

The Untapped Potential of City Diplomacy in Peacebuilding in the Mena Region

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ABSTRACT

Cities can play a significant role in international relations and in building bridges between peoples. This paper examines the role of cities and “city diplomacy” in promoting peace in the MENA region, particularly in light of current challenges and the ongoing reality of tension and war. Drawing from Ibn Khaldun, it highlights the significance of cities as cultural and economic hubs capable of fostering trust among diverse populations. With a focus on the rise of mega-cities, the article argues that urban centers hold unique potential for bridging intercultural gaps through “soft” diplomacy. By analyzing sister-city agreements and city networks, the paper argues that cities can shape a new regional narrative of solidarity. Case studies of Abu Dhabi, Essaouira, and Haifa demonstrate how city diplomacy can promote tolerance and multiculturalism. The paper concludes that cities can play a pivotal role in building sustainable regional peace in the MENA region.