: I think this meeting is on the record by the look of it, so...and also mobile phones...since we have got roving microphones, if you could turn them off, rather than just to silent because they otherwise interrupt. Sorry, Jim.

Jim Buttery: Dr Amr Hamzawy, Dr Omar Ashour, staff and members of Chatham House, our host and partners here today, members of the YAANI policy network and mentors in the audience, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon and welcome to the this MENA policy forum. When the landscape of the Middle East and North Africa changed so dramatically in 2011, we were all challenged to rethink our positions and review the relevance of our programmes in the Middle East. We, at the British Council, made an early decision, we decided that if we were to meaningfully accompany the region in its transition and effectively carry out our...our own mission of creating international opportunities and building trust then we would have to be clear on the changing needs and demands coming from the region, especially amongst young people, the key demographic. We decided to listen and learn, to consult far and wide, and deliberately to go outside of our traditional comfort zone to talk to lots of people who don't agree with us. One of the things that became quickly apparent was a policy deficit, or a lack of what appeared to us to be clear thinking on issues of policy. It was brought home very vividly earlier this year in a public debate in London that we organized when a prominent Salafist activist...Salafist politician from Egypt confessed in a question and answer session to not really having any clear polices on most key issues.

This audience knows better than most the importance of influencing policy in order to bring abut lasting, meaningful change. You also know that the nature of policy and policymaking is very inexact, very amorphous. It is less of a...It
is more of a process and less of a prescription, and it often takes time and is affected and influenced by many different, overlapping factors. So, we decided that we would focus deliberately at the British Council—as an organization, a British organization based in the region—we would focus on voicing skills, primarily, amongst young people, but we needed something different, and that something different was an initiative to bridge the gap between our work in community development and our work in youth debate, or wider participation. And that is where YAANI, the YAANI policy development initiative was born. What made it different is that it is youth led and it is a marriage between the world of the activist and the world of the researcher. Researchers to help strengthen the evidence base for the activists, and activists to keep the researchers more connected to the real world. Intelligent activism, if you will.

The 37 members that Claire has talked about are largely with us today. They are drawn deliberately from very different backgrounds: different countries, sectors, and with very different interests. We have supported them in the first year of their journey with funding from the UK government's Arab Partnership Fund and some of the British Council’s own funds. The network is a powerful, a growing powerful resource, and we very much hope that you will get to…that you will get a sense of the usefulness and the powerful insight that this network can bring, and the benefits it can offer to universities, research bodies, political parties and civil society at large across North Africa and the wider region. We also very much hope that with your support—not just today, but in the near future—be it through…be it through…excuse me, my train of thought is going…we hope that with your support—be it through mentoring, work attachments, knowledge sharing, or even funding—that you can support the journey of this group of young people that have a tremendous amount to offer as we see, as we witness a change in political culture playing out across a rapidly developing and changing the region.

So, thank you all for coming today and thank you for the support that you are offering this initiative.

[Applause]

**Claire Spencer:**

Now, we are extremely privileged to have two guest speakers to, if you like, set the scene and the context of the need, as we have just heard, we have identified for the younger generation. Now, we have debates on: ‘what does young actually mean?’ The age rage we are talking about here is essentially
25-35 year olds, who are with their younger cohorts going to be, if not already, the majority population in the region. So, this is why it is important, I think, to have a focus on the role this generation with their new ideas, the fact that they are ‘logged in’ in more ways than one to what is going on in the outside world and the fact that they can make reference to ideas not just to the larger world, but also amongst themselves. The developments in individual countries is no longer just a matter for individual nationalities, but actually there is some merit to be gained from referring across borders. So, we have deliberately on the panel created with what—with respect, or with apologies to the Egyptians—what I am calling an ‘Egyptian sandwich’; so, we are starting with an Egyptian speaker, we are ending with an Egyptian speaker, and then we are having a view—personal, as I said—from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia in between. So, it is with great privilege, I think for all of us, to invite Amr Hamzawy, who is very well known to the audience here, I am sure, as an activist, as a politician, as a parliamentarian, indeed—and I’d like to hear more about your future as a parliamentarian, if I may—and the founder of the Freedom party in Egypt, who has been extremely active over the last year.

Amr Hamzawy:
Thank you very much, Claire. Do you need me to stand up?

Claire Spencer:
If you would like to. You can do it sitting down; you have got the microphone already, if you want to be visible perhaps stand up, but I think you can be seen.

Amr Hamzawy:
Okay. Yes, I am, good.

Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be here. Let me start by expressing my gratitude to Chatham House and the British Council for working on such an interesting initiative and for convening meeting, and for inviting me to come.

Claire Spencer:
You can’t hear?
Amr Hamzawy:
You can’t hear?

Audience Member:
[Incoherent]

Amr Hamzawy:
Okay, so let me stand up...Standing up will allow the voice. [Laughter] Okay, once again, thank you very much for having me. Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to the British Council and Chatham House for working jointly with young Arab analysts—such an interesting initiative, which comes at a very timely moment—and for inviting me to come and address you and share with you some reflections on policymaking and policy debates in Egypt primarily, and maybe looking beyond Egypt to countries which have been going through similar transformations in the last two years.

Let me start by one major reflection, which is the very fact that we have been lacking democratic structures throughout most of the last five to six decades in most Arab countries—in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, in Jordan, and of course in the rest of the Arab World as well—the fact that we have been lacking democratic structures has meant that we have lacked that profession of policy analysis; we simply do not have it. And you can look in Egypt, look in Tunisia, or look in Morocco and search for policy think-tanks or policy centres, and what you will find is (a) academic research centres, where research questions, where the design or respective research is different from the design we have in mind or should have in mind, or you will find NGOs and advocacy centres and groups of activists doing a huge set of right things and pushing forward different right and important issues, but not working on them from a policy perspective. So, in relation to what you are trying to build and establish, an initiative, a group of policy analysts, young policy analysts, we have to realize that we have been lacking that profession of policy analysis in the Arab World over the last six decades. Of course, I am not comparing…my frame of reference is not the United States, where I was trained as a policy analyst at the Carnegie Endowment, no I am even comparing what we have to European countries. For, the US is a different, where policy analysis and policy research centres especially in a place like Washington DC do dominate discussions about politics in general, to a lesser extent in Great Britain, to a lesser extent in continental European countries, but even a comparison with
continental European countries would make it clear to us that we have not been having that profession throughout the last decades.

The second reflection: in most Arab universities—and here once again, I am moving beyond Egypt—if you look at academic settings, and you look at political science departments, or departments working on public policies, departments working on management issues, or issues pertaining to public service, different issues relevant for policymaking and policy debates. All those academic departments have been suffering from autocratic structures throughout the last decades leading most of their staff to leave the country and be outside, or to be in the country and to suffer from the autocratic restrictions imposed on them. So, the second…the second infrastructure which countries normally have, democratic countries normally have, academic centres, academic centres working on political issues, economic issues, issues pertaining to public service, we have been suffering from great autocratic limitations in most of them. And I am reflecting on my home department at Cairo University, the Political Science Department, where we have been in different ways restricted, autocratically throughout the last years, and I have colleague [name incoherent], who is part of the network, I believe, who can attest to that as well. And I went to Tunisia and visited different political science departments before the revolution and I was shocked, I mean the situation was even worse as compared to Egypt. Surveillance was everywhere, as a guest of the department, my room was—my hotel room was—invaded and my laptop was taken away and I never got it back. So…in a political science department at the University of Tunis three years ago. So, what at I am trying to get at is if we look at the reality for our region in terms of what kind of potential do we have to do public policy research, to do political science research relevant for policy analysis, we have to bare in mind that we have been suffering from great autocratic restrictions.

The first and second reflections taken together make it very clear to me, and I guess to you as well, members of the network of young Arab policy analysts, make it clear to all of us how significant that endeavour and initiative is. It is an endeavour to establish a culture of understanding what policy making means, (a); (b) of debating policy choices; and (c) influencing public opinion trends vis-à-vis public policy choices. Let me take the three layers very quickly and share remarks on them.

Public policy…policymaking, public policymaking, be it in relation to economic, political, social, cultural issues or even issues transcending national borders, regional and international questions, public policymaking in transitioning Arab countries is being reconstructed, we are in a momentum of
reconstruction. How the different mechanisms of policymaking operate and work, that is being redesigned as of now in Egypt, with a new president in Tunisia, with a set of political actors relevant to that in Libya, maybe Morocco is a bit different, but in the three countries which are transitioning hopefully to democratic governance, public policymaking dynamics, mechanisms and structures are being redesigned. And you have to be part of that, that redesigning effort which is going on until now—and I can attest to the Egyptian situation—has been up until now managed, spearheaded by generations which are most probably outside your generation, or the generation represented by the network of young policy analysts, and probably outside, to a big extent outside of my generation as well. We still have the same age group—the above 50, below 70 [laughter]—dominating public policymaking and redesigning effort in Egypt. And it is being redeveloped, it is being reinvented, it is being restructured, and it is very important for you to tap into it.

Secondly, in terms of public policy debates, or policy debates, let me give you an example of what is going on in Egypt and Libya and some other Arab countries, Yemen, with regard to that movie that was produced in the United States with the participation of at least an Egyptian American, and which has created tensions and violence and unfortunately the killing of American diplomats, including the Ambassador in Libya. If you follow the Arab media, if you follow satellite channels and news and media outlets, print media, you will hardly find a qualified policy discussion on the very question: ‘can the US government stop any citizen in the United States expressing his or her views regardless of how or she expresses their views?’ That very question of even looking into a bit of the legal framework in the US: ‘does the government, does the American administration have the tools to stop someone from producing that movie which was produced?’ That very question was not answered. Up until now it hasn’t been answered, and you will not find even a single opinion article addressing it in most cases. Creating an awareness for how to debate policy choices, and how to debate policy choices and policy questions in an informed manner, needs a new generation, needs new blood in policymaking circles, needs new blood in media, needs new blood in print media as well as televised media. Otherwise we will continue to regenerate and reproduce what we have been going through in the last decades, but under a different set of political conditions, moving away from autocracy into emerging democracies. So, to create awareness form as to how to debate in a well-based, well-grounded manner policy questions and issues. Let me refer to the point, which you made on the Salafi politician confessing that they, that his party, the Noor did not have policy lines. Well, it did not need
any confession [laughter], you just needed to follow even every second or every third week, the inner workings of the Egyptian People's Assembly, which I was a part of, to realize that—not only Salafi actors by the way—most parties and actors did not have clear legislative and oversight agendas, they did not know what to do. There was no design, there was no models, there was no agenda, no itemized prioritize. And it wasn't only the Salafis, even movement, a movement which has been out there for 80 years at least, the Muslim Brotherhood, did not have a legislative and oversight agenda, in spite of the fact that they were a part of parliament starting in the late 1970s, beginning of the 1980s. So, that is more of a…of a macro issues that we are looking at, and it is by no means specific to the Salafi groups, or specific to Islamists, political Islamist groups, it is a macro deficit, which all parties and political actors parties suffer from. If you take in Egypt once again, you look into the presidential team, the assistants and advisers to the president, you will hardly find clear agendas, itemized priorities on economic and cultural issues, regional issues, issues of international affairs. No, even assistants and advisers do not know what they are doing; they do not have a clear mandate up until now. So, what I am saying is those issues are very central, those deficits are the outcome of an environment, Arab environments which haven't been able to debate policy choices systematically and in an accumulated manner throughout the last decades, and that needs to be changed.

Finally, in terms of what…if you look at policy debates in a country like Great Britain, in the United Kingdom, or in the United States or other stable democracies, one of the key features of debating policy choices in those countries is the fact that the environment surrounding policy debates is a pluralist environment. A pluralist environment a set of features: (1) freedom of information, free circulation and flow of information. Citizens know, to a great extent, when a question is being debated, they can get information and develop a qualified opinion about it. So, we have freedom of information, of course, not in an idealistic or idealized manner, but to a large extent; we have pluralist views or opinions expressed on any single policy issue. So, freedom of information, pluralism in terms of views and opinions expressed, and we have a degree of—and here comes the professional aspect of it—you will always find a clear policy line as to how or if the objective, or what is being debated, the taxation system, for example, you will have very clear analysis of how to go about taxation and social justice and reform of taxation systems. And here is a professional component of policy analysis, how to inject a degree of professionalism, a degree of detailed analysis, a degree of detailed information that informs the public—of course, all of them inform the public—
and helps policy makers to decide in a rational manner. So, freedom of information, specialization, I would say, that degree of sophistication and specialization in policy debates, and pluralism in those debates. If you compare to what we have in transitioning countries, we have elements of all of them but they need, they need to be worked on, and the only way to get a real, a real start in that regard is by cultivating young analysts, and by getting them into centres or positions where they can be influential.

Let me...let me close off by stating once again that it is key to...to keep in mind that our societies up until now are not used to debating politics and policies in a pluralist sense, and that we will continue to suffer from quick identifications, from quick dualities, right and wrong. We will continue to suffer from a great deal of dichotomy building in our political environments as well as in relation to public policy, and we will continue to suffer from having a polity in Egypt, or a polity in Tunisia or even in Morocco, where the major focus is on and not on the question of details, it is a constitution and not a taxation system, it is an electorate system and not transparency and impartiality of public service. For some time we will continue to focus on grand questions, which move citizens, and we will ignore, continue to ignore a set of detailed and very important questions. One way to balance the imbalanced, in that regard, is by getting your voices to be better heard, and by getting your qualified expertise to be better received and made aware of across our countries. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Claire Spencer:
Thank you, Amr, for setting the context and reminding us all so succinctly why we are doing this. I was just thinking: how do you make taxation really interesting though? We do have debates on that in this country and it does affect everybody, but it is a real challenge to do so. Anyway, thank you very much again for reminding us of your academic background that actually having your facts right, preparing them is essential to going out there and spelling out what good policy would look like. So, you have led us in very well into our three YAANI members; we have Nadia Logab here, from Algeria, Imen Yacoubi from Tunisia, and Yassir Mezouari from Morocco, and being a democratic organization, we have not dictated who goes first or which order they speak in, I believe they have organized that themselves, but I believe there is a principle of 'ladies first' that seems to be operating here. [Laughter]
Imen Yacoubi:
That is right.

Claire Spencer:
So, which one? Imen, please…welcome.

Imen Yacoubi:
Hello, everyone. Thank you, Claire, thank you for giving me the privilege to be here and to speak about youth in my country and the MENA region and about YAANI, although I have to admit they are two very challenging topics. So, I would like to go back in time precisely to 2008 in Tunisia, when the government, or the previous government, launched what it called the ‘Youth Dialogue Programme’. It was launched in March 2008 and it was to last for one year, and before the end of that year, actually in January 2009 over 30 persons, young persons died facing the shores of Italy in a sinking boat of clandestine immigrants. A few days ago something like this happened again with about, over 70 Tunisians died facing the shores in Italy in a sad accident. So, that cast like a dark shadow over the youth dialogue idea, or the debate about youth et cetera, and it felt like it was just ink and paper, no more than that. So, apart from that, in Tunisia in general and I might say the MENA region, nobody really believes the government when it invites young people into serious dialogue. Generally youth are regarded as bad blood that should be expelled from society, I hope I am not exaggerating by saying that, but youth are often regarded with suspicion, considered as disruptive, reckless, irresponsible, and unless they are indoctrinated into the system in one way or another, the rest are left to sail their own boats, often in a very suicidal manner. So, why should anyone believe the government when it invites people, or [incoherent] people into a serious dialogue? Youth generally can be a cumbersome obstruction in the face of authority. Well, fortunately for me, I have been working with youth, I consider myself a young person, but I am a teacher, so I am working extensively with young people, apart from teaching, I do other activities with them, and it is something that I really enjoy and appreciate. As a member of YAANI, I have always been preoccupied with something, it is the question of: what is the best context in which youth can come together? Is it in groups, in teams, in youth councils, as any people like to imagine that? Probably that is possible, but I always want to imagine youth coming together in networks because I believe that networks allow young people to, or allows for the mobility of young people to be dynamic. And I
believe that youth become disruptive when they are not allowed this mobility. I think that a network—and I believe that any programme or any project that deals with youth should allow for this mobility, as I said, it should be transferred, so it should cut across borders—I think it should allow people a kind of exchange that is not linear, it is not the kind of exchange that goes on like in a conference room or a classroom, I rather want imagine it as the kind of exchange that goes on in a chatroom, you know, when everybody is, you know, exchanging ideas in that sort of manner many of us are familiar with. I also think that programmes dealing with youth and youth empowerment are important in the Arab World today. Why? Because we have like a demographic boom in the Arab World, and in Tunisia in 2008 it was estimated that youth between 18 and 24 constituted 18% of the Tunisian population, which is a huge figure as you can see, and it is estimated that the affect of youth will never be as important in Tunisia as it is right now because the birth bomb occurred in the 1970s and the 1980s, and actually in this year, in 2012, we are starting to have a demographic decline of the young population.

So, how is it that such a big number of young people had little or no effect over the course of history, and nearly no voice at all? The answers may be many: lack of a sense of citizenship; repression, of course; self-censorship; division among youth on lines of religion and religious belonging also original belonging et cetera; but I think that the biggest challenge, to my thinking, is the inability of young people to come together in a suitable context, and the lack of motivation for them to do that; why should they come together at all? And I think that programmes dealing with youth and I think that probably YAANI, or to my thinking YAANI allowed for this getting together, for a sense of involvement, because young people are a source of empowerment for each other. I believe that energy is contagious, and I believe that there is no bigger motivation for young people than the belief in change-making, that they have an effect or the ability to change, to create positive change change. I believe that policymaking is about young people the tools of change, so to put knowledge in the hands young people is important. A young person drawing the picture on a wall in the street has power, definitely, because he is expressing an idea, but without giving him the ways to disseminate knowledge and the channels through which to do that, well, this power, I believe, is an empty shell.

One of the most challenging problems of the Arab World, as we know, is the poverty of policies, and I believe that most of us agree about this. So, we know that policies, action plans and strategies have always used...been used interchangeably in the Arab World to the great detriment of public interest.
Policies in the Arab World often lack holistic methodology, they are short term, but I think that the most challenge, or the most...the biggest problem with them is that there is a serious handicap with regard to diagnosing the problems. There is always this...there has been always this shortage of diagnosing this problem to deal with, and I think that any project that, again, of youth empowerment, should take that into consideration and go in the direction of reinforcing this knowledge about policy analysis and policymaking.

Today, the engagement of the Arab youth, we are, probably—there are no clear statistics about this, but probably this is something that you all feel—there is a growing engagement, and this is something that calls for optimism. However, there are still many challenges that need to be taken into consideration. Well, this is something that I witnessed in Tunisia, for example, so...after the insurgency, I believe—or rebellion or uprising or revolution, you might call it what you wish—there is a systematic tendency to absorb young energies into established, old political movements, political parties to indoctrinate them with ideological allegiances that may or may not suit their own ambitions, and I am afraid that young people lack self-confidence and the belief that they can create change and suggest alternatives.

There is another thing that also I want to highlight here, which is that what has been termed 'the Facebook and Twitter revolutions' I am afraid are threatening to turn into literally Facebook and Twitter revolutions. What I mean is that there is a clash for power lead by different political interests, yet people are gradually entering a new era of isolation ushered by social networks. They are remaining on the margins, telling political jokes, inviting friends into virtual strikes, enjoying a kind of semi authority or power instead of a real authority. I believe that there is now a serious change taking place with this generation. Of course, every generation is different from the one that comes before it, you may tell me, but in this era we are witnessing a new kind of perspective among young people, and it is caused mainly by the consumer society, by new ideas of self-indulgence, we are facing new revolutions—not only those political revolutions, I'm speaking about the body revolution, I'm speaking about fashion, things like that—and they are caused by many reasons, of course, like the media, like women's emancipation, well, between...

Claire Spencer:
Inverteds?
Imen Yacoubi:
Yes, inverted commas. There is more... so, I think that policy makers should take that into consideration and unless they do that, I believe that policymaking, well, I believe that youth will continue to sail their own boats in their way. Thank you very much.

Claire Spencer:
Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Nadia, it is over to you.

Nadia Logab:
Yes. Thank you, Claire. Well, good afternoon, everybody. First of all I would like to thank Chatham House and the British Council for allowing me this opportunity to speak today, it is my great pleasure. One year before today I was interviewed by Dr Spencer for the potential participation in this programme of YAANI, and one of her interview questions was, and I try to quote: ‘What do you think, Nadia, the youth is missing in Algeria in order for them to emerge as actors or leaders in the country?’ And some of my answers were trust and confidence. Trust in the way that the government, among others, does not believe in youth to be effective; and confidence is that sometimes the youths themselves do not believe that they can be effective. In this way, they are rarely given a chance to prove their abilities. In other words, they are not being empowered enough to make their hidden or inner capabilities and power shine to the world. Empowerment, in fact, was the very reason that motivated to take part in this journey of YAANI. I saw YAANI as an experience through which me and other young people from the region, with the support and expertise of experts and trainers, can actually treat priority policy themes, and through research and investigations, but also through the exchange of the participants of YAANI. Being part of YAANI, for me, is a concrete evidence or proof that the people of the MENA region somehow share the same concerns and the same aspirations, and actually they can work together when it comes to making these aspirations happen. At least the youth can. It was also an inspiring experience through which my motivation and enthusiasm as a young activist in Algeria and a young professional increased. Seeing many young people motivated and committed to their cause increased my confidence that we, as youth, can actually be in a
position to influence our governments if we devote more...enough hard work to our cause. Indeed, today I have hope that the young people who have belief and have faith in their cause can bring their countries into the right track of social and economic development if they are equipped with the right tools and skills to do so.

Today we have the privilege to have access to more information, to have more knowledge about either our country, our neighbour country, or the country across the oceans. So, with the ways of social media, [incoherent], and other advanced communication technologies it is becoming even harder for anybody to hide the truth. So, the youth of today has a better understanding of what is going on around them, and therefore it is most unlikely that they will be...that they will tolerate injustice and marginalization as much as the previous generation did perhaps. So, what I am trying to say is that an initiative such as YAANI came just in a very good time, where the youth has more motivation and will to do something to change their condition, but is not being empowered enough to realize that change, which makes YAANI very relevant and likely to succeed in the region. The fact that these young people of YAANI, who do not necessarily have decades of experience in policy analysis or policymaking, but yet they were able to produce evidence-based policy recommendations to people who have more experience in the region, defeats somehow the theory of how the uninterested youth that I mentioned earlier and that my colleague mentioned too. It is a concrete way of saying that ‘here we are, this is our voice, you need to listen to us because we can be producers also instead of being only consumers of your policies.’

On a more local level, not to talk about Algeria, but Algeria, as you may know, failed to fall in the...failed in falling to the domino effect of the recent Arab revolts, but since then the governments and a lot of political parties have started over-using the term ‘youth’ and mentioning them as a very important dimension. Actually, the youth in Algeria represent the vast majority of the population. However, there were new concrete or tangible mechanisms or processes in order to integrate those youths in the policymaking, they were not integrated, not much in the new parliament that was formed last May, let alone the new government that was announced last week. So, the challenge may be that the Algerian youth is likely to face will be to prove themselves worthy of trust and also to restore their inner confidence and act towards positive change instead of limiting it to merely aspirations and dreams. And then comes the role of civil society to come up with opportunities such as YAANI to provide a space for these young people to develop the necessary
skills, acquire the needed tools and to make the right connections in order for them to make their voice heard and their demands met, which are essentials for any democracy.

Thank you for your attention.

**Claire Spencer:**

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Nadia, I was also observing while you were speaking that in a region certainly my generation large saw as being Francophone is now forcibly reminded is [Arabic], Berberophone as we would say, sorry for the use of that word, and of course is Arabaphone, and is now becoming with your generation Anglophone, and I don’t see this as a recognition that the UK or even the United States poses or gives the answers to all of your queries and certainly your investigations into policy, but as a tool the use of the English language opens up the globe to you in the way you have described. So, I think that is something that I have certainly learnt through the experience of YAANI. Not everybody is completely Anglophone, we haven’t made this a pre-requisite, particularly since it is a British Council initiative, but I am extremely struck by some of the policy briefs that have been written for many of those writing them not only in a second language, but sometimes in a third language and that is very impressive.

So, with that challenge in mind, Yassir, over to you.

**Yassir Mezouari:**

Thank you, Claire. Good evening, everybody, and it is a pleasure to be here to talk on this panel with my fellows, my YAANI fellows.

**Claire Spencer:**

We call them the YAANIs, by the way.

**Yassir Mezouari:**

The YAANIs, yes. [Laughter] I think I will step back from the region, what is happening in the region. I think Morocco is a bit different because there was
not a revolution, but evolution, and this evolution, I think it came from more than 30 years of movement, of socialist movements, of young peoples’ movements, of many parties’ movements, and maybe the Arab, what we come the Arab Spring, hurried up reforms in Morocco, but reforms were, I think, ready to come. We are in a country with I think a majority of young people in the country, we are more than 60% effective citizens. And maybe at one time we became fed up with being marginalized in policymaking and political positions and being able to give what we need to give in decision-making. The system and the regime, I think, was clever, and he heard it even before we talked about it, and one of the biggest things I think the system has done was the constitution of 2011. The constitution has brought many reforms. One of the…I think the important ones…I can… I will talk about four or five important ones from my point of view. The first one is that citizens and young people have this participatory power; it is in the constitution now. It can be in councils and it can be by motions to government. So, it is well written in the constitution. There is…many councils will take place, such as a youth advisory council, a family council, a language council. So, many big issues that were in the country were raised in the constitution. So, that was the first thing.

Gender equity is also well noted and well written in the constitution. There is a gender equity now in the constitution. It had been some NGOs, you know, affair some 10 years ago, 15 years ago, but now it is a matter of the whole government and the system.

There is also the human rights council, the human rights. No, it is not advisory anymore, they have the power to decide and pursue people against human rights harassment and…yes…

And I think, me as a part of young, of the the youth movement, we have done 2011 a big struggle to…to pursue the government to involve young people in the parliament. And that, you know, it can be officially and I think more than 10 local, 10 youth chapters, parties, went on debating, went on…they wrote a memorandum, they meetings with stakeholders and political deciders, and finally we could have [incoherent] young people, less than 40 years in the parliament as deputies. So, I think that is a victory because we are now in the policymaking, we are in the legislative institution. But it is not, you know, enough, yes, to be in the institutional…legislative, you know, institution is not enough, we have aspirations too and that is the next, I think the next battle because we will have it maybe in 2013 or 2014, but I think we should have young people deciding as mayors as municipal councils because that is the
real change we can see, it is in the cities, in the states, and in the regions. So, it is...you know, one of...

YAANI gave me really specific skills because the skills I did have a short experience, it was short, with what we call in Morocco the shadow youth government, and I think this shadow youth government has this, you know, this mission to follow up what government is doing, you know, in the question of policymaking and each young minister is following the real one, the minister in his sector. So, it is a good experience because...but also it is not as enough as we want. I think change comes from inside, and not from outside; and inside I think Morocco is lucky because we have multiple parties and that is why we didn’t have revolutions because we did always have this, you know, democratic debate and because we had many parties and not one governing party. And I think we should, as young people, you know, struggle from inside the parties. We should involve the parties, we should involve the NGOs and then we can, you know, we can really make our voices...become...more louder because parties are represented in the parliament, they are represented in many institutions, so I think it is the right way to be really in the decision making side. And...what can I say? Even the opposition now in the constitution have a strong power; the opposition in the parliament now have the right to lead commissions, which was not the case in the, the case in the previous decades. Now, the opposition, and we have a different opposition now, because we have not the old stereotype opposition that we had 20 years ago, we have a new one and the opposition has really now constitutional power.

So, I think the youth movement, which we belong to as young people are engaged has done many things, but not enough things, but has done many things until now. We had reforms, maybe it is not waited for so long reforms, but I think it is very important reforms that the king has given part of his prerogative to the prime minister, something that we didn’t have 30 years ago, 20 years ago. I think we should act together, we should act with the system, not against the system as NGOs, as political parties...when I am talking about political parties, I am talking about ourselves, young people. We should act from the inside—and I say it always with my friends over coffee, drinking coffee—we should act not only criticising, you know, from outside and say, 'those people are corrupted, we should not go there.' No, I should go there and try to stop this corruption even in the parties, in the political parties and this. So, YAANI gives me this, you know...going back to YAANI, the research reflects and the...what we say...[French word]...the objective, sole objective. I am a young activist and I am involved in many things, but with such skills as
an analyst, a policy analyst I have a third, you know, part of the arm. So, maybe we should do more debates. I think debating is very beneficial. In Morocco now, debates are... I think each month we have debates on how to make the constitution, you know, real, to be realized because there is a constitution, but how can we put it on the ground? That is the real, now, the next challenge for us as Moroccans. And, I am here to, for any questions then for the debates.

Claire Spencer:
Good. Thank you.

[Applause]

Yassir, thank you very much, particularly for focusing on two aspects which I am going to invite our second guest speaker to pick up on; one is the ‘how to do’ because we have discussed a lot about the acquisition of tools, but how do you actually then start thinking of putting them into action? Which I think is very important, and I would say in these region is something that is going to vary across the region rather than be similar. So, as you have described, the case in Morocco opens up opportunities, which may or may not be available yet in Algeria, may be available soon in Tunisia, when they conclude a constitution, but we have been aware while this programme has been going on that nothing is static, you cannot ask people to influence policy when the head of state, the head of government is not the same from, I won’t say one day to the next, but certainly over the period that we have been meeting. So, the second observation is the multi-hatted nature, in other words you have—and this is obvious in the group we have here—you don’t just have one role in life, you use the skills in many different areas of your life: professional, non-professional, NGOs, civil society. And I think I am handing over now to Dr Omar Ashour, who is a very close colleague of ours who multi-tasks and multi-hats, I think, in very productive sort of ways, and I will perhaps ask him to reflect on that. He is at the University of Exeter, he is newly returned from Egypt and I think, is it now completing your six month or nine month affiliation with the Brookings Institute in Doha, which I think the majority of which you have spent in Tahrir Square, am I exaggerating?

Omar Ashour:
More or less.
Claire Spencer:

[Laughs] But he has actually been an activist while he is there, an academic, someone who has enormous skills in the policy analysis area if you read all his online publications—I won’t go through them all, but if you just Google his name you will find them all—and, in fact, you know, given recent events, you have something that you have already published to say on that already as a good backgrounder. So, Omar, just pick up some threads to conclude us, please.

Omar Ashour:

Thank you very much for the very kind introduction, but can everybody hear me because…? Yes, I’m fine.

Claire Spencer:

Can you?

Omar Ashour:

I have a tendency…I can stand up if that is easier…

Claire Spencer:

Stand up.

Omar Ashour:

I will stand up because I have a tendency, my voice gets very low [laughter] when I speak.

Thank you for the kind invitation and initiative, I didn’t know much about it except recently, and I think it is a critical step forward on connecting the policy relevant activism with the research and academic networks, which is something very critical—as Amr noted and all my colleagues noted—we are lacking in North Africa and the Middle East at the moment. Some of the…I am going to just reflect on some of the challenges of developing an advanced analytical policy network and some of the hurdles preventing the impact of the youth and how this can be remedied, hopefully, in the aftermath of the, or during the Arab Spring, because I don't think it is over yet. Nobody, I think,
thinks it is over yet. [Laughter] We will see how that develops, especially regarding the youth impact on policy.

Some of the problems that was referred to earlier by my colleagues was the disconnect between the policy and the activists, the segments with a few exceptions, the leaning towards, the activists leaning towards passion and idealistic solutions versus the academic researchers leaning towards knowledge and pragmatism to a large degree. But, also, you have something that undermines this: the ideological dominance analysis, especially the rifts between left and right, the Islamists versus secular and so on. So, these ideological affiliations effect the conclusions and therefore hinders the impact, really, on policy development. You have also the training in government sponsored universities, more during the leaderships of [Hosni] Mubarak, [Zine El Abidine] Ben Ali and [Muammar] Gaddafi was more of less leaning towards intensive research and avoiding anything that had to do with practical solutions of multi-relevant issues, especially when it came to high politics, issues that are…I find it very critical now of the fourth line between and the authoritarian system and the democratic system is whether the elected civilian institutions have control over the armed forces and the security services and the other, of course, institutions of the state. The security sector reform, for example, was something that was taboo for a long time throughout North Africa and the Middle East and just we are now starting with civil-military relations, which was another taboo, the in-depth democratization and coming up with policy-relevant conclusions when it comes to democratization was another topic that was undermined. And then, in the end it is the security of the regime and its domineering influence over the academia and the research networks throughout the Middle East and North African. I am glad Amr mentioned his experience in Tunisia because exactly the same thing happened to me in 2007 in another of the North African countries [laughter] and I thought it was because of the sensitivity of the topic, I was working on transitions from armed to un-armed activism among Islamist militias. So, I was interviewing some of the former militants, and the same thing happened, the laptop disappeared [laughter], but only for three days and somebody returned it to the hotel, so it was…So, this gives you an idea of practices, but also in Cairo University you had…to get to promoted as a professor, you had…some general has to sign up on the motion to get the elections, the student elections. Also, the security services interfered in them and so on. So, all these accumulations have undermined the advancement of policy relevant research in academic institutions, especially the government ones. Obviously, my colleague at Cairo University would know more because I come from the American University in Cairo, which is a bit shielded because—
Amr Hamwazy:
The US has influence over him. [Laughter]

Omar Ashour:
The other issue is...so far there is either a lack of or a limited political will to integrate the youth analysts into the official structures of the state, ministries, or giving them leading roles in those ministries, bureaucracies. Part of it has to do with what also my colleagues referred to: the culture of looking down on these, I think Amr mentioned it. Also, it has to do with the excuse of experience; youth are inexperienced, they are more idealistic, and this also...the latter pretext can be remedied by initiatives like YAANI and other training tools for youth analysts. Some of the...some changes can be noted. In Egypt, for example, some of the political parties—including the Salafid political parties—put their youth to the fore. There is a the spokesperson who is only 28 years old makes some of the leading figures speak to the media, who are members of the higher executive committees and so on, from the young. So, some of these changes...if you look at the average age of the most recent Egyptian government, it is quite low compared to the earlier ones. So, you have some of these changes, but again they are not enough, so that is why there is either a lack of political will or limited political will, depending on which country we are talking about.

You have also the blocking the youth capacity, really, from entering the...from being policy relevant. You have a...basically these revolutions succeeded because of young men and women who did not pay attention to their parents, or who disobeyed their parents. But this is only a partial success; this is an attempt or a capacity to make some kind of serious political and socio-political change. But to make this move from the informal sphere to the formal sphere, that is...did not happen yet in any of the transitional countries, any of the Arab awakening countries, whether Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, I am not talking about Algeria and Morocco yet. And I think to make this happen, two things have to be done: one of them is the intensive training of young activists in policy matters slash—and this does not have to be official, it does not have to be done by the British Council and Chatham House only, but by the party, their own parties, their own political groups and this type of thing happened and had bad consequences in Egypt, for example, with the so-called ‘foreign organizations case’. The national democratic institute and other organizations were training youth activists on these matters and a crackdown happened under the supreme council of armed forces staff. So, this is one dimension that again is risky, again it has its own problem, but what can really limit or
remove these hurdles is the political will be the elected government to take up the youth cause and try to enhance the youth impact on policy circles by removing such hurdles and more or less helping and funding some of those initiatives and directing it in more policy-relevant directions.

I will stop here now, and open to your questions.

Claire Spencer:
Thank you.

[Applause]

Thank you, Omar.

Well, we were due to end at 3pm, but I am very conscious that we started late. So, I am going to ask my colleagues whether it is possible to go on for an extra 10 minutes, until 3:10pm, if you can find out for coffee purposes?

But, we have talked a lot here, so I would like to invite you…if…the rules of the game are my glasses tend to see women’s hands [laughter] rather more clearly, there is something about the lenses on these, and I will tell you in groups of three, I think, who is next. So, as and when I point to you, if you could…there are some microphones, I believe, running around, yes, so there will be a roving microphone. Just say who you are for the benefit of the panel.

Yes, please, lady in the middle who I saw first.

Question 1:
Thank you. My question is directed to Dr Hamzawy and also Dr Omar [Ashour], more specifically first to Dr Hamzawy. Given that we are talking about policy, here, are you able to share with us in any way the policies of your party, in broad outlines? And if you do intend to participate in the up-and-coming elections for the parliament in Egypt, if you will be in fact campaigning on a policy platform, or more a personality-based campaign?

And to both Dr Omar [Ashour] and Dr Hamzawy, from a policy perspective, since that is what we are speaking about today, in the absence—as you have indicated—of a clear, coherent, or at least clearly articulated foreign policy on the part of the Egyptian government, what is both of your readings right now of the response we have seen from President [Mohamed] Morsi specifically, and the Freedom and Justice Party more generally, to the events both in
Cairo and in Libya? Can we extrapolate a foreign policy based on their statements and events? Thank you.

Claire Spencer:
Very cleverly put. [Laughter] Right, you can sit on those. [Laughter]

Sorry, it is going that way, so the lady just along here. If you would like to stand up, then they can see you. It is you, yes. Thank you, and then the gentleman behind next.

Question 2:
I am from Reporters without Borders or Reporters sans Frontiers, and we have endeavoured to work extensively throughout the region, publishing many press statements on the freedom of information problems. I was wondering if—just a question for all of the panellists—if you could tell me how closely you are working, not just with governments, but international NGOs on your freedom of information and free media policies not just for traditional media, but also for freedom of expression and information online? Thank you.

Claire Spencer:
Okay, we…within the YAANI network, we do have a media group, so if any of those would like to take it up, just do this [indicates hand gesture] to me if you are a YAANI member, and I'll send it over to you, to your direction.

One more question before we take it back to the panel.

Question 3:
Thank you, I am from the Egyptian Embassy here in London. Dr Hamzawy and Dr Ashour rightly mentioned that…the lack of, or the nature of the political system and the nature of the autocratic management of academic bodies in Egypt over the last decades have hampered the development of meaningful policy advisory to decision making. However, I think I would like to remind you that even since the beginning of the 1990s with this wave of neo…or when Egypt adopted this neo-liberal agenda in collaboration with the IMF and the World Bank, there has been a magnitude of production of reports, policy papers, you name it, conference conclusions, everything on a range of issues advising the government, mainly funded by foreign bodies. Of course, it had
not been really integrated into the decision-making process on a range of issues ranging from very, maybe not taboo issues like Dr Omar mentioned, security things and military-civilian relations, but on gender equality, on child rights, on a range of issues and the hub of this body of work is now the bureaucracy. So, my question to you is, how can the relationship between the bureaucracy and the newly emerging political class be managed in a way where—I think it is very uneasy at the moment—but how can it be managed in a way that does not let all of this work that has really been done by young advisers who have been paid by foreign funding, mainly, and who have been very well educated, just go to a waste? And how can those newly emerging political bodies and movements actually do in addition to their new initiatives and new training in policy, make use of what is there already, which is…which contains very valuable work, which may not have been taken up by policy implementers, but it is still very valuable? Thank you.

Claire Spencer:
Okay, thank you.

Right, well that is the first three questions, so can I ask either end of the panel to tackle the Egypt ones, and then the others? So, would you like to start, Amr, you had specific questions?

Amr Hamzawy:
Sure. Let me, let me start…thank you very much. Let me start with the last question. Well, what…what you have just said as far as Egypt is concerned is perfectly right when it comes to a set of social and economic issues primarily, and when you get into politics you will get a different picture not only related to taboo zones and taboo spheres, civil-military relations, security sector reform—when in fact in relation to security sector reform, we did have a set of papers and studies coming out of Egypt in the last few years before the revolution—but, in total, the questions of politics and policymaking in relation to political parties, in relation to the inter-play between the state bureaucracy and political actors, in relation to the former ruling establishment and its different components, or the question of civil-military relations and the balance or lack there of…all of those questions were not really tackled. The reports, which came out of our faculty, our department in Cairo, of similar departments, of the Haram Centre for Strategic Studies were to an extent attractive in terms of titles, but if you get into reading them you will not find much. So, you really have sort of a two-class picture, or a two component
picture. In relation to socio-economic issues, you are definitely right and we need to find ways to benefit from what was done. In relation to political matters, no, not to that extent. How to manage that in view of a bureaucracy which continues to basically put aside, put away, marginalize that research done by experts? I believe that there is no way to go about that but by to push forward in the constitution as well as from the legislative perspective a set of codes to ensure public service impartiality. My concern...what was the reason for the bureaucracy under Mubarak to ignore a set of interesting studies which did contain policy advice? It was (a) ideological preferences, (b) political preferences, which led to that stagnation within the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy felt it was not in need of any advice coming from outside if it was not cleared from a security perspective, from an intelligence perspective and so on and so forth. If we open the road in Egypt once again for a new hegemony, a party hegemony to replace an old hegemony, if we continue to lack the impartiality of public service, the bureaucracy will never be able to get beyond its own ideological preferences imposed on it from somewhere else, from a ruling establishment or a set of parties, or one party. So, we have to ensure that public service impartiality is being taken seriously in Egypt.

Secondly, party policies, elections and so forth. Well, I mean, party policies are accessible, you just have to check the website, so I am not going to refer to them. But the second question was quite key, and it is more of a macro issue and it is not only related to me. I mean, do Egyptian politicians or even parties run their election campaigns based on policy platforms and based on personalities. To a great extent, our experience has been throughout the last 18 months that election campaigns—parliamentary and presidential—were based on personalities and not on policy platforms. And secondly, if there was an added component to personalities, it was primarily a principled language of sorts, or rhetoric or a discourse addressing principles on the Islamist side of justice, on the liberal side of the state’s civilian nature and so forth, and primary rhetoric and principled language and very limited substance. Now, next time, I believe that we will not be—and here I am reflecting primarily on the liberal spectrum—that we will not serve our cause well if we continue to run based on personalities and some general statements on the nature of the state and societies and so on and so forth, and we need to qualify what we stand for, which is why we are working very hard now in our party and in coordination with other parties to develop a social justice platform, policy platform, which really has clear element, clear policy lines on taxation, on subsidies, on the IMF [incoherent] that is being discussed now in Egypt, and looking ahead as well.
So, if we do not manage to shift policy in Egypt from being focused on principles and the nature of the state and society and government, if we do not manage to transcend those ideological dichotomies which, or dichotomy building which Amr referred to, and how it impacts negatively in policy debates, if we do not manage to do that I believe we will not have a great chance in the up-and-coming elections. So, we have to do it and we are doing it now.

Claire Spencer:
Thank you. Omar, anything quick to add to that on Egypt?

Omar Ashour:
Err…

Audience Member:
[Incoherent]…third question…

Claire Spencer:
Which was?

Amr Ashour:
Yes, the one on policy and US embassies and…

Claire Spencer:
Maybe, Omar, you can do that. [Laughter]

Omar Ashour:
I am not from the FJP [Freedom and Justice Party], but I am just going to…

Claire Spencer:
Go on, have a go. [Laughter]
Omar Ashour:

I am just going to address it shortly, on the foreign policy. I thin that Morsi, what the president wants to do at the moment is not to be Mubarak in his foreign policy orientation. This is a...he wants to maintain a bit of independence in the foreign policy. He went to Iran, which did not, whatever he told them—there are conflicting reports—but this was not very welcome in many circles in the US. He...but the same rules in the region applies. The linkage with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the economic dimension is very critical. The military dimension and the relations with the United States is very critical. Both of them are major determinants of Egyptian foreign policy regardless of who is ruling the country. But at the same time, we are seeing a region in transition. We are seeing the rising of new powers, we have Turkey on one side, we see a shift in a major player in Egyptian, in the foreign policy of the Middle East. Syria, very clearly took the side of the pro-revolution, not pro-status quo, and you have as well the emergence of sister organizations in other countries, whether the Muslim Brothers in Libya, the Justice and Construction Party, whether...obviously Hamas on the borders as well, but also if the change happened in Syria we will see an emergence of the Muslim Brothers as a significant layer in Syrian politics. Not necessarily the rulers of Syria, but a significant player. So, all of these shifts will give him more leeway in changing the policies, despite the determinist—despite what I just mentioned, despite the relations with...economic relations with the Gulf, political relations with the United States, despite these two pillars in Egyptian foreign policy—there will be a new way because of the changes in his ability to manoeuvre a bit and not to copycat what Mubarak has done and therefore minimize the status of Egypt internationally. Another thing that he will be looking at quite significantly is Africa, but that has nothing to do with the question.

Claire Spencer:

Yes, and we have strayed right into Chatham House home territory, which is foreign policy, so I am going to invite everybody to try and focus on the domestic [laughs]...but that is not a reflection on what you have said.

Does anyone have anything to say on working with international NGOs, or would you like to sit and reflect on it?

Amr Hamzawy:

...media group...
Question 2:
I’d like an Egyptian answer to that question.

Claire Spencer:
You want an Egyptian answer to that one?
Okay, I am just conscious that with time running out, we need to pick things up. So, if you have got a very brief international NGO question.

Omar Ashour:
Let me address it when we have the second round of questions.

Claire Spencer:
Right, yes. Then you can wrap it into the others.

Okay…there is a question here. I am going to dot around…a question at the back there. So, we will start over here, and I will keep pointing at you. I have seen you all, okay, so I will try to get you all in. So, the gentleman here, let’s start here, please, with the microphone.

If I know who you are, I am deliberately not recognising you, by the way, to level out the field.

Question 4:
Thank you very much. I am a member of Chatham House. I would like to congratulate this inception of YAANI and so on, but I am a bit surprised that as a youth, as a young, probably politician, you have…

Dr Claire Spencer:
Who are you referring to?

Question 4:
You have something interfaith, and I don’t see any other faith in your listing. And we have Christians, we have Jews in the Arab World, why are they not represented among you? And I am talking about Moroccans, as I am, an
Egyptians, as I am a favourite, and I have just been to Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. Whose is...is it that the British Council that didn’t put it forward? [Laughter] Because I am very much involved with interfaith worldwide, and interfaith forums, and I am surprised, although yet disappointed, because I am sure you are going to do something to that. Thank you.

**Claire Spencer:**

Thank you. This is not—

**Question 4:**

I’m sorry?

**Claire Spencer:**

This is not representative of absolutely everything that goes on in YAANI.

**Question 4:**

This is why I asked, I hoped that you would do something about it.

**Claire Spencer:**

Good.

Right, who did I see over there, lady at the back? Yes.

**Question 5:**

Hi, I am vice chair of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, and I work on sexuality in the Arab region and I just want to give you a concrete example of a policy towards youth that is a problem for us right now. So, shock horror, our young people are having sex before marriage. We have virtually no sexuality education in our schools; we desperately need better education. So, in Egypt, a group of us went to the ministry under the old regime, and we said, ‘we need better education.’ And the ministry officials said, ‘No, no, we have no practice before marriage.’ And we said, ‘But yes, we do.’ [Laughter] And they said, ‘Where is the evidence?’ So, a group of us went out, we had a national youth survey in 2009 of 15,000 Egyptians under the age of 29. We crafted all these questions to try and get this evidence about practice before
marriage to present it to the ministry officials. The problem, of course, to do household surveys in Egypt, you need the approval of the government, and the government said, ‘No, you cannot ask these questions.’ So, we are facing a policy problem here. As researchers, we need to have the freedom to do the work to establish the evidence base. We also need the ability to translate that evidence base into terms the policymakers will accept. So, in the case this, there is no point in talking about sexual rights; we can, however, talk about HIV and public health. But finally, we also need to have policymakers who care about the evidence, because elsewhere in our region, in Algeria, in Tunisia, in Morocco, for example, we actually do know about young people’s sexual behaviour, and yet we are unable now still to convince ministers to introduce sexuality education. So, if you have ideas of how to break this down—

Claire Spencer:
Ahh, you want a solution, do you?

Question 5:
Exactly. [Laughter] Find me in the coffee break, thank you very much.

Claire Spencer:
Two minutes for a solution! [Laughter] That is very interesting, thank you very much. Right, we will come into the middle…Oh, yes, there are a couple of YAANIs who want to intervene, so the gentleman in the pink shirt who I am deliberately not recognising, and then the gentleman in the very smart tie and brown suit afterwards.

Question 6:
I am a YAANI member, I am working on youth political empowerment. So, I have a question to the Egyptian panel. [Laughter] I am not Egyptian, so…With the rise of the [incoherent] party, and the in Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the change in the political arena in the MENA region, is Egypt particularly, and the Arab World, shifting their foreign policy from traditional allies like the European Union and the United States to the east? And here I should mention the case of Turkey. Are we going to see a
shift in the foreign policy from the west to the east, as the economy is moving from the west to the east? To Asia, for example, to Turkey, or to the Stans.

**Claire Spencer:**
I should say, this is our budding ambassador for the foreign policy of YAANI group. [Laughter] Have you… is that it? Yes. Sorry, I'll bring it to the front and then back to another YAANI, so we move on. So, the gentleman on the front row, sorry.

**Question 7:**
I am a journalist and a member of Chatham House. There are two fundamental points which I would like to raise here. YAANI is an initiative that is initiated, developed, sponsored by the British Council and Chatham House. In that sense, it is no different from [incoherent] or other organizations, which were supported by other organizations and trained and succeeded in playing an important part in the revolution. Unfortunately, some quarters in Egypt tended to try and taint the [incoherent] as being foreign agents. In my view, they have succeeded in training outside and Egyptian-ising their tools to play right in their own country for the best they could do. Are the people, the YAANI members, aware that they could face such accusations, and to what extent can they try to distinguish between the training and the skills they have acquired and the work they do, as anyone who comes to this country or elsewhere to train and obtain a degree and then go back and work for the best in his country?

The second fundamental question is related to the failure of the youth in succeeding to contribute to their policymaking or the re-building of their country after the revolution. I think this has been due to one very important factor, which has contributed to the success of the revolution in the first place, and that is the revolution has been by large, in large a leaderless and also not that organized, otherwise it could have been targeted by the state security police everywhere. This failure has given rise to other parties that were organized on the ground to take advantage of the change which has taken place, and try to isolate and exclude those very youth. I would like to ask the YAANI members how could they use the period between the first election and the second election or the third election to utilize their ability to transmit the knowledge which they have acquired to people in their own countries and mobilize, organize, and be able to take advantage to the…for the good of their own country?
Claire Spencer:
Thank you very much. Well, I am going to hand the initiative back an Egyptian YAANI member at the back, who has also been in the media group, so might encapsulate—Ahmed, can you do that?—the question about the media or NGOs that we were asked before, and then I will hand it back to the panel, so you have time to reflect on the questions you have just been posed.

Ahmed Zakaria Ahmed Al Basyouni:
Good morning, I am Ahmed, I am from Egypt from the YAANI network. Actually, you can say this is a question or a comment. A question, but I don’t have an answer actually. This question about the lack of policy centres in Egypt, I think the centres of policy making, or public policymaking in Egypt was like the Haram for Strategic Studies, or the IDCC, which is governmental. We have all these, but we don’t have powerful policymaking strategies in Egypt. And what is weird for me, after the revolution, we didn’t find any initiatives from specialists like Dr Amr or Dr Omar to make something like this, to make public policy centres or public policy study place in order to make policies for the people in Egypt or for the Arab region. And, for example, Dr Amr—and don’t consider this a criticism—that you joined the political life and make your party, and you have the choice the make the public policy centre at the same time, or something like this. At the same...

Another point about the youth engagement with the policymaking. I don’t think that any of the youth was engaged in making the constitution in Egypt. If you count the number of the people who are youth in the constituency committee of the constitution in Egypt, I think you will not find anyone, and the people who are considered to be youth, they appeared after the revolution, and they make their place in the media every time, every day so they would be selected to the constitution committee, and they don’t search for the people who are maybe good in their specialties. So, this is really weird to have a revolution and people who died for their country, and we don’t engage the youth in the right way.

Thank you.

Claire Spencer:
Thank you very much. Now, I am aware we have made up our lost 10 minutes, so I am afraid for those who have got questions, this is your ideal moment—hang on, not now—to approach members of the YAANI network
who will have badges on them showing that is what they are in the coffee break. But I think I will give certainly the YAANI member of the panel—unless the other two have something desperate to say—the chance to come back and respond to the questions about how do you deal with the accusations, or how to you envisage dealing with accusations about being too closely allied to outsiders because I am sure in other funding activities this also arises. So, if you would like to conclude, then I will tell everybody before we conclude so you can, those who can need to can go and get coffee now. The round table session of this afternoon will be starting as planned at 3:30pm, so the coffee break will only be 20 minutes, and the chairs of each round table will be there. The topics, very briefly, are on media, youth empowerment and participation, education and employability, gender and society, equitable development, and engaging civil society. So, within those groups, they will be meeting at 3:30pm in different rooms. So, you will get the chance to engage directly with the groups on specific issues that they themselves have been working on. But I will hand back now to the panel, to the YAANI members for concluding words before we go for coffee. So, would you like to respond to those?

Yassir Mezouari:

Yes. Just a few words about the accusation of being funded by foreign funds. Yes, we are facing already these accusations, and I think the best things...we are trained by the British Council, it is just a period, but, for example, in Morocco, the Moroccan team, we are working on creating our NGO or association so our independent structure to work in Morocco, so that we won’t be...we won’t belong to the British Council any more. We will be supported by British as hundreds of NGOs in Morocco that have foreign funds to do their projects, but in thinking, in making proposals and policymaking, I think as a structure, as an independent structure, we will have this freedom to do what we want. So, maybe for the nine...these nine months, for the programme, yes, we were funded by the British Council because this is an initiative of training, of monitoring, of a lot of things, but then after, I think the baby—the YAANI baby—in Morocco will stand up on his own feet and will work independently in thinking and in giving results from any other foreign or governmental instance.

Claire Spencer:

Good. Do you have anything to add from anything else that was said?
Nadia Logab:
Yes, just regarding his question about how are we going to use the skills to spread it within the country. I think we, in Algeria, we already started thinking about making or establishing an independent think-tank that will involve the YAANNI participants and the other, the outside network that has been extended. And this answer is one of the points mentioned by Dr Hamzawy about the lack of think-tanks in our country. So, I think with such initiatives and Yassir mentioned the YAANNI organization in Morocco, those are the institutions that will ensure the sustainability of the network.

Claire Spencer:
Okay. Imen, last word?

Imen Yacoubi:
Yes, well, I am not going to add a lot to what Yassir and Nadia said. Well, yes, we are already facing these accusations about, you know, funding et cetera, about foreign funding, and I think that, well, there are so many projects now being funded by foreign organization, and especially by…not only foreign organization, even by states and the US State Department is a really good example, it is really infusing a lot of money into civil society in Tunisia. But I think that no matter how well-intentioned these funds and these projects are, I think that they tend to kind of frame you, or to put you in a sort of box. So, I think that a good way to…to, I mean…let’s say to get rid of this sort of accusation is to show how you can get out of that, you know, out of the box in a way.

And, yes, to answer the question about how youth can be present, how can they add change to a period between two elections? Probably they should always be there and be present. And what I personally notice about youth is that they tend to act on their disappointment, not to act on what really motivates them, so they join the liberal party because they don't want the liberal party to win. They join the Islamic party because they don't want the liberal party to win. So, probably that is why they lose their energy very quickly and they lose their enthusiasm very quickly and they retire. So, probably if we succeed in creating projects, programmes that motivates youth in a positive direction to create something, not to try to avoid something, or not only to try to avoid something, that would be good. That would be an achievement, I think.
Claire Spencer:
Well, thank you, that is a very positive note to end this section of the discussion on because the discussion will continue for those that can stay. So, thank you very much indeed.

Imen Yacoubi:
Thank you.

Claire Spencer:
And see you upstairs.

[Applause]