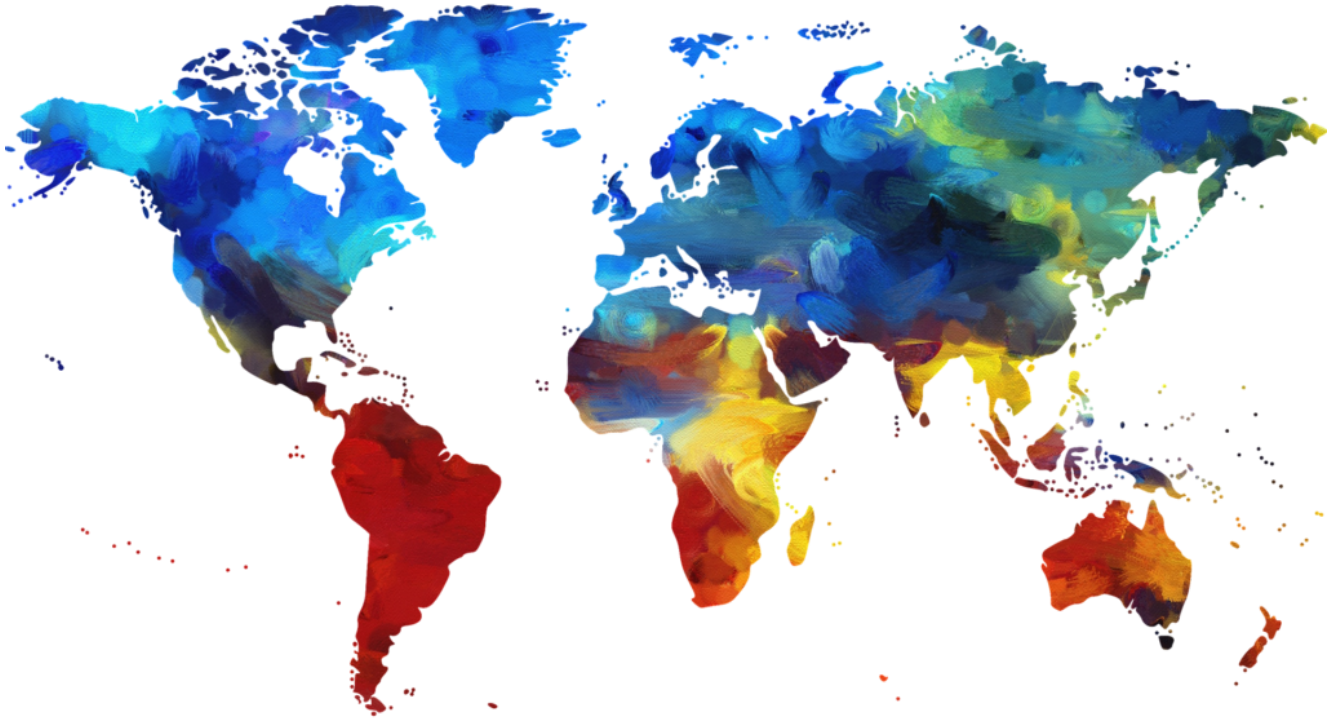
RSA Global Webinar Series – Egypt – Panel on Post-Conflict Reconstruction



By Yehya Serag, RSA Ambassador Egypt and Ain Shams University, Egypt and Abeer Elshater, RSA Ambassador Egypt and Ain Shams University, Egypt

Our contribution to the Middle East and North Africa in the RSA Global webinar series focused mainly on the post conflict reconstruction challenges in this volatile region. Since 2011 several countries in the MENA region witnessed the so-called Arab Spring revolutions, which in several cases have developed into civil conflicts (such as the cases of Libya and Syria). At the same time, the region witnessed a horrific catastrophe with the Beirut port blast in August 2020, resulting in high levels of destruction in Beirut port and extending to other areas within the city.

To understand better the dynamic and challenges of the post- conflict and -catastrophe reconstruction attempts in the Middle East, we invited three experts from the region to provide better insights on such dynamics and challenges.

Our first panellist was Dr Nabil Menhem, who started his presentations

describing the role of planning conundrum through building cities in perpetual post-conflict. In his online presentation, the focus was on figuring out different scenarios from Sri Lanka and some countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENNA) Region. He concluded that adapting a place-based approach with a particular centre on the territorial recognition of the equitable distribution of recourses could confront the challenge of conflict in the MENA region. He also heightened the critical role of urban planners in addressing the post-conflict recontraction in Lebanon.

In the same line of thinking, our second panellist Dr Hala Asslan showed the challenges that governates are facing in tackling the damages in historical monuments as circumstances to the conflict in Syria. She provided the audience with several types of rehabilitation and restoration projects like Souk al-Harir, Syria. Her concluding remarks stressed that the process of reconstruction could not come to real applications without including all necessary efforts in changing the midst from war to peace. Hala also provided five pillars for the reconstruction process that could fit several cities like Syrian communities. These pillars include security, justices, economic considerations, public participation, and crosscutting tasks of stakeholders.

Finally in the last speech in the post-conflict reconstruction session, Eng. Ashraf Al-Hassi highlighted the case of Libya, with a particular focus on the damage that took place in Darna and Benghazi. He explained the reasons for the various conflicts in these places and the actions already in place which are aiming to control the situation. He summarized that the challenges are due to i) unjustified internal political war, ii) the inequality in accessing resources that followed the discovery of fossil-fuel reserves in some Libyan cities without a strategic-oriented governmental policy for managing alternatives. Finally, he provided the Vision-Understanding-Clarity-Agility (VUCA) approach for better handling the post-conflict reconstruction in such areas.

The three presentations and talks provided by our speakers provided an in-depth overview of the different challenges and considerations that are to be expected when embarking on the processes of reconstruction within the affected countries.

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