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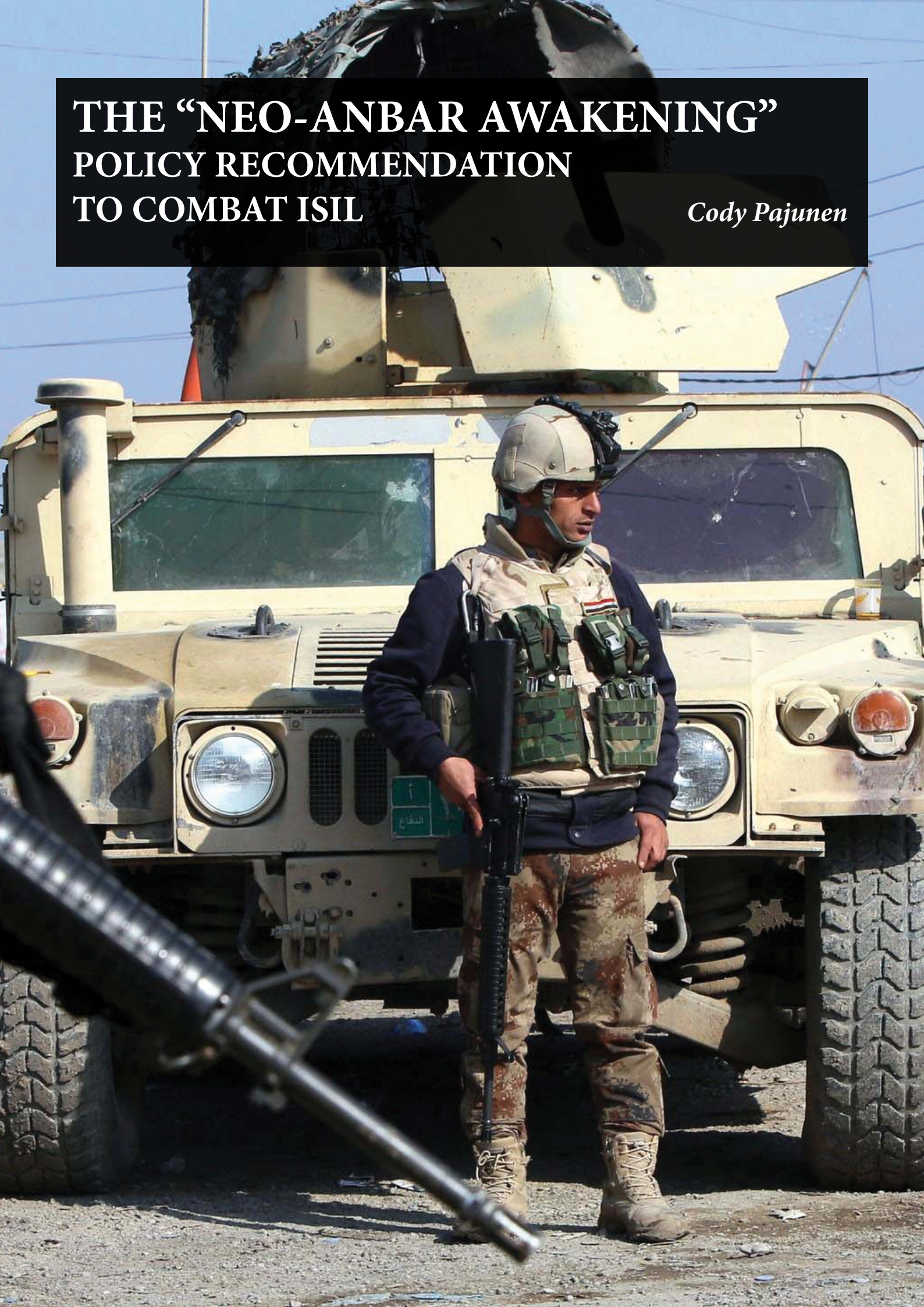
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THE "NEO-ANBAR AWAKENING"
POLICY RECOMMENDATION
TO COMBAT ISIL

Cody Pajunen

> ❝ Our American friends had not understood us when they came. They were proud, stubborn people and so were we. They worked with the opportunists, now they have turned to the tribes, and this is as it should be. ❞

- Sheikh Abd al Sittar Abu Reesha, leader of the Anbar Awakening

Sheikh Abd al Sittar's words resonate with wisdom to this day. His is referring to the first 'Anbar Awakening' that took place in 2005 and lasted roughly until 2011. During this time, Sunni tribal leaders in Iraq's Anbar province "began quietly forming working alliances with US military forces against al-Qaeda." The US solidified its alliances with Sunni tribes by launching joint military offenses against al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) known as 'the surge.' The surge proved fruitful and "suppressed the violence, broke the links between militias/insurgents and the Iraqi people and allowed American officials to forge a new power-sharing arrangement among Iraq's various ethno-sectarian groups." The Anbar Awakening produced security for the Anbar populace and military defeats for AQI. This project looks to be the framework for a 'neo' Anbar Awakening' to undermine the rule of ISIL in its own Anbar strongholds. Slowly making attempts to undermine ISIL's military capacity may be able to roll back its ability to govern and hence its ability to maintain popular support. To draft an effective plan for this 'neo' Anbar Awakening, theoretical context, the current situation in Anbar province, a tentative strategic plan, potential problems of this plan, and entailing solutions will be addressed.

Theoretical Precursors

David Ucko believes that COIN operations must be derived from contextually-specific circumstances. He does not advocate for a certain theory of COIN to employ but rather to re-strategize existing tangible and intellectual COIN resources as necessary. Strategists such as Gray also see the benefits of addressing the most immediate strategic concerns. To remain theoretically pragmatic while addressing pressing strategic concerns to undermine ISIL, this project will use Roger Petersen's community-based insurgency mobilization model. Petersen was not mentioned in the literature review because his theoretical model does not address COIN from a more macro standpoint. However, his model provides critical perspectives in

drafting a 'neo' Anbar Awakening.

In order to mobilize a community against insurgent forces, Petersen first splits the population up into 7 distinct categories with entailing numbers; mobile combatants (-3), local insurgent support (-2), unorganized resistance (-1), neutral (0), unorganized support (+1), self-defense militias (+2), and government security forces (+3). COIN forces must target -3 and -2 forces, train +2 and +3 forces, and engage all aside from -3 and +3 forces. Six mechanisms that drive people across the spectrum are then considered for how to mobilize each community; rational calculation, focal points, social norms, emotions, status considerations, and psychological mechanisms. Community-based mobilization uses these population sectors and mechanisms to aid +2 forces and focus on the strategic decision-making of other similar forces as the main way to eventually undermine an insurgency. This strategy contrasts "US-centric COIN tactics" that only focus on US-driven action to defeat an insurgency by 'going all in' on the loyalty of local forces.

The main facets of a population forces that community mobilization focuses on are -3, -2, +2, and +3. Other portions of the Anbar populace still factor in but will remain relatively unaddressed due to this project's scope and goals. Community (in this case 'tribal') mobilization is not population-centric. In population-centric COIN approaches, all operations are done to sway the general populace to either the insurgency's or the government's corner. Tribal mobilization involves strategically drawing tribal forces into the +2 category and using them to defeat -2 and -3 forces. It does not involve conducting operations solely for the sake of the local populace's perspectives (although such perspectives must still be considered). To mobilize a community, a COIN force must realize that its success depends upon the interest-based calculations of local actors. Tipping the cost-benefit analysis of local actors (tribes) involves employing both economic and

organizational incentives. Using incentives to fight a war may seem inhumane but nonetheless worked in the first Anbar Awakening. Money given directly to tribes to be split more fairly as opposed to government rationing increased trust between local actors and the US in this first Awakening. Simultaneously, organizational incentives like attempting to ensure greater political representation are enticing offers to previously disenfranchised Sunni tribes in Iraq's Anbar province.

Finally, Petersen also addresses levels of analysis in his model. He claims that analyses should come at the most fundamental level of a community (or tribe) - the individual. However, this view is limited as Petersen wasn't able to factor the current Anbari situation in regards to ISIL into his logic. Many individuals have chosen to fight for ISIL on their own accord. The around 20,000 foreign fighters in ISIL are prime examples. Even though the individual level of analysis is obviously critical to consider in some regards, it is not as crucial for the purposes of this policy recommendation. This recommendation is focused on Anbar province where tribal allegiances supersede all. Sheikh Dhaher Bedewi, a Sunni tribal leader in Anbar province, claims that the violence currently surrounding Anbar is solely "a tribal issue." The main schisms thus come not from individuals in ISIL and individuals outside ISIL fighting each other and switching sides but, rather, from historical tribal beef coming to fore under the banner of ISIL violence. At the same time, the US is currently aiding tribes, not individuals, to fight ISIL. Thus, Petersen's model will be used to construct a 'neo' Anbar Awakening using the level of analysis of tribes.

Why Anbar Province?

Figure 10.1 Map Highlighting Anbar Provine in Iraq
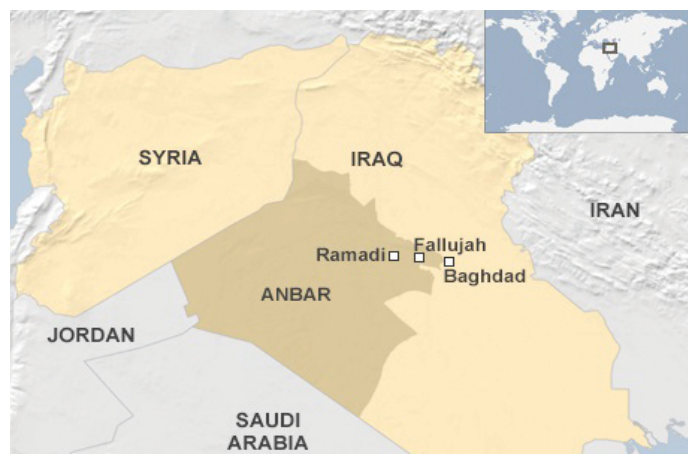
1. Historical Significance

Ironically enough, ISIL's precursor, AQI, spawned the first Anbar Awakening. AQI had a large presence in Anbar province in the early 2000s. By 2006, the provincial capital of the province had "fallen…to AQI's dominance." The organization's prominence in the area led to locals opposing it via two different perceived injustices. The first was AQI's attempt to establish a monopoly of the revenues within the province. This revenue came primarily in the form of criminal activities, oil-smuggling in specific. AQI started to receive preferential treatment in the crude-smuggling business. Such treatment did not sit well with the local tribes of Ramadi who historically dominated this black-market service. The second was AQI's use of violence to try and subdue the local populace. Anbari tribesman started to act out against AQI as it tried to monopolize oil-smuggling trade. Uncooperative tribes meant that AQI would lose its hold over Anbar province. As a result, the organization embarked on a campaign of violence.

The brutal killing of tribal Sheikhs, kidnappings, extortion, rape, public beheadings and dismemberments, and the systematic use of murdering entire families because of their tribal affiliations riddled Anbar Province. This violence reached a point to where Anbar tribes had enough. Tribes again started to oppose AQI and its brutality. This sentiment was manifested most clearly in the city of Ramadi where angered locals, vengeful policemen, and rival jihadist groups decided to band together in a 'motley' alliance to oust AQI. Secondly they formed a group known as Thuwar al-Anbar or Revolutionaries of Anbar. Thuwar al-Anbar was the beginning of the Awakening. These new locally-derived coalitions needed backing and found a partner in the US. Many of the groups allying to oppose AQI in Anbar had previously fought US forces, yet found armed Americans a better alternative to armed AQI operatives. As an emir from Ansar al-Sunna (a Salafist faction fighting in Iraq) told an American military official, "We have concluded that you do not threaten our way of life. al-Qaeda does."

The first Anbar Awakening represented a genuine bottom-up approach to oppose the AQI insurgency. The movement grew from a few localized alliances to a nationally institutionalized COIN apparatus. As anti-AQI alliances continued to grow throughout

Anbar and Iraq as a whole, a movement known as 'the surge' started to take place. Initially characterized by the addition of a large amount of US troops to the fight, the surge became a COIN dream. Ali Khedery, a long-standing US diplomat in Iraq, clarifies that the surge consisted more than an increase of American troops. It brought in a 'surge' of American diplomacy that forced Iraqi politicians to work cohesively to accomplish national goals. This political cohesion was met with a huge decrease in violence leading up to the 2009 Iraqi national elections. The elections produced more Sunni tribal representation, with tribes earning seats in the Anbar Provincial Council and other anti-AQI alliances acquiring similar positions.

The surge produced benefits for many who used to fight for AQI because of the power it (the surge) provided. Success on the political front brought a rejuvenation of nationalistic sentiment which swayed popular support away from the AQI. AQI was subsequently pushed to the brink of decimation. The organization decided to rebrand itself the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) to appeal to existing national fervor. This name change faced more backlash than anything else. Genuine nationalists wanted nothing to do with it. It became clear that most Sunni insurgents had "only ever accepted AQI on an ad-hoc military basis." The bond that existed between AQI and the tribes it depended on was thus easily broken when a more legitimate means of security and stability entered the picture. In the long-term, the Maliki administration abused the Awakening alliances. Sectarian violence has since erupted. In effect, many paint the Anbar Awakening a failure. This viewpoint neglects the fact that the Awakening itself was successful, while it was the political mechanisms in Iraq that took power later that could not sustain peace in the long-term.

History has also taught the US officials that war in the Anbar province is tribal, not necessarily religious. In the first Awakening, the US was able to seduce the loyalty of Anbar tribes by offering them the economic and organizational resources they needed.

The same structure undoubtedly carries through today, and it is known that Anbar tribes have values that carry far beyond their current alliance with militant Islamic extremists. Although the situation in Anbar differs drastically from that of the first Awakening, the US knows which incentives can help build powerful alliances. Finally, the history of the first Awakening provides the US with the foresight that long-term mechanisms must be in place after tribal mobilization to avoid further disenchantment and destruction in Anbar. Thus, Anbar is a perfect site to launch this 'neo' Awakening because of the past successes and failures the US has embarked upon within it.

2. Tribes Dominate Anbar Province

Iraq's tribal system is a labyrinth of perpetually fluctuating complexities. It's difficult to understand. When fighting an irregular war, the US has a tendency to gravitate towards forces and power structures that are familiar to its own. Sunni tribes do not 'fit the bill' of familiarity. It may seem as though Sunni tribes are too unreliable to back with money, arms, and military advisors. However, the dominance of Sunni tribal structures in Anbar can be advantageous for US forces looking to undermine ISIL for three reasons: Tribal alliances are malleable, tribes in Anbar are primarily Sunni, and using tribes as a means to oppose ISIL allows the US to sustain a relatively limited troop footprint.

> History has also taught the US officials that war in the Anbar province is tribal, not necessarily religious. In the first Awakening, the US was able to seduce the loyalty of Anbar tribes by offering them the economic and organizational resources they needed.

Anbar, being the site of the previous Awakening, must be the site for its 'neo' incarnation as well. To start, experience allows US officials to navigate the complexities of Sunni tribes more easily. Officials are already familiar with specific tribes in the Anbar region, whether they be friends or enemies of the US.

Tribal politics supersede everything in many parts of Iraq and Syria. Anbar province is no different. In Anbar, "every piece of terrain…is claimed by a tribe." The preeminence of tribalism, especially in regards to Anbar, must be established here. Amir al-Dandal, a member of a prominent Syrian tribe, witnessed inter-

tribal fighting in Deir Ezzor due to circumstances surrounding ISIL. The fighting, al-Dandal claims, "had everything to do with the tribes, not with jihadi politics, and it was resolved on a tribal basis." The same dynamic undoubtedly holds true in Anbar.

Tribal politics and allegiances are dynamic and can change rapidly. Although tribes can be problematic, their ultimate loyalty normally lies in one place; the tribe. Preservation of the tribe is the largest priority of tribesman, no matter who they are allied with. Resources are the life-blood of sustained preservation. No resources means no protection, and no tribal protection means tribal destruction. Therefore, outlets of tribal resources are key to maintaining tribal loyalties. As Petersen posited, community-based groups, such as tribes, are subject to the power of incentives and are thus malleable. Tribal alliances in Anbar "will succeed or fail based on…whether groups' interests continue to converge on common incentives." It may seem politically incorrect to base security alliances off of incentives. However, the reality of the situation is that the provision of incentives, and the ability to sustain them, provides an opportunity to establish trust. Each tribe will invariably act in its own self-interest based on a cost-benefit analysis. This dynamic shows why Anbar tribal dominance is beneficial to US COIN operations. If the US can provide benefits to Sunni tribes in Anbar that outweigh the costs acting against ISIL, crucial alliances can be built. Thus, the fact that tribalism and its malleability rules Anbar is yet another reason why it should be the focus of COIN operations.

Sunni tribes in Anbar province are well…Sunni. The tribes' religious affiliations may be obvious but the implications of that "Sunni" label are not. Religion is undoubtedly an important factor, but it does not weigh in as much as one may think in this project's COIN analysis. The fact that most tribes in Anbar province are Sunni means that they all have a general symmetry in regards to their composition, customs, and values. Although all Sunni Anbari tribes are not all identical in every way, patterns do persist. Inter-group symmetry is important because it gives an educated understanding between the relationships between tribes within Anbar province.

ISIL is made up a multitude of Sunni tribes, many of whom reside in Anbar. By knowing what values (like incentives) motivate them, COIN operators could

more accurately exploit their loyalty to ISIL. At the same time, Sunni tribesmen allied with the US are going to have an in-depth knowledge of their ISIL counterparts.

> ## " Americans, along with the Iraqi government, know very well that no one can break the back of ISIL except the Sunnis. "

According to Sheikh Wissam Hardan, a co-founder of the first Awakening movement, "Americans, along with the Iraqi government, know very well that no one can break the back of ISIL except the Sunnis." The strategic role of Anbari Sunni tribes is unparalleled. Sheikh Wissma solidifies this importance by positing "We know ISIL's secrets, where ISIL moves and how they operate. We know the weaknesses of ISIL." This knowledge comes not from the Sheikh's constant surveillance of ISIL but rather from his familiarity with Sunni tribal operations. At the same time, many Sunni tribes in Anbar have allied with ISIL because they feel that they have no legitimate governing outlet to turn to. If a few Sunni tribes witness other Sunni tribes allying with the government and coexisting in a relatively peaceful manner, they deem the situation safe enough to follow suit. In Petersen's terms, this provides those who are able to affiliate with anti-ISIL tribes unparalleled strategic knowledge of -2 and -3 forces by leveraging +2 forces. All the while, showing other -2 forces that allying with the +3 sector could prove beneficial for them.

The US spent its fair share of time in Iraq. While there, it deployed thousands of conventional forces to fight Iraq's insurgency. While it sustained a large footprint in Iraq, the US learned that its large presence produced consequences. Blowback, the CIA-coined term for the latent consequences of military and political action, became a household word. More harm was produced as negative sentiment for the war was directed at the US. Such sentiment was not conducive to undermining the legitimacy of AQI. Sunni Anbari tribes offer a way for the US to conduct COIN operations without having a large force footprint. The US does not need to leave a large footprint because Anbari tribes have their own incentive to fight ISIL and do not need US rational to initiate their fight. ISIL has been launching waves of

brutality against tribes not aligned with its 'caliphate.' In 2014, for example, Anbar security officials claim that ISIL killed around six-hundred from the Albu Nimr tribe in just the month of November.

Existing tribal incentives and security apparatuses both make Anbar a prime location to initiate a 'neo' Awakening because problems persisting in the province can be "resolved on a tribal basis."

The Albu Nimr tribe has been fighting ISIL ever since, showing that a light US footprint is possible because Anbari tribes already have a deeply entrenched incentive to fight the brutal organization. The US does not need to come back into Iraq to try and establish a new system of governance to fix the violence. Nor does it need to completely re-construct an entire security apparatus as it has previously attempted. The US just needs to try and sway Sunni tribes into an alliance of incentives in an attempt to mitigate the violence, not come in with tanks and helicopters to crush an entire insurgency. Existing tribal incentives and security apparatuses both make Anbar a prime location to initiate a 'neo' Awakening because problems persisting in the province can be "resolved on a tribal basis." The US may thus not have to overextend its resources in fighting ISIL. As a result, the US can selectively bolster sectors of the strategy that are deemed most critical.

3. The US is currently arming anti-ISIL Tribesman in Anbar Province

The Anbar Province would be an ideal place to launch a 'neo' awakening movement because the US is currently aiding anti-ISIL tribes. The US has already approved $24.1 million to be allocated for the purposes of arming and training "tribal security forces" in Iraq. At the same time, the US is doling out armaments to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Kurdish military to oppose ISIL ($1.2 billion and $353 million respectively).

The aid money consists solely of arms and other warfighting materials. The intention is to aid each 'camp' in the hopes of incentivizing them to work together in a cohesive manner. Anbar is thus a prime

candidate to launch a US-sustained 'neo' awakening because a current tribal funding infrastructure is in place in the province.

4. ISIL has been launching Brutal and Effective offenses in Anbar

Not only do Anbari Sunni tribes want more US aid to undermine ISIL, they need it. During the weekend of February 13, 2015, Anbari tribal Sheikh Naim al-Gaoud proclaimed that Anbar province would "collapse in hours" if tribal forces did not receive funding and would subsequently withdraw from the fight against ISIL if these conditions persisted. This claim is well-founded. ISIL has been launching full-scale assaults against ISF, Shia militia, and Sunni tribal forces throughout the province. ISIL's main strategy in this region is to operationally secure Anbar province, secure its own lines of communication in the region, and prepare for an assault on Iraq's al-Asad airbase, the only existing major ISF stronghold in the province. The organization has been fairly successful in this quest. It (ISIL) established a stronghold in the Anbari city of Hit and has been able to repel repeated ISF attempts to retake it. The ISF subsequently embarked on an operation to acquire the regions surrounding Hit, but were again defeated by ISIL. ISIL was then able to initiate a counter-offensive and take the al-Dolab district, further expanding its area of operation. In the process, ISIL confiscated a "large quantity" of military vehicles. Ramadi also became a target of ISIL's December 2014 offensive, witnessing suicide vehicle born improvised explosive device (SVBIED) attacks. ISIL combat initiatives have continued against al-Asad. The ISF, in response, attempted to take the areas around al-Asad but were again pushed by ISIL forces.

It is becoming clear that ISF forces are 'locked' in al-Asad airbase without many options to expand beyond it and are unable to render security services to the rest of the province. These problems are only in part due to lacking military capacity. Sunni tribes have tried to restore their dominance of the region but have not been able to due to ineffective coordination with ISF forces. Anbari tribes have made the claim that supports promised to them from the Iraqi government (GoI) have been diverted to Shia militias. Tribesmen have attempted to reach out to the Shias for help but have found them non-responsive. To make matters worse, these Shia militias have been reported to launch

assaults on Sunni populations in Anbar, leaving them more susceptible to IS recruit operations. A combination of ISF and Shia militia unwillingness and inability to help their Sunni 'counterparts' greatly limits the capacity of anti-ISIL forces in general. As a result, ISIL has been able to enjoy military success in Anbar province. Anbar is thus the necessary location to initiate a 'neo' Awakening because US support could not only help Sunni tribes halt the ISIL militarily, but also change the way in which America's support is distributed. This can bridge the endemic sectarian nature of security provision throughout Iraq. At the same time, Anbar also presents an opportunity for the US to capitalize on existing anti-ISIL sentiment derived from their brutal military offenses.

5. ISIL is an extremely effective Tribal Power Broker

As previously mentioned, ISIL is able to sustain control over the Syrian and Iraqi populations due in part to its use of its organizational focus on tribalism. Syria and Iraq are states that have a large amount of tribes. These tribes have their own social and political systems. Most importantly, their loyalty lies within their own respective tribes. State influence is important but Syrian and Iraqi tribes have been historically known to protect their kin above all else. Resources give tribes the ability to advance the interest of their own respective kin relative to other tribes. Thus, the drive for resources to retain relative power and influence to protect kin is at the forefront of each tribal agenda. This system of tribal power-politics is the base of almost every tribal decision. ISIL knows this dynamic and is willingly to exploit it. The organization has positioned itself as a formidable tribal power broker. It acquires tribal loyalty via incentives and sustains it by providing mediation services.

> **ISIL also knows that power happens to be 'artificially constructed...and therefore hard to fully harness.' It exploits this power vulnerability by appealing to the younger generations within tribes who naturally want to retain some form of individual influence.**

ISIL is the first jihadist entity to ever turn members of the same tribe against each other. The Shaitat in Syria and Albu Nimr in Iraq are both examples of tribes that ISIL convinced to commit fratricide. The most astounding fact is that religious ideology played virtually no part in either of these instances. If kinship trumps all in tribal loyalty, how has ISIL able to turn families against one another? The answer is seemingly simple; incentives. ISIL, with many of its members hailing from Syrian and Iraqi tribes, knows that the power-politics surrounding tribalism is extremely influential. They know how far material resources can go to gain allies. ISIL has a vast array of resources to distribute from oil smuggling and other proceeds deriving from similar illicit activities. It uses these resources wisely. An effective strategy ISIL has been able to employ is known what Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan refer to as dividing and ruling. ISIL knows that tribes are normally ruled by village elders. These elders, however, keep a status quo that retains their influence. ISIL also knows that this power happens to be "artificially constructed… and therefore hard to fully harness." It exploits this power vulnerability by appealing to the younger generations within tribes who naturally want to retain some form of individual influence. Those tribesmen with a perceived ability to mobilize larger amounts of manpower are targeted by ISIL. Giving these younger tribesmen prospects for money, power, and prestige incentivizes them to turn on their tribe and affiliate with ISIL. Factional fissions subsequently result and the faction with the most power (usually those aligned with ISIL) wins out and kills the other so that future power struggles don't persist. Since tribal power is volatile, those with an obviously greater amount of resources can persuade the loyalty of others.

It should be noted that ISIL not only incentivizes with resources, but also through fear. ISIL offers younger and influential tribesmen resources but sometimes declining the offer isn't an option. If tribesmen refuse, ISIL assassinates them and their families. Here, the value of kinship undoubtedly plays a part. Since tribal loyalty normally lies in kinship, allying with ISIL gives tribesmen the ability to increase kinship resources but also keeps them safe from otherwise certain death. Dividing and conquering tribes not only helps ISIL acquire man-power, it also helps reduce the chances of a force being created that can oppose it. Systematically dividing tribes produces violence among and between them. Their military capacities become diverted to

Iraqi government forces take position in the Jarf Sakhr area on May 24, trying to protect the region from Islamic State advancement. (Haidar Hamdani/AFP/Getty Images)

fighting each other instead of ISIL. As a result, any unified tribal front to oppose ISIL would be difficult to acquire and maintain.

ISIL also offers tribal mediation services. ISIL may fuel tribal violence to ensure the brunt of tribal military force stays away from it but it also selectively arbitrates conflicts between them simultaneously. ISIL knows that total tribal chaos would negatively affect it. Controlled chaos, on the other hand, defines the organization's brilliant manipulation of tribalism. The solution of control amongst potential tribal chaos comes in the form of a man named Dhaigham Abu Abdullah. As head of ISIL's tribal affairs administration, Abdullah serves as a mediating force to mitigate conflicts that arise between tribes. He and his men are employed by ISIL as arbitrators. Here too do power-politics come into play. Once affiliated with IS, tribes still want to increase their relative power. They come to arbitrators to attempt and accumulate more resources. In this way, tribes become dependent on the source of power that can give them relative influence; ISIL. The manipulation of tribalism allows ISIL to retain control over vast populations. Power-politics in these regions will continue to play a critical role in determining who controls what. Tribes in both Syria and Iraq thus present both obstacles to and opportunities for successful counter-insurgency forces in the future. If the US proves unable to capitalize on the tribal power structure in Anbar province, ISIL

may continue to increase its influence in the region via the exploitation of Sunni tribes.

Petersen Factors - Anbar 2015

It has been established that Iraq's Anbar province is the most ideal location for a 'neo' Awakening movement. What has not yet been detailed is exactly what factors will go into the movement. The Petersen community-based insurgency mobilization model produces easily-identifiable variables that can be applied to the current situation in Anbar Province.

Population Sectors

It is true that all sectors of the Anbari population are crucial to the success of this new Awakening. However, Petersen specifies that initiating community-based resistance to an insurgency should give preference to considering -3, -2, +2 and +3 forces. Again, the scope of this recommendation is strategic and thus focuses efforts on the most pivotal strategic assets to community-based insurgency opposition. This is not to say that neutral actors do have strategic benefit, they do. However, this recommendation is not population-centric in nature and employs a more specific means of undermining ISIL; using Anbari Sunni tribal forces strategically in regards to their relationships with ISF forces. The population sectors in Anbar to be focused on are as follows:

A. -3 Forces

'-3' forces consist of mobile armed insurgents. They consist of individuals who travel beyond their individual communities in the name of an insurgent organization. Petersen puts -3 forces in the category of "a guerilla unit or rebel army." In today's Anbar province, -3 groups are directly comparable to ISIL forces. -3 ISIL forces do not include the organization's affiliated tribes as such tribes are local in nature and fall under the jurisdiction of their tribal leaders. -3 ISIL forces are those that spawned from Syria and organized the support of local tribes. Most of these forces involve ISIL personnel located in Abu Kamal, Haditha, Al Qaim, Hit, the outskirts of al-Asad airbase, and Ramadi. -3 forces also flow from the 'rat lines' (border towns) between Syria and Anbar province. Petersen sees these actors as inherently combatant. However, ISIL has expanded the operational capacities of its mobile members to include media experts, recruiters, and governing administrators. Efforts to undermine ISIL -3 forces must take the dynamism of the organization's forces into consideration.

B. -2 Forces

'-2' personnel fall under the category of the localized insurgency. They consist of "local militia" that fight with and on behalf of an insurgency. -2 forces are arguably the most pivotal enemy force in regards to conducting a new Awakening in Anbar province. In Anbar, -2 forces consist of local Sunni tribes that are affiliated with ISIL. These tribes represent the backbone of ISIL's military and governing capacities in the area because of their local knowledge and ready supply of manpower. 'These tribes' is a general term meant to describe the Anbari Sunni tribes affiliated with ISIL and is an imperfect label at best. However, information as to the specific tribes in Anbar that are affiliated with ISIL is hard to come by let alone credible if it were to exist. What is known is that Adnan Letif Hamid al-Sweidawi is the current shadow governor for ISIL in the Anbar province. ISIL shadow governors are tribal leaders operating under the broad jurisdiction of ISIL central authority. -2 forces are therefore Anbari tribes currently under the leadership of al-Sweidawi. -2 tribal forces presumably operate in close proximity to -3 ISIL mobile forces as well as throughout the rest of Anbar province.

C. +2 Forces

'+2' population sectors are what Petersen refers to as the "armed local government supporter." These are locally-based armed groups that oppose the -2 and -3 forces and are theoretically in support of the government. +2 forces are the population sectors that COIN forces focus the most on when conducting a community-based mobilization to oppose insurgents. Just as -2 forces serve as ISIL's backbone in Anbar, so do +2 forces for the US and GoI. In Anbar, US and GoI-affiliated Sunni tribes make up the +2 population sector. As with -2 forces, +2 personnel fight within the areas they live to sustain protection. The success of COIN operations depends upon the extent to which these +2 forces can be sustained from a survival and loyalty standpoint. The goal of Petersen's community-based mobilization is to strategically incentivize the loyalty of +2 forces to oppose -2 and -3 forces in the hopes of diminishing support of the insurgents to the point where only -3 forces fight on the behalf of it (the insurgency). +2 forces in Anbar currently consist of US-affiliated Sunni actors such as the Albu Nimr tribe and the Sons of Iraq tribal coalition.

D. +3 Forces

Petersen's +3 societal sector is comprised of "mobile armed government forces." They theoretically operate on a disciplined, unified basis and serve as the standard means of military capacity within the state. To Petersen, these forces are the state's armed military forces. In Anbar, this is only partially true. The ISF undoubtedly represents a facet of +3 actors currently fighting in Anbar. However, Shia actors also fall under the +3 category. Shia militias and elements of the IRCG-Qods (or Quds) force also operate against ISIL in Anbar. The IRGC-Qods are the international military wing of the Iranian Republican Guard. They are, well, Iranian-backed. Many Shia militias fighting in Anbar are led by the IRGC-Qods and thus also under Iranian influence. Both actors are considered +3 because they are not local and fight on a mobile basis with the ISF. They are not a part of GoI forces but nonetheless operate as an Iranian appendage of them.

The fact that these Shia militias and IRCG-Qods force fight with ISF does not mean they consistently coordinate efforts to undermine ISIL with +2 forces. They usually do so only on an ad-hoc and desperate basis and have even been known to attack the Anbari Sunni populace not (yet) affiliated with ISIL. +3 forces in Anbar are anything but the monolithic entity Petersen idealizes in his theoretical model. As a result, they will be dealt with on a skeptical basis as to their role in this project's 'neo' Anbar Awakening.

Neo-Anbar Strategy

The delineation of Anbari population sectors relative to Petersen's model is a helpful way to grasp the complex array of actors necessary to consider if a 'neo' Anbar Awakening is to be successful. However, this delineation does not provide a strategy as to how this new Awakening is to be employed. Ucko and similar authors stress the importance of strategy when undertaking COIN operations. This project agrees with this focus and subsequently recommends four actions that together represent a potential strategy that the US could undertake to increase its anti-ISIL success in Anbar province; aid Sunni tribes and the GoI separately, directly aid Anbari Sunni tribal confederations, diversify the purposes of tribal aid, and actively mitigate sectarianism.

1. Aid Sunni Tribes and the GoI Separately

The US is currently spending around $1.6 billion to arm Sunni tribes and GoI forces. Arms are being sent from the US to the GoI directly. The hopes are that the GoI-received armaments will subsequently be distributed the way in which the US government intends with selected Sunni tribes receiving roughly $24 million. Wishing away sectarian splits, such a policy is wishful thinking at best. Sunni tribal leaders currently fighting in Ramadi, Anbar's provincial capital, claimed that they had "received only one shipment of the weapons the U.S had promised" as late as February 23, 2015. US COIN forces must continue aid to the Sunni tribes, but give it to them directly just as it did in the first Awakening. The US should also continue to aid the GoI but separately as well. The funding for both are currently specified, cleared by the US government, and have even been shipped out. This makes aiding both on a separate basis difficult yet definitely feasible.

Not only is a split-funding strategy feasible, it is completely necessary. The inability of US arms to get to Anbari Sunni tribes may seemingly indicate US unwillingness to fund counter-insurgency efforts. However, the real problem lies in current US arms distribution policies in Iraq. The aid program depends on aid being sent to Iraqi forces (including Sunni tribes) "by and through the GoI to build the necessary military capability to counter ISIL." The GoI currently receives the US-promised armaments and advisors. Sunni tribes are suffering from a huge shortage in supplies. For instance, in December

An Iraqi Special Operations Force (ISOF) soldier brandishes an IRCG-Qods patch, signifying the strong ties between the two groups. Iranian-backed Shia infiltration of the IA could undermine the ability of the GoI and Anbari tribal authorities to work together to undermine ISIL in the Anbar province.

2014, the Albu Nimr tribe and the Sons of Iraq both reported a 'deathly' low supply of ammunition while attempting to re-take the ISIL stronghold Hit. As promised supplies were not able to serve as a force-multiplier for Sunni tribes in Hit, the ISF and its affiliated Shia militias were launching a completely separate offensive without heeding to the calls for backup that Sunni tribes were beckoning. The December 2014 Hit offensive exemplifies the fact that the GoI is not distributing US aid to Sunni tribes, but rather initiating its own anti-ISIL campaign. Arms and advisors are being sent to Iraq, the GoI just has not held up its end of the bargain from a distribution standpoint.

The US suffers from a fundamental misunderstanding of the strategic impact the Anbari sectarian security divide produces. Continuing to aid Sunni tribes via the GoI neglects a few of Petersen's mobilization mechanisms; rational calculation, social norms, and focal points. Mobilization mechanisms are the forces that induce actors to switch from one of Petersen's societal categories to another. Sunni tribes base their loyalties on rational calculation. The Albu Nimr, Sons of Iraq, and other affiliated anti-ISIL tribes are currently +2 forces. +2 forces are undoubtedly loyal to the government. However, loyalty has its limitations. In the Petersen model, +2 forces are loyal

to the government only as far as their own strategic considerations are concerned. Sunni tribes in Anbar are no different. The benefits of fighting for the GoI must outweigh the costs of fighting ISIL (which are unarguably high). A lack of supplies and support from government forces could really tip the cost-benefit analysis scales in the direction of abandoning the 'good graces' of the GoI.

Trusting the GoI to honestly distribute arms to Sunni tribes on a consistent basis also neglects tribal social norms. Anbari tribes are not bound to the GoI by an unshakable loyalty to its state affiliation. Rather, their ultimate source of adherence lies in "intense preoccupations with family, clan, and tribe." Sunni tribes are thus intensely loyal to the well-being of their kin above all else. Expecting them to remain loyal to the GoI outside of a favorable cost-benefit analysis plainly neglects the cultural sensitivity necessary to conduct effective COIN operations. The US's current arms distribution policy also glosses over the Sunni/ Shia divide that exists between Sunni tribes and the ISF and its Iran-affiliated Shia appendages. The ISF and Anbari tribes only work together on an ad-hoc basis because incentive to work together outside of imminent mutual annihilation is lacking. The ISF is already supported by the GoI. It only uses Sunni tribes when it absolutely needs them. Why? Because the two forces mistrust each other. There is a "Sunni-Shia balance" in the ISF that favors the Shias. Upon the 2011 departure of coalition forces, the Maliki administration 'restructured' Iraq's military with a heavy Shia bias.

At the same time, the ISF is fighting in close coordination with Iranian-backed Shia militias, further widening the sectarian gap between them and the Sunni tribes. Because sectarianism runs deep, both forces (Sunni tribes and the ISF) are inherently skeptical of one another. Thus, trusting one with the well-being of the other also neglects Iraqi social norms. +2 and +3 forces have to be incentivized to fully cooperate as a result of a divergence in ultimate

loyalties and social identities. This neglect of social norms could have a greater effect on the cost-benefit analysis of Sunni tribes to fight ISIL because they are not being adequately incentivized to cooperate with ISF and Shia militia forces. As a result, Sunni tribal mobilization could turn in a negative direction.

Petersen refers to the mobilization mechanism of focal points as "events, places, or dates that help to coordinate expectations and thus actions." US relying on the GoI to distribute much-needed arms create a set of expectations for Sunni tribes. Sunni tribes, if they continue to Anbari Sunni tribes could thus conceivably mobilize to a more negative societal sector (ie -2) if their expectations continue. More effective US aid to Sunni tribes in the form of direct provision is therefore necessary if America wants to keep its current +2 allies.

Petersen also proposes sustainment mechanisms. Sustaining +2 forces at the +2 'level' requires pay, discipline, and the demonstration of an inevitable government victory. The hastily-composed December 2014 Hit offensive gravely violates all of these +2 'sustainment' mechanisms. Sustainment mechanisms cannot be, well, sustained if mobilization mechanisms are not met. In order to sustain an ally, one must first ensure that it will not acquire an antithetical loyalty. The US government sending arms to the GoI directly to be distributed omits mobilization mechanisms and thus provides no foundation for sustainment mechanisms to preserve the trust and COIN capacity of +2 actors like Sunni Anbari Tribes.

> **Around thirty-eight different Sunni tribes call the Anbar province home. It is necessary to more clearly distinguish which tribal actors the US should aid in order to increase the effectiveness of its support. Distributing US funds to all on an equal basis is neither strategic nor possible.**

2. Directly Aid Tribal Confederations

Supporting the GoI and Sunni tribes on a separate basis poses a huge obstacle; knowing exactly who to aid. The previous section laid out the reasons why both entities should receive divided avenues of funding. However, one entity was tossed under the over-generalized blanket term of "Anbar Sunni tribes." Around thirty-eight different Sunni tribes

call the Anbar province home. It is necessary to more clearly distinguish which tribal actors the US should aid in order to increase the effectiveness of its support. Distributing US funds to all on an equal basis is neither strategic nor possible. 'Sunni tribes' in Anbar province are by no means monolithic. Some are affiliated with ISIL, some with the US; others have split allegiances, while the rest lie within gray areas between all of these. Deciding which tribal entities to arms is a terrifying yet possible undertaking that requires some in-depth strategic thought.

In short, tribal confederations, or qabilas, should be the targets of US support. In order to understand why tribal confederations should receive direct US aid, it is necessary to understand how Anbari Sunni tribes are organized. The structure of Anbari Sunni tribes is essentially hierarchical. The most basic political and legal unit is known as the khamsah composed "of all male children who share the same great-grandfather." The biet, or house, contains khamsahs and represents a large extended family which is focused on performing economic functions. Multiple houses make up a clan, or fakhdh. Several clans, in turn, produce a tribe ('ashira). Both clans and tribes perform the primary political and military functions for those affiliated with them.

It is a possibility to directly aid tribes, being they are a relatively large organizational unit for many local Anbaris and that such an action was the previous strategy of the first Anbar Awakening that successfully undermined AQI. It turns out, unfortunately, that most Anbari tribes are in "constant competition" with one another. Each constantly vies to maximize resources for its own kin at any expense. As a result, giving aid on a tribe by tribe basis could produce competition among potential US allies and undermine their ability to effectively counter the ISIL. This fact punches a gaping hole in Petersen's model.

Petersen assumes that +2 forces operate as a monolithic entity and can be strategically treated as such. Inter-tribal competition and potential conflict shows that +2 forces could eventually be at odds with one another. This potential conflict further compounds the complexity of deciding which +2 forces to aid. However, tribes have been known to maintain loyalty to one tribal entity larger than themselves; the tribal confederation (qabila). Tribes within these larger confederations hail from a common descent and

sustain loyalty to it as a result.

The problem with aiding confederations is that tribal unity within them is generally "very loose and informal in military, political, and economic terms." Some tribes may contribute many resources to a confederation while others may only pertain to the well-being of their own specific lineage. Inter-tribal conflict is thus still something necessary to consider. However, confederations consist of the only umbrella-style organization that Anbari Sunni tribes would even consider sustaining any variation of loyalty to. As a result, they (confederations) are one of the only realistic options that could potentially produce a monolithic-ish response to ISIL. One word can help solve the potential viability of genuine confederation loyalty: asabiyya. Asabiyya is an Arabic word that represents group loyalty and the sense of belonging. Although tribal confederations may be informal, asabiyya within in them has been known to be particularly discernible in the face of an "external hazard." Petersen's model again brandishes its beneficial head here. Petersen, as stated before, focuses on the process of strategically binding +2 forces to a COIN operation. Giving money and arms to a tribal confederation increases both its appeal to tribes from a resource maximization standpoint and a credible, well-resourced outlet for tribes to fight through by way of genuine cooperation in lieu of a serious external hazard; the ISIL. It is a potentially favorable cost-benefit analysis that could strategically bind tribes to one another in the form of a confederation. Petersen's model posits that two of the ways to sustain +2 support in COIN operations are derived from pay and the perceived inevitability of a state victory. Fighting ISIL via the direct armament of tribal confederations gives both resources and tribal trust in asabiyya that could produce the perception of unified action and eventual victory.

Tribal confederations may be an effective entity for the US to aid directly but which Anbari tribal confederations should be aid specifically? The Dulaymi tribal confederation may be the most realistic answer. Arguably the largest tribal confederation in Anbar province, the Dulaymi has been known to consist of around "50 main tribes" who span in and out of the province. However, this wide expanse of tribal allegiances lends it to be particularly vulnerable to ISIL influence. The Dulyami tribal confederation, as it stands, is currently "split" in allegiance between ISIL and anti-ISIL forces. Gathering Dulaymi-affiliated

tribes such as Albu Itha (E'tha), Ablu Faraj, Ubayd, and Albu Nimr would be difficult. Using a Dulaymi tribal council could prove effective against ISIL. The Dulaymi tribal confederation may be split on the issue of ISIL, but supporting the factions currently opposing ISIL could help turn the tables against it in strategically key areas such as Haditha, Hit, and Ramadi. This band of tribal fighters would indeed be motley and loosely allied. Yet the combination of material resources for tribal preservation in areas of strong ISIL presence and a common enemy could serve as binding factors that help the tribes coordinate.

Effectively aiding the Dulaymi tribes may produce successful anti-ISIL opposition. Dulaymi tribes either allying with ISIL or currently neutral in allegiance could view these a potentially successful anti-ISIL military campaign as incentive to mobilize on the Petersen societal sector scale and become US allies. If anti-ISIL Dulaymi tribes can be sustained and push back ISIL influence, those tribes allying with ISIL currently may see it in their strategic interest to join in on the US funding and abandon ISIL who could no longer provide an enticing cost-benefit analysis for allegiance. Aiding anti-ISIL Dulaymi tribes could thus utilize Petersen's 'focal points' mobilization mechanism to sustain and even acquire more anti-ISIL support in Anbar province. There is one anti-ISIL entity that this project is unable to completely understand due to a lack of credible information; The Sons of Iraq. They are flagrantly anti-ISIL but their specific tribal make-up and relation to Dulaymi tribes is convoluted at best. The Sons of Iraq could be another beneficial actor for the US to aid directly but its structural make-up and influence was not able to be confirmed by this project.

3. Diversify the Purposes of Tribal Aid

Aiding tribal confederations could still prove problematic if 'allied' tribes succumb to violence amongst themselves. Aiding qabilas is a general way to try and forge a 'marriage of convenience' between tribes by giving them resources and the opportunity to fight a common enemy. The ends to which aid is used for could determine whether a functioning, relatively united anti-ISIL entity is formed or tribal skirmishes trump all and ISIL continues to dominate in the Anbar province. Aid in the form of arms is a beneficial resource to send to tribes. At the same time, money is also a conducive tool. The US is currently

sending money ($24.1 million) in the form of arms. In the first Awakening, money was given directly to Anbari tribes to distribute by way of their natural customs. The US was able to maintain a unified front of Anbari tribes because of its large presence and ability to closely coordinate with them on the ground. However, America no longer has that same 'luxury'. Its troops were rescinded from the area in 2011. Anbari tribal aid must take different forms to account of the lack of US forces directly ensuring solidarity on the ground in the province.

It may seem crude, but money and guns are simply the best types of support that the US can give to Anbari tribes. Success lies not in the type of aid but rather how aid is used. It would be impractical for this project to draw up a plan to recommend an idealized set of resources for Anbari tribes grounded in some sound philanthropic theory. The US can only work with what it has and it has guns and money. Once again, this 'neo' Awakening operates under the guise of Petersen's model which focuses on strategic implications for actions not necessarily humanitarian implications (although the two are by no means mutually exclusive). Guns and money provide incentive for tribes to work together. However, those guns and that money can and must be used for a variety of purposes. US aid is currently geared towards supporting tribal military offenses. Military offenses are a necessary, but not sufficient target of aid to effectively counter ISIL.

Aside from military offenses, US aid to Anbari Sunni tribes must be used for other purposes. Aiding tribal confederations is challenging because a multitude of competing entities (tribes) reside within them (tribal confederations). Resolution mechanisms to sustain inter-tribal unity within them are therefore crucial considerations. Such means of resolution are a key cultural component within Anbar and must be funded if the US wants to keep its tribal allies. Two means of intra and inter-tribal resolution must be funded if anti-ISIL unity is to be sustained. One dispute resolution component that should be given US support are tribal intermediaries or al-mashayas. If a crime is committed within or between tribes or tribal sub-units, the khamsah group initiates the means for vengeance by communicating the fact that the two groups are enemies. The group vulnerable to a violent response will normally approach tribal officials for help. Al-mashayas are one of the first means of dispute resolution employed by tribal

officials because they approach those seeking revenge and physically separate the two groups in conflict. By lodging themselves in the conflict between groups, al-mashayas represent one of the only forms arbitration to stop conflicts from erupting so that intra-tribal and inter-tribal solidarity can be sustained. These tribal intermediaries are composed of respected authority figures such as sheikhs and tribal judges. Their ability to influence dispute resolution rests in their legitimacy. Such legitimacy can only be enhanced with US money. At the same time, giving money to a greater amount of tribal notables to serve as intermediaries on a full-time basis would give more dispute resolution potential within tribal confederations to forge a more unified anti-ISIL front.

A second dispute resolution, the diyya, should also be given funding consideration by the US. Tribal disputes can be mitigated by payment. The payment given from tribal group to another to end a dispute is known as the diyya. Diyyas solidify the fasl, also known as "the solution" that prevents conflicts from escalating between two tribes or tribal sub-units in conflict with one another. Without the diyya, there can be no solution between tribal groups and conflict will continue to escalate. The US should capitalize on the resolution potential of diyyas by setting up a fund for them to be distributed by the tribal confederation council. The council could than have the ability to quickly distribute culturally reasonable sums of money to mitigate tribal conflicts so that the confederation does not completely disintegrate. Obviously, it would be extremely difficult to monitor how that money is actually used. However, the stakes of inter and intra-tribal solidarity are just as important for Anbari tribes because they have to live in a world filled with consistent ISIL attacks. Incentive for distribution of diyya funds may thus be not too far-fetched. Producing a 'diyya fund' may seem naive and impractical but, in reality, the only way to ensure tribal solidarity is through local customs and the diyya happens to be a crucial one. Also, diyyas are not exclusively monetary in nature; they can also include exiling individuals at odds with one another to mitigate conflict.

The US, however, may not ever realistically consider aiding the travel expense of tribesmen in danger of being internally reprimanded. Producing a fund of diyya resources to encourage fast, culturally systematic responses to tribal conflicts as they arise could prove an effective way to maintain tribal confederation

solidarity to ensure a relatively unified tribal front against ISIL.

US funding that goes to Anbari Sunni tribes must be culturally broadened. Putting aid in the hands of tribal confederation councils may be lofty and susceptible to misuse but is nonetheless crucial to undermining ISIL. In the first Anbar Awakening, the US altered its policies and started to aid tribal sheikhs directly. This strategy provided a more effective means of tribal resource distribution on the grounds that it was more culturally sensitive. It also allowed US-affiliated sheikhs to maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of their fellow tribesmen. Tribal authority is "fickle…and therefore hard to fully harness." If the US wants to maintain loyal allies, it must make sure those allies can sustain the necessary amount of command and control. Strategically, it is beneficial to know one's allies and keep ties with them to develop a relationship based on necessary incentives and inevitable trust that comes along with the consistent fulfillment of promises. In order to keep +2 forces on the side of the US, sustained aid towards a more diverse means will keep those in the power the US wants. It may also forge a trust between both sides that could sway the tide of victory in America's favor and away from ISIL.

4. Actively Mitigate Sectarianism

An oft-overlooked factor contributing to the influence of ISIL in Anbar province is sectarianism. It is easy to pin ISIL's ability to control over 35% of Iraq on a military or religious basis. Although these factors play a part, sectarianism trumps all. Sunni tribes allied with ISIL are not all monsters. They are vying for their own strategic benefit. ISIL success in Anbar province is completely derived from the fact that it presents a better outlet for some tribes to live their lives. Zaydan al-Jubouri, a Sunni tribal leader affiliated with ISIL, claims "We chose ISIS for only one reason. ISIS only kills you. The Iraqi government kills you and rapes your women." He is not alone in this sentiment. The Maliki administration systematically marginalized large swaths of Sunnis, especially in Anbar province. ISF fighting alongside Iranian-backed Shia militias isn't too conducive to building trust with Sunni tribes either. ISF forces and Sunni tribes may be able to hold off ISIL advances temporarily. However, even if the US establishes separate funding avenues to the two groups, security cannot be sustained. Security cannot be acquired without mutual trust. Even if ISIL

is eradicated the sectarian divide will allow another similar organization to take its place among the bad blood that exists between the GoI and Anbari Sunni tribes. The US needs to aid Anbari Sunni tribes and GoI in a way that can help mend the sectarian divide in the country. Such a task may not even be possible and this project is not asserting that it can simply recommend a policy that can undo decades of constant strife between the two groups. However, an attempt to do so is necessary, not just to undermine ISIL but to make sure another similar organization doesn't take its place in the future. One way the US can try and incentivize at least some semblance of even the most basic form of trust between the ISF and Anbari Sunni tribes is through the enforcement of no-bid contracts.

No-bid contracts refer to a situation where only one entity provides a needed service and thus has control as to who or what gets bids for said service. The provider of the services thus controls who gets what. The provider is able to incentivize the actions of the recipients. This dynamic generally mimics the situation in Iraq. Although other actors such as Iran financially back the GoI, the United States is the major source of anti-ISIL funding. Both GoI forces (like the ISF) and Anbari Sunni tribes are dependent on US aid. The US needs to utilize this advantage to incentivize both groups to work together. The first step is to establish separate aid channels for GoI forces (such as the ISF) and Anbari Sunni tribes that have already been elaborated on in this project. The second step is to make aid completely dependent up on the extent to which the two sides cooperate and support one another. If one side neglects the well-being of the other, it will lose a portion of its funding. These conditions may not sound always seem politically correct but they realistically use strategy to incentivize cooperation for the time being. An 'alliance of incentives' could be produced. Incentivizing cooperation could lead to what Petersen refers to as "a stable truce among an oligopoly of warlords." In this case, the GoI and Anbari Sunni tribes are included in the warlord category. Such a no-bid contract system should be centered upon two main conditions; the GoI keeps the IRCG forces out of Anbar and that ISF forces stay in Anbari areas to sustain security after they are taken from ISIL.

GoI forces such as the ISF are currently suffering from substantial weakness "after nearly a third of its divisions collapsed in the face of the Islamic State offensive in June 2014." The ISF has turned to the support of

Shia militias as a result. Shia militias have helped the GoI defend against ISIL attacks in Baghdad and other crucial areas but their services come at a price. Shia militias have "reportedly committed human rights abuses against many Sunnis and reinforced Sunni resentment of the Iraqi government."

ISIL operates under the mantra that it represents fellow Sunnis previously abused under 'infidel' leadership. Such a ploy has been effective in Anbar. The GoI is at a conflict of interest between survival and a long-term strategy to gradually mend sectarian resentment. The US should withhold aid to the GoI if it continues to use Shia militias in Anbar. Exactly how much requires an economic analysis that is beyond the scope of this project, however, the GoI must be incentivized to mend sectarian strife in Anbar if ISIL is to be legitimately undermined. That is not to say that Shia militias should be forced out of Iraq altogether. Doing so would increase sectarian strife and is ultimately an unrealistic strategy as Shia militias do provide legitimate military support for ISF forces outside of Anbar. Shia militias should be left out of Anbar because the province is unarguably Sunni-dominated. Many Shia militias operate as puppets of Iran and thus have a different agenda of how to overthrow ISIL and sustain security relative to Sunni tribes. Anbari tribal trust can only be won gradually. The GoI banishing Shia militias out of the province at least shows that it is willing to leave the future of Anbar up to the tribes and not Iran. It could also show Anbari Sunni tribes who are currently not affiliated with ISIL that it genuinely wants to work with them. Putting both GoI forces and Anbari Sunni tribes in the fight together without Shia militia influence could help build operational trust after a while. Such a dynamic could only help mend distrust between the two forces. Current ISIL-affiliated Anbari Sunni tribes may also be persuaded to undermining ISIL if the GoI continues its break with Shia militias in the province. Sustaining +2 forces and acquiring -2 forces would definitely allow the GoI to gradually roll back ISIL influence out of Anbar and hopefully the rest of Iraq as well. The no-bid contract system would ideally enforce and sustain this condition.

At the same time, the ISF must sustain its presence in the areas it helps Sunni tribes take over from ISIL in Anbar province. Years of war have ravaged Anbar's population. ISIL is able to rule over so many Sunnis in Iraq due in part to its ability to provide general security.

The ISF must supplant ISIL as the main security provider in the province if it ever hopes to successfully undermine the insurgency. As of yet, ISF forces "have not been providing any assistance to the Sunni tribes who have been fighting the ISIL units in the province." Namely, they have not been providing security. The ISF must provide sustained security for its tribal allies in Anbar not just in helping out with military offenses but with setting up security perimeters in vulnerable regions as well. The US no-bid contract system should enforce this by detracting aid from the GoI if ISF units provide unwilling to provide these security services. Some ISF units cannot do this as they have their own survival to worry about. However, when the ISF launches offenses and takes territory in Anbar, it should detach security forces to allow for the captured region to be maintained. The ISF has been known to capture areas and pull out immediately after, leaving Anbari tribes to fend for themselves when ISIL counter-attacks. This strategy cannot be tolerated. If the ISF sets up security perimeters in areas it captures in Anbar Province, the two anti-ISIL forces could be incentivized to work together to continually deter a common enemy.

If the ISF can sustain security, it could gradually show Anbari Sunni tribes its willingness to work with them to defeat a common enemy which could lead to more cooperation in the future. This plan is primarily militaristic in nature and may overlook other crucial elements conducive to building trust between the ISF and Anbari forces. It relies on the assumption that the two sides will end up wanting to fully cooperate under the right conditions. However, ending sectarian strife must start somewhere. Incentivizing the ISF to support Anbar tribes could give Anbaris a security provider that isn't ISIL. Petersen's emphasis on focal points is especially important here. If Anbari Sunni tribes either currently allied with ISIL or not opposing the organization see a genuine attempt on the part of the ISF to protect citizens in the province, they could be convinced to switch sides if they deem that security can be sustained through cooperation with the ISF. No-bid contracts could thus have positive ripple effects if properly used.

The proposed no-bid contract conditions are directed solely at the GoI. This does not dismiss the fact that some tribal confederations may be unwilling to work with ISF forces given their distrust of the GoI and its Shia militia influence. However, Anbari tribes have simply abused the ISF less than the other way around. It could be more effective to aid Anbari Sunni tribal confederations directly on the condition that they not succumb to internal fissions. Constant aid will ultimately give tribes the incentive to work together as their livelihood depends upon unity. Providing the GoI with incentive to more fully cooperate with Anbari Sunni tribes and the tribes themselves from not rupturing into competing factions could produce a lethal, relatively unified front against ISIL and undermine its ability to portray itself as the lesser of two evils in Anbar province.

How could the US government be sure that both parties uphold their parts of the deal if given aid? The answer lies in the US Army Special Forces (SF) also known as the Green Berets. SF units are currently attached to ISF forces throughout Iraq, including Anbar province. They are culturally-adept warriors who constantly provide the US government with up to date situations on the ground. Tasking SF with giving an honest assessment of how each side is fulfilling its respective no-bid contract conditions would serve as an extremely effective and credible means of monitoring. However, SF units have been primarily deployed in support of ISF for the purposes of training and advising. The US should spread SF influence to anti-ISIL tribal areas as well. This could provide not only a force that can monitor Anbari Sunni tribes but also one that can strengthen their protection. Dispersing SF power to tribal confederations could give Anbaris more trust in the US as it would be putting its best and brightest on the line to help eradicate tribal lands of ISIL influence. Finally, having SF units positioned among both ISF and tribal forces could produce more effective cooperation between the two Iraqi forces. SF forces could coordinate with one another in times of conflict to systematically utilize tribal and ISF forces in tandem. This way, another mechanism

A U.S. Army trainer, left, instructs an Iraqi military recruit at a base in Taji on April 12. (John Moore/Getty Images)

of coordination would expose the two forces to one another in an attempt to build trust while vying to eradicate a common enemy. A strategic combination of no-bid contracts and currently deployed resources would no doubt take time, money, weapons, and luck but nonetheless serves as a potentially effective way for the US to start bridging sectarianism in Iraq. Future security cooperation could sustain between ISF forces and Anbari Sunni tribes as a result. The ISIL insurgency and future conflicts could be mitigated by a more inclusive Iraqi security system. An illustration of coordinated success came on March 7, 2015 when a joint ISF/Shia militia/Sunni tribal attack led to the acquisition of the town, Khan al-Baghdadi. If this area can be sustained by the joint force and all sides continue to cooperate, the ISIL stronghold of Mosul could be a realistic future target. The US needs to ensure future cooperation between all anti-ISIL forces involved for this to happen. If necessary, the conditions of an enforced no-bid contract laid out above could prove critical.

Current US Operations in Anbar Province and their Implications

The US government and the GoI have recently undergone an attempt to create an Iraqi National Guard. This security force is meant to consist of "a new Sunni force made up of between 120,000 and 200,000…Sunni tribesmen under the central leadership of officers from the former Iraqi army." This force is meant to carry out combat operations in Anbar under the support of coalition air support. It is hoped that a 'mixed bag' of anti-ISIL forces could bridge the sectarian security divide that exists in Anbar province to eventually eradicate ISIL presence from the area. Actual coordination between anti-ISIL forces has been success. The March 7, 2015 Khan al-Baghdadi confrontation is a prime example. However, sustained loyalty and commitment of each respective anti-ISIL force is unlikely for one reason; the composition of the Iraqi National Guard plan isn't strategically sound.

Security cooperation in Anbar rests in strategy. Incentives represent the basis of strategy in Anbar and must be provided to retain the loyalty of ISF and Anbari Sunni tribes. This concept is nothing new as the first Anbar Awakening was deeply rooted in monetary and military force support to Anbari Sunni tribes to retain their help in eradicating AQI influence. The Iraqi National Guard plan, however, is devoid of these strategically-issued incentives.

To start, the plan rests in the ability of the GoI to recruit Anbari tribal forces. Tribal forces are supposed to be enlisted via popular mobilization efforts put on by the GoI. The GoI having such an appeal over Anbari Sunni tribes is wishful thinking. Anbari tribes, under the plan, would have to operate under the guidance of provincial military authorities who adhere to the wishes of the GoI. It is assumed devolving power to the province level will allow the ISF and Anbari tribes to work together on a more localized basis. Tribal incentive to do so is lacking at best. Such a plan glosses over the fact that Anbari Sunni tribes will still have to fight under ISF military officers. Considering the ISF has many times proved unwilling to provide support for Anbari tribes and withhold US-provisioned aid during ISIL assaults, tribal trust of these leaders can only run so deep.

At the same time, details pertaining to the organization of the National Guard, how it would be funded, and the ranges of its powers are not yet solidified. These issues are compounded by the fact that current National Guard units have not been sufficiently paid or armed. If the GoI can't even sustain material incentives to Anbari Sunni tribes, the cost-benefit analysis of the tribes fighting under the auspices of the ISF could be prove unfavorable. Ratification of the bill to formulate wide-spread National Guard units has even been obstructed by centralist Iraqi leaders worried about the implications of giving more autonomy to provincial governing forces. History doesn't help the situation either. The GoI dismantled Awakening units after AQI was undermined and the US left. Any GoI promises of political or military inclusion after the fall of ISIL in an attempt to sustain tribal loyalty will most likely be approached with a heavy amount of skepticism. True cooperation among the GoI and Anbari tribal forces, it seems, will be hard to come by. Tribes have a variety of reasons not to trust their state leaders while the GoI has problems resting power in Sunni entities. Thus, the ability of the GoI to create and sustain an Anbari tribal force under its rule is problematic in nature.

Second, the National Guard plan suffers from a flawed level of analysis in constructing these heterogeneous anti-ISIL forces. It assumes Anbari tribal forces to be a monolithic entity. Anbari loyalties, as has already been established, reside in tribes first and foremost.

Constant competition between tribes amidst the limited provisioning of anti-ISIL aid makes any alliance vulnerable to schisms. Anbari tribes distrust GoI forces and other tribes alike. Forcing them under one anti-ISIL banner under GoI leadership with the hope that ISF officers can lead them to victory is unrealistic. Tribal loyalties must be assessed on a case-by-case basis because they ultimately act in their own best interest regardless of what the GoI or provincial authorities want. Throwing a variety of tribes together without properly sustaining monetary and security incentives and hoping sustained military cooperation to undermine ISIL will take place is culturally naïve. Viewing Anbari Sunni tribes as a large single entity will thus undermine efforts to fund them and undermine ISIL. It will take a more gradual approach rooted in sustained incentives to forge cooperation between these groups and have a chance at lessening ISIL influence in the Anbar province.

Finally, the Iraqi National Guard plan "focuses on the Islamic State while ignoring Shia militias." ISIL simply cannot be undermined in Anbar province until the GoI relieves its reliance on Shia militias in the area. The US government and GoI assume that a common enemy between state security forces and Anbari Sunni tribes is enough to incentivize sustained collective action. What both states fail to address is that Anbari Sunni tribes have another enemy whose failure is antithetical to ISF success; Shia militias. Anbari tribes distrust these forces for good reason. For instance, Shia militias abducted over one-hundred and fifty Sunnis in Samarra and allegedly massacred forty-one in Jurf al-Sakhr. The GoI still relies on these Shia militias for support and this reliance expands into Anbar province. US and GoI expectations to create a joint tribal/state security apparatus is significantly hindered by the presence of Shia militias who operate under an Iranian agenda. As a result, National Guard units cannot be sustained if Shia militias continue to have a dominant influence within ISF ranks. The incentive of Anbari Sunni tribes to undermine ISIL could be greatly outweighed by the potential implications of Shia militia influence once ISIL is gone. US and GoI forces shouldn't make Anbari tribes choose between the lesser of two evils because ISIL has been winning that scorecard. That is not to say a National Guard cannot be formed. It already has and is made up over seven thousand volunteers, including many from the Dulaym tribal confederation. While an abundance of volunteers may paint the plan as a success, details

of GoI infrastructure to retain tribal loyalty and even consistent battle-field coordination have yet to surface. It is imperative the US and GoI alter its strategy to arm Anbari Sunni tribes if sectarianism is to be slowly bridged and ISIL gradually phased out of power.

Potential Implications of a Neo-Anbar Awakening

The U.S. embarking upon a 'neo' Anbar Awakening as per the above recommendations could potentially produce profound implications beneficial to US efforts in countering the ISIL insurgency. These implications produce a dichotomous effect, one that could benefit the Iraqi security apparatus and another could sabotage ISIL. Structuring the 'neo' Anbar Awakening along more culturally-strategic lines could produce a more functional Iraqi security apparatus. The 'neo' Anbar Awakening attacks three mechanisms critical to establishing anti-ISIL control in the Anbar province; organizational coherence, recruitment capacity, and legitimacy.

> ### The 'neo' Anbar Awakening has the potential to provide conducive resources for anti-ISIL actors to establish a relatively effective organizational capacity while diminishing that of ISIL.

The ability to sustain organizational capacity in Anbar province will determine who the victorious actor will be in Anbar province. The 'neo' Anbar Awakening has the potential to provide conducive resources for anti-ISIL actors to establish a relatively effective organizational capacity while diminishing that of ISIL. One does not necessarily have to occur before the other. Gradual cooperation amongst the ISF and Anbari tribal forces could undo ISIL's organizational prowess and then (hopefully) increase cohesion between them (anti-ISIL forces) to the extent that they can protect Anbar jointly and legitimately. If the US is able to sustain aid to Anbari Sunni tribes and the GoI simultaneously, military successes could present themselves relative to the current situation in Anbar province. This is not to say that the two forces can completely eradicate ISIL from the province as that is highly unlikely at this point. What is likely is that sustained aid in the manner prescribed above in

this project could likely increase their relative military success against ISIL.

Sustaining relative military success could undermine ISIL's ability to govern for two reasons. First, it could sabotage ISIL's ability to distribute administrative services, resources, and security. If anti-ISIL forces could gradually roll back ISIL's military strongholds, the organization would no longer have established control of those regions. Without established ISIL control, these territories could not be properly sustained as a wilayat and the administrative functions and services it offers could subsequently suffer a reduction in provision. ISIL is able to sustain its control over territories because its organizational capacity allows it to provide basic amenities not previously given to large swaths of Sunnis (specifically in the Anbar province). If its military strongholds were to be diminished, ISIL could not as easily provide these functions. The security ISIL offers its inhabitants from outside threats would also diminish. Without these mechanisms of appeal, the 'neo' Anbar Awakening could weaken ISIL's ability to govern and subsequently retain control over the local population under its current jurisdiction.

Second, ISIL's organizational capacity could also be damaged in more direct way; lessening the amount of governing personnel it has at its disposal. Iraqi shadow governors compose an integral part of ISIL's command and control structure. Some of these shadow governors are tribesmen. Anti-ISIL forces could either eradicate ISIL-affiliated forces from an area or incentivize them to become, in Petersen's terms, +2 forces (anti-ISIL). Doing so could quite possibly lead to ISIL-affiliated shadow governors fleeing, being killed, or switching allegiances. These three possibilities could then sabotage ISIL's formal organization and possibly impair its overall function in Anbar province.

Organizational implications from a 'neo' Anbar Awakening could also affect recruitment capacities of both non-ISIL forces in the province as well. An actor that is able to assert its organizational capacity to the extent of providing basic services and security will be a more appealing option to the population of Anbar. As previously mentioned, ISIL has been able to 'divide and conquer' various Sunni tribes because it can offer younger tribesmen the spoils of power and resources. Through cost-benefit analysis, tribes will continue

to ally with the power that gives them the most beneficial offer. ISIL's inability to provide substantial benefits to tribes due to a relative loss of hard power in Anbar could decrease its soft power capacity to recruit strategically-minded locals. Anti-IS forces, if able to increase their military momentum, could also have a large impact on ISIL's global recruitment operations. Selling itself as a legitimate 'caliphate' capable of enacting and sustaining Islamic rule will be an increasingly difficult task if it gets gradually pushed out of Iraq. On the flip side, military defeats could make ISIL more brutal in its attempt to sustain foreign recruits bent on waging jihad. However, such a strategy could nonetheless illustrate its desperation and lead to further defamation. There is a reason so many foreign recruits (currently estimated to be around 20,000 strong) join ISIL; it is successful. Success explains why ISIL's numbers have swelled to a huge extent relative to groups like al-Qaeda or al-Shabab. People naturally want to join the best. If potential recruits started to see ISIL as a sub-par terrorist organization, their egos could determine that their abilities could be better used towards a movement that is more likely to be successful. Diminishing either ISIL's actual or perceived success could thus possibly hurt its seemingly impenetrable image, furthermore stunting its local and global recruitment capacities.

It is difficult to assess how anti-ISIL recruitment capacity in Anbar province could evolve if a 'neo' Anbar Awakening is properly implemented because this project does not specifically cover anti-ISIL recruitment. However, given the fact that Anbar is dominated by tribes (tribes that operate in their own strategically-formulated best interest), it is likely that anti-ISIL forces could be more appealing to either neutral or currently ISIL-affiliated actors. Success and perceived competence breed appeal. The extent to which anti-ISIL force establish a functioning organizational capacity that can provide basic life amenities and security that is derived from both Anbari Sunni tribal and GoI action according to the above prescriptions could determine the popular perception of anti-ISIL forces throughout the province.

A diminished organizational capacity, reduced ability to draw on local Anbaris for support, and lessened international appeal could all undermine ISIL's legitimacy. ISIL is a formidable force because it is seen by all as either a legitimate solution to the world's problems or an enemy to humanity. Any

doubt surrounding either of these perceptions could sabotage the functional competency, appeal, and mysticism of ISIL. If it doesn't grow it dies. If the growth of the ISIL 'virus' is stunted and its geographic control gradually rolled back, it will die because it no longer will be able to establish itself as a legitimate entity over such a large amount of people. Anti-ISIL forces (Sunni tribes and the GoI) could witness a completely opposite future if they can fight and govern with one another. Slowly bridging the sectarian divide between Sunnis and Shias in anti-ISIL Iraq could thus increase state legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Iraqis need to constantly witness joint efforts to dispel a common enemy from their state. Cooperation between the variety of anti-ISIL actors and their seemingly diverging agendas will undoubtedly prove difficult to coordinate at times. Nonetheless, gradual actions made by all anti-ISIL parties to at least attempt and work together is a necessary step that has the possibility to result in a relatively more representative Iraq to capitalize on the inevitable power vacuum in the country that could span beyond Anbar province. Doing so could produce a sustained, albeit volatile, legitimacy within an Iraqi state that will once again inherit the responsibility of ensuring a group similar to ISIL does not pose a threat in the future.

Conclusion and Contribution

This paper examined the ISIL insurgency and its implications. Based on extensive theoretical context, a clear delineation between terrorism and insurgency was crafted to highlight the depth of intellectual grappling needed to address the threat of ISIL. In order to counter ISIL, the US must first see it as an insurgent, not merely terrorist, entity and subsequently utilize a variety of tools at its disposal in order to have a realistic chance at undermining it. A variety of counterinsurgency authors and their arguments were covered. Ultimately, the 'strategist' school of thought seemed to be most fitting because of its emphasis on employing a flexible framework of responses to insurgent entities that differ according to time, place, and population.

ISIL and five of its microcosms were addressed to illuminate its complexity. Historical analyses asserted that a mixture of ethnic-religious tensions, political and social disenfranchisement, and existing jihadi infrastructures in place in both Iraq and Syria created a fertile ground ripe with opportunity for a power-

house militant organization to take root. ISIL's appeal presents itself not in the sole garb of religion but that of rational calculation amongst a variety of foreign and local actors as well. ISIL's use of ideological dissemination, recruitment tactics, organizational capacity, and financial resources all propelled its ability to flourish relative to all other competing powers in the region in the wake of the Syrian Civil War and establish itself as a credible, capable governing power. This project put forth three policy recommendations to address the complexity of the ISIL threat. The US's current weaponized drone programs have proved to tip the cost-benefit analysis of many relatively neutral actors towards ISIL. Overall, it has produced much more blowback, in turn crippling America's ability to win the 'hearts and minds' campaign abroad. Defeating ISIL also concentrating US resources on the Anbar province to help Sunni tribes in the region. These tribes provide a calculable base of relatively rational actors to utilize in order to delegitimize ISIL in the Anbar province and beyond. Finally, US efforts to subdue the ISIL threat must not end at prioritizing the use of hard power. A long term approach, political nature, was lastly addressed. A genuine attempt by international actors to bring ISIL to the negotiating table with the intent to incrementally de-militarize the group and eventually bring it into the political process is paramount and represents a new approach to defeating ISIL. Politicization would serve as the physical manifestation of these talks to include ISIL members into a new, more representative political system in Iraq.

A benefit of this project's analysis is that it opens enlightening passageways for further research. The ISIL situation in Iraq and Syria is perpetually dynamic. Circumstances change every day as should solutions to eradicate the organization. Due to the scope of this project, research was limited primarily to the situation in Iraq. Subsequently, analyses of ISIL's recruitment, organizational capacity, and finances in Syria could be expanded on in much greater detail. The situation of Anbar province and ISIL's response to opposing forces in the province will also need to be continually assessed for accuracy. Finally, the prospects of political and social reconciliation between war-torn communities in both Iraq and Syria will hold unparalleled implications for the future of the region. This project truly adds to existing literature because of its emphasis on ISIL as an insurgent and not purely terrorist entity. Simultaneously, it put

forth three innovative policy recommendations that span both short and long-term approaches. While the undertaking was grand, these recommendations, even if unused, can contribute to ongoing research in national and international security.

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For Full Report and References Visit:
http://www.ir-ia.com/reports/Neo-Anbar-Awakening.pdf

Iraqi soldiers monitor a checkpoint east of Baghdad. (Photo Credit: Ali al-Saadi/AFP/Getty Images)

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE BAHRAINI UPRISING - AGENTS OF CHANGE?

Linda Hewitt

Introduction

Since the Arab Uprising[1] started in 2010 there has been an exceptional media attention on Arab women and their role during the unrests (Al-Ali and Pratt 2015). Women were either represented as heroines or victims of neo-patriarchal politics who were sexually harassed in public. Many scholars (Al-Ali 2014; Kandiyoti 2013; Pratt 2013) emphasised on gender aspects during the protests and the various images that were applied on Arab women marching on the streets across the MENA[2] region. The uprisings created a new space for women to be active in the public spheres as protesters, mobilisers, volunteers, doctors, feminists, activists etc. However, the impact of the outcomes on womanhood and gender norms had different effects on women's conditions and rights which varied according to national contexts (Al-Ali and Pratt 2015, 8).

In this paper I will look at the case of Bahrain where especially women's participation received big attention in media as it broke the orientalist stereotype of "the Arab Gulf woman". Bahraini women had to negotiate with tradition and modernity during the protests while looking for a collective identity. I aim to look at women's agency and empowerment during the Bahraini uprising in 2011 by asking what was women's role during the uprising and what were important outcomes for them? I will discuss women's participation of social change during the unrest by focusing on the discourse of empowerment and the concept of agency. Hereby, I want to emphasise on the importance of women's participation on various levels that aimed to achieve a democratic discourse. I am aware that democracy, women empowerment and gender equality have Eurocentric connotations that need to be cautiously questioned within different contexts. Yet, I believe that secular and religious values are possible to combine in order to create a new discourse within a postcolonial framework as different discourses of women's agency intersect.

The socioeconomic status of Bahrain improved over the last decade which positively influenced women's role in society and economic participation. Female empowerment is important on the government's agenda, however their public and political participation is still limited, that is why Bahraini women used the uprisings and new social media to be heard (Aljishi 2013, 55).

Due to limitations I will not go into detail on women's parliamentary participation, but rather on their agency in public during the major unrests from February until May 2011[3]. Also, I will not discuss women's agency representation in media as this would be an essential topic for a separate analysis especially with the importance of Facebook and Twitter during the uprising[4]. This paper gives a very general overview of the political history of Bahrain in order to understand the reasons for a social uprising and will be followed by a short summary of the uprising in Bahrain from February until March 2011. Furthermore, I will analyse women's role, agency and struggles during the uprising, whereby I will focus on the discourse of empowerment of female narratives in the social movement. I want to stress here that the uprising was not a women's movement but a social protest for social equality regardless of religious and class backgrounds, thus the primary concern was of Bahrainis as suppressed citizens of an authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, the movement had unlikely consequences for Bahraini women.

Short Overview of Bahrain's Political History

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy that has "a bicameral parliamentary system with a fully elected lower chamber, and appointed upper chamber" (Aljishi 2013, 57). Compared to its neighbouring countries, Bahrain seemed rather progressive when in 1999 King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa promised to allow political associations, abolished the special courts, released political prisoners, permitted an opposition press and expanded civil rights. In 2001, he initiated the National Action Charter which was perceived as a contract between the King and his people. This "contract" was supposed to lead to democratic reforms (Aljishi 2013, 57). Yet, there are still limitations to that since Bahrainis can only vote for one chamber, while the upper chamber is appointed by the King who tends to elect members of the royal family. Hence, the sovereign has the final word. The kingdom still does not fulfil the qualifications of a democratic state neither is it a totalitarian regime, but rather a more or less authoritarian regime between democracy and totalitarianism (Schmidmayr 2011, 13). Moreover it is an island between the two biggest Islamic factions, the Sunni Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Shiite Islamic Republic of Iran. This locates Bahrain, which means "two Seas", in a hot spot of the Middle East. Additionally,

the regime that dominates politics and economics, is Sunni while the majority of the population (60%) is Shi'a. Bahrain attained independence from Britain in 1971 and established a constitution in 1973(Al Gharaibeh 2011, 96). The power of the Sunni Khalifa family persists almost unchanged since their annexation in 1783 despite different protests during in previous decades[5] (Al-Mdaires 2002, 21). Over the years, the ruling family brought Sunni tribes to Bahrain who had special privileges and divided the island into Sunni and Shi'a quarters[6]. This imaginary strip line is still visible between the poor Shiite villages and the clean wealthy Sunni areas. In the years of 2004 and 2005, first indicators of an upcoming revolution were visible when thousands of protesters demanded a fully-elected parliament. The uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia inspired Bahrainis to join the "Arab Spring". Yet, there were major differences between Bahrain compared to other upheavals in the Middle East because Bahrain infrequently experienced protests and thus the protests were not as unexpected as in other Arab countries. Hence, the uprising in 2011 can be seen as a continuity of earlier unrests (Karolak 2012, 5). The date of February 14th, 2011 marked the tenth anniversary of the National Action Charter which seemed to be a good date for opposition leaders to go out on the streets and demand constitutional reforms and resignation of the king. The upheavals were analysed as sectarian issue, even though demonstrators emphasised that this is not a Shi'a movement but a civil movement whereby also Sunni supporters demanded for reforms (Karolak 2012, 5). Many female activists used the media attention of the unrest to emphasise on gender issues e.g. discrimination, women quota or personal status law (Karolak 2012, 11).

The Uprising

Before the discovery of oil in 1932, pearl trade was very important in Bahrain's economy. This historic significance was mirrored in the monumental sculpture in the Manama Pearl Roundabout, which was the scene for one of the biggest demonstrations in Bahrain on the 14th of February 2011 when thousands of people were protesting against the regime. Due to the parliamentary elections there was a Facebook call two weeks before the 14th of February, to gather around the Pearl Roundabout for a demonstration, which promoted two slogans:
Firstly the protests should be peaceful and secondly it was a call for political reforms focusing on instituting

the constitutional monarchy that discriminates the Shi'a majority (Marlowe 2012, 21). Young and old, women and men gathered on the streets in hope for change. But the Bahraini regime destroyed the people's hopes for a peaceful solution and social improvements when they imprisoned[7], killed and injured many protesters and invaded the demonstration (Marlowe 2012, 21). Thousands of Bahrainis camped for days around Pearl Roundabout, which was supposed to symbolise the Bahraini Ta'rir square, demanding the resignation of the prime minister and the end of Khalifa rule (Hasso 2014, 16). In March 14th the Saudi Arabian troops entered Bahrain sent by the GCC to attack the Pearl Roundabout and destroyed the monument as this place was deemed to be a security threat, police forces barricaded the area and renamed it Farooq Junction (Hasso 2014; Marlowe 2012, 21). Up until now there are small demonstrations in Shi'a villages all over Bahrain that are shut down by police force and tear gas regularly (Marlowe 2012, 21).

Women's role in the Uprising

This chapter discusses women's participation during the uprising by focusing on the discourse of agency and empowerment.

From the start, women were an active part of the uprising protesting in the front row, holding Bahraini flags, shouting slogans such as "No Shiites, no Sunnis,

Arrest of a female protester in Manama, Bahrain

only Bahrainis" to emphasize that they are frustrated with the regime. Jihan Kazerooni, a member of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights said (2012) that women were an important partner during the protests and made up about 50% of demonstrators (Marlowe, 21). Hasso states (2014) that without Bahraini women it would have been impossible to sustain the revolution (21). Not only the number, but also the power of women presented in the public space made them significant participants. Among the female protesters were also many female human rights activists, lawyers, photographers, film makers as well as female doctors and nurses who went to the demonstrations to help wounded protesters. Some female medics even set up underground clinics (mostly hidden in narrow Shi'a villages) where they treated injured protesters (Marlowe 2012, 23). Women organised demonstrations and were often presented as speakers shouting slogans, demanding freedom, emphasising on Human Rights violations and demanded release of political prisoners (Alfoory 2014, 7).

Gender issues occurred during the uprisings as Bahrain has a habitus of gender segregation[8] and male dominance. Previous protests where gender segregated, meaning that men and women protested in different spaces[9] which echoed conservative notions. Especially the opposition group Al-Wefaq stressed the significance of gender segregation in large public gathering (Hasso 2014, 6 and 19). The difference of the uprising in 2011 was that women walked alongside men in the front rows for the first time. Al-Ali and Pratt claim (2015) that "[w]omen's access to economic and political resources, as well as social support networks vary according to social class, place of residence, citizenship status, ethnicity, generation, and political and religious affiliation" (2), meaning that Arab women are not a homogenous group who have the same access to resources in order to perform protests. Nevertheless, during the uprisings there was a generational shift visible because many young women and men were marching together in contrast to gender-segregated protests from previous generations. Internet and the use of social networks such as Facebook or Twitter impacted activists as it engendered the discourse, as well as national and ethnic contexts.

Agency

When speaking hereafter of women's agency, I refer to the ability of a female narrative to make her own free choices which will eventually follow in empowerment. Agency is influenced by factors such as class, religion, ethnicity etc. which can also limit women's decisions (Barker 2003, 448). Yet, women's agency can also modify structures through different strategies that allow women to transform existing patriarchal and political restrictions (Bespinar 2010, 525). In Bahrain many women are struggling for agency especially in public spaces. The uprising in 2011 gave them an opportunity to use their agency as a collective to express their demands for social justice as pro-democratic agents. Bahraini women were not only agents of the uprising, but are also agents of political repression with different means as protester, policewoman, doctors, activists, lawyers etc. Therefore, Bahraini women's agency is multi-dimensional, complex and varies from agents of change, who have different approaches between each narrative, to pro-government agents who aim to maintain the current status quo. Depending on their background Bahraini women represent different agents of progress, struggle and repression (Alfoory 2014, 3). I will not discuss every different agency of Bahraini women as there are too many variables, but I want to highlight that Bahraini women have different demands and do not necessarily represent a homogenous group as it is often misrepresented. Therefore, we have to differentiate between collective and personal empowerment through different women's agencies. By that I mean to separate the "practical" and "strategic" gender interests in the concept of empowerment (Bespinar 2010, 225). Bespinar (2010) defines "practical" gender interest as "practicable alternative" to cope with structural and cultural restrictions which do not change those constraints (225). Whereas, "strategic" gender interests can improve structural restrictions by creating a collectivist approach for an alternative, gender equal society (Bespinar 2010, 225). Of course those interests can overlap. Nevertheless, even if female protesters had their own view on empowerment and reform building processes, during the protests they started to create a collective community that marched together under slogans that concerned and connected them commonly. The protest symbolised an informal task-oriented collective that formed a new public sphere with its own power where also women were involved in the organising committees and medical and media institutions (Hasso 2014, 18). This strategy was not only empowering the society as collective, but could also give individuals an empowering agency within the community.

Empowerment

When using the term empowerment, I borrow Kabeer's definition of empowerment as an interconnection of agency, resources[10] and achievements that enable women to exercise actual choices through which they gain agency. The ability to choose between different options by agents that had not had the possibility before is a key element in Kabeer's definition of empowerment (Kabeer, 2012, p. 217). Empowerment is seen as a process that strengthens agency and resources in a reciprocal relation (Tadros 2010; Yadav 2010; Kabeer 2012). Furthermore, Goldman and Little (2015) claim that empowerment should be assessed as a multidimensional development that seeks to measure growth on a multitude of levels (personal, economic, political) through different discourses i.e. individual (mind and body), domestic (family) and community (society), because it is at the intersection of these discourses that women's individual narratives are found (762). Through a processual kind of active citizenship, women gradually gain the empowerment it takes to co-build the institutions that govern their lives, and that are at the same time forming and formed by their ability for opposition (Kabeer, 2012, p. 230). In the case of Bahraini women, their agency of an active citizen who went out on the streets, opposing the government alongside with men and addressing their concerns out loud (on individual but also societal level) created a discourse of empowerment. Kazerooni states (2012) "women are the power and the strength of our revolution" (Marlowe, 21) because due to their braveness and strength they played a central role in the uprising. But women not only publicly spoke about their demands, but also created information tents around the roundabout that informed women about the need for freedom, democracy and equality. During the uprising the organisation "Women for Bahrain" was established which aims to unite Bahrainis against sectarian separations. It stresses that the uprising was a Bahraini not a Shi'a movement (as the government tended to label it). Activists claimed it to be an inclusive, pro-democratic and nationalist movement which aimed to empower Bahraini citizens (Alfoory 2014, 8). Yet, women used the protests not only to speak up, but also took this opportunity to empower other women from lower classes to become aware of their status. In this case women's agency grew and more women started to demand equal rights and felt like being part of something that could enable change (Marlowe 2012, 22). Zainab Al-Khawaja, daughter of a prominent political prisoner, described how men told her to go to the back of the march for her own safety, but stopped after realising who she was. Some were even thankful to her for breaking the gender barrier and started to support women to go in the forefront (Marlowe 2012, 22). This move may make some men aware that women can be as strong and powerful as men. However, not everyone supported women's participation. Some opposition leaders degraded women for "crossing the gender line" (Marlowe 2012, 22). But this argument was resisted by the people as the revolution continued in a mixed crowd that did not enforce a segregation because the marches were seen as a public space that enabled to express a sense of freedom and equality (Hasso 2014, 21). A collective protest was seen as a tool to achieve empowerment by different sectarian and gendered agents.

Gendered Violence

The down side of women's participation was that they have been subjected to torture and arrests. Doctors and nurses were arrested for treating wounded protesters[11] and teachers were dismissed from schools and universities or even arrested and threatened for speaking up for Human Rights. Al-Ali and Pratt (2015) state that "women's bodies are central to political transformations" (5). Thus, women are often used as embodiment for control since women's behaviour symbolically reflects societies' honour. Legislations implement rules such as dress codes, controlling sexual behaviour or limited access to public spaces (Al-Ali and Pratt 2015). Violence against women by state agents is a counter-revolutionary tactic to silence protesters (Al-Ali and Pratt 2015), here regime apparatuses use sexualized actions such as rape, sexual assault, forcing hostages to undress, removing women's hair covers or monitoring sexual behaviour to blackmail activists in order to control activists through shame (Hasso 2014, 26). Various repressions against women particularly can be termed as "gendered violence" in order to discourage women to join protests, but also as a strategy of control. Out of "security reasons" the government advised parents to protect their daughters from illegal acts (i.e. large protests) to preserve their dignity (Alfoory 2014, 10). This gives a notion of the space of protest to be masculine and aims to limit women's presence of protest activities. State agents use violence towards women to assure their authority despite activists challenging hegemonic gender norms (Al-Ali and

A Bahraini woman holds her national flag during an anti-government protest in solidarity with jailed political activist, Hisham Al-Sabbagh on April 30, 2013. (AFP Photo/Mohammed Al-Shaikh)

Pratt 2015, 9). Kandiyoti claims (2015) that this marks a "masculinist restoration" of patriarchy (in Al-Ali and Pratt, 7). To some extent I agree that the regime may have feared a loss of authority and patriarchy is still an important discourse in Arab societies, yet I disagree with the term "masculinity" as it also needs to be taken into account that different social and class backgrounds perceive "masculinity" differently, thus it need to be contextualized. Furthermore, not only men injured women but also policewomen were sent to (violently) remove women from the protest grounds as well as female doctors were tortured by female security officers (Alfoory 2014, 9 and 13). This stresses that women were likewise violent against other women which underlines my previous claim that Bahraini women are not a homogenous group as different social and economic backgrounds influence their agency. However, both agencies, the pro-government violent agents and the oppositional activist agents, act outside traditional roles and expectations because women are often believed to be kind passive and just caretakers (Alfoory 2014, 14). But this shows that women in power positions can commit a crime out of different agencies such as economic, discrimination or punishment.

Women entering the public sphere are considered to be an important aspect for empowerment, democracy and freedom, since equal access reflects social justice and equal principles. Thereby, discrimination against women is a key element for failure of political systems regarding democratic processes (Al Gharaibeh 2011, 96). There are two views on women's role in Bahrain

the religious discourse that prefers woman to preserve traditional domestic roles and the 'modern' liberal view that promotes women's participation in public spheres (Al Gharaibeh 2011, 97). The Bahraini constitution could be seen to be in between those principles as it calls for women empowerment, but on the other hand limits there access to certain spheres through legal barriers of Shari'a law such as equal right to grant citizenship to their children, personal status law, violence against women (Al Gharaibeh 2011, 99-105).

Results after the Uprising

Women's participation in the Arab uprising has been important at all levels. After the uprising the King initiated a National Dialogue which aimed to find compromises with the opposition on social, political, economic and human rights levels (Karolak 2012, 12). Also women associations were invited to express their concerns. The regime pretends to support women empowerment, but has not been able to show actions. The results of the National Dialogue were formed into recommendations that the King has to approve before the implementation meaning that the National Dialogue itself has no power. Regarding women issues the recommendations included "greater protection of for women against violence, equal rights in the workplace and political and economic empowerment" (Karolak [2012, 12). Furthermore, women asked to grant citizenship to their children and equal salary.

In October 2011, three female MPs participated in the

elections. Hence, women make up 10% of the lower house of parliament (Karolak 2012, 13). However, posters of female candidates were vandalised and women's participation remains quiet due to a low number of candidates. Yet, their presence in Parliament is at least a starting point to have a representative female agency and maybe come closer to a women quota in the time to come. But it also needs to be mentioned that those elected women all represent "modern" agents who support the government that do not necessarily represent the Shi'a majority (Karolak 2012, 13). Even though governmental authorities developed women empowerment, whereas some opposition women reject reforms due to the fact that those come from the ruling regime and the opposition does not propose gender-specific issues. The biggest opposition party Al-Wefaq did not support women's quota as it stated it feared to lose seats in parliament if they would include women (Karolak 2012, 12). But I believe they did not take into account that they may win female supporters and voters if they would include women in their political program. However, female empowerment can only occur through governmental policies as female activists are not able to generate enough pressure to implement reforms that can empower women" (Karolak 2012, 13). Using women's empowerment is a big advantage of authorities against the opposition on national but especially on international level. The government should assist women when running elections or publicising women's associations (Al Gharaibeh 2011, 110). Politically Bahraini women are more active than ever before, but women lack funding and support for running elections.

Additionally, religious leaders have a big influence on voters (Al Gharaibeh 2011, 109). Traditional attitudes in Bahraini society limit women's role in public. Therefore alternative solutions must be found to advance women's empowerment within Islamic culture. Religious and modern standpoints need to find a common framework that allows women to be equal citizens. Legal protection, changing Personal Status Law and bigger involvement of women in political and economic spheres are steps to achieve the discourse of empowerment and equality. Traditions and religion are important in Bahraini society. Yet, the legal constitution has the ability change laws in order to promote equal rights and enable women to participate in public sphere. This could change societies' attitude towards traditional aspects such as divorce, honour crime, inheritance etc. This shift will not happen rapidly, but can change slowly through education and political processes whereby religious leaders may re-think their views on traditional roles of women.

Conclusion

This paper provided a general understanding of women's different agencies during the 2011 uprising in Bahrain. It emphasised on various activities women took. While some activists aimed for change other women aimed to maintain the status quo through governmental control and violence. Women were used to silence other women and eradicate her from political participation (Alfoory 2014, 15). This eradicates the notion of Arab woman being passive and apolitical. I do not make a demand of being complete since each agent is unique and agents of change can differ in their strategy of involvement. Thus, this paper represents a self-selected choice of examples to emphasize on different possible agents and the multi-dimension of women's agencies in Bahrain. This intended to eliminate the dominant image of "The Arab Gulf woman", "The female protester" or "The Bahraini woman".

Even though the demonstrations did not yet significantly change legal regulations, some women still perceive their participation as a step forward towards liberalism. Strength and willpower illustrated that women have the ability for change. However, up until now Bahraini women ask for empowerment, waiting for authorities to react on their demands (Karolak 2012, 13). Bahrain's case shows ambiguity regarding women empowerment. Even though women were in the front rows during the protests they seem once more marginalised. The pro-democratic uprisings were unable to develop women's rights and politics remains male dominated. Also religious leaders oppose female candidates which are another influential factor for women's empowerment as conservative electors would not vote for women (Karolak 2012, 14). There are many barriers in the private and public sphere that prevent an advanced empowerment of women. Even though women and men were mutually protesting for reforms there is still a "lack of commitment towards women's rights" (Karolak 2012, 13) which is needed for a pro-democratic movement.

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1. I avoid using the term" Arab Spring" as it tends to unite the diverse processes and outcomes of the different countries in the MENA ranging from reforms and protest movements to civil war .

2. The Middle East and North Africa

3. Even though Bahraini women have full political rights since the 1973 Constitution, they remain disadvantaged as the Election Law of 1973 was perceived to apply only to male citizens due to conservative and religious agents' visions (Aljishi 2013, 59). As example, in 2002 the first municipal election took place whereby 30 women stood for elections, but none of them were elected, which surprised the Bahraini society (Aljishi 2013, 60). For further details on possible reasons why female candidates in Bahrain fail to enter parliament see Aljishi, Bahiya J. (2013) . 'Reforms and Political Participation of Women in the Kindom of Bahrain.' In Turkish Policy Quarterly. 11(4), 55–67.

4. Social media activity was widespread during the unrests and also offered a platform in uncovering stories from the urising, give it an international public attention and helped organising the protests.

5. In 1938, 1950s, 1965, 1970s and mid-1990s, mostly demanding for reforms by working classes (Hasso 2014, 5-7).

6. Naturalization policy: They still bring non-Bahraini Arabs and Pakistanis to Bahrain, to grant them Bahraini Passports and recruit them into the army or police, to increase/shift the number of Sunnis in Bahrain and to avoid employing Shias for higher positions.

7. For further information on arrested Bahraini Human Rights activists see http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/human-rights-defenders-targeted-bahrain-2 [accessed May 02, 2015]

8. But compared to other Arab countries such as Egypt or Lebanon, sexual harassment in public spaces is rare in Bahrain.

9. Often on the other side of the street or behind the men.

10. Resources can be material, legal, relational and knowledge (Kabeer 1999)

11. See "Bahrain: Shouting in the dark" You Tube video, 50:55. Posted by "Al Jazeera English," August 4, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaTKDMYOBOU

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DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST:
EXTERNAL STRATEGIES AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

Caterina Perlini

1. Introduction

Authoritarian governments in the Middle East, particularly in the region's Arab core, have largely remained resistant to the processes of democratization that have engulfed other parts of the world since the 1970s. This period is associated with the third wave of democratization that began in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s, spread to South America in the early 1980s and reached East, Southeast and South Asia by the late 1980s. The end of the 1980s witnessed a rise of transitions from Communist authoritarian rule in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, as well as a trend toward democracy in Central America and South Africa. This wave, however, did not reach the Middle East. In fact, the region is not only strikingly less politically free than any other region, but according to Freedom House's annual reports, it is also slightly less so today than it was in the 1980s. During the last quarter of a century, not one Arab leader has been removed from office through competitive elections. In this, the Middle East has experienced the fewest regime changes on average among predominantly non-OECD regions.

During the mid-and late 1980s, a number of countries in the Middle East had engaged in political liberalization and democratization. This was partly a result of escalating popular dissent with authoritarian leaders that caused major riots in opposition to the established political order. These domestic pressures led to political progress in such countries as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Jordan. Each of these countries experienced an increase in political activity, in particular through elections that contained some degree of transparency. Yet, not only has progress towards genuine political change remained slow across the entire region, but it has also encountered steep decline. Countries that intended to liberalize their political systems have maintained restrictions on political participation and competition, hereby limiting opposition and guaranteeing the survival of the regime in place. There has also been a significant amount of backsliding. In the case of Algeria for instance, efforts of democratic progress were put on hold in the early 1990s, reverting back to authoritarian military rule. Recent signs of political change in the region were equally followed by further backsliding in 2010. In Egypt for instance, the parliamentary elections of 2005 were hailed as a major sign of democratic success. However, the limited pluralism that marked the 2005 elections soon deteriorated, giving way to widespread repression, opposition crackdown and fraud during the 2010 vote. Similarly, the Egyptian media, which had witnessed limited openings during the past several years, faced the closure of various publications and the arrest of several journalists. In the Gulf States, Kuwait experienced a decline of its civil liberties since 2010, due to 'restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly' and Bahrain carried out a campaign of repression directed against the country's majority population of Shia Muslims.

In December 2010, after a long period of absence, a strategic player returned to the political stage of the Middle East: the people. In Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Oman, and Libya protesters flooded the streets demanding accountable government and in some cases, regime change. In Tunisia and Egypt, this populist wave overthrew two of the region's most resilient dictators. Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia had been in power for 24 years and was ousted in January of this year. Similarly, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak surrendered his powers in February 2011, ending his thirty year long presidency. Despite these recent stirrings, thirty years after the beginning of the third wave, political liberalization in the region has still largely failed to remove incumbent elites and empower their opponents.

In light of these events, the onset of the twenty first century shows an Arab world that has largely missed the opportunity to move towards democracy, human rights, and economic as well as social progress on a variety of fronts. However, domestic demands for democratic reforms are increasing and are likely to remain at the core of political life. For now, not one successful democracy has emerged in the Arab world, where one-party states continue to thrive. Nor in the words of Lebanese journalist Hazem Saghia, 'has a leader emerged amongst us that would have the modesty of Nicaraguan dictator Daniel Ortega who accepted without bloodshed the result of the peaceful elections that demoted him'. Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2011 report, supports these assumptions, stressing that thirteen out of sixteen Arab countries classify as 'not free'; the exceptions being: Lebanon, Morocco and Kuwait, graded as 'partly free'. In this, Arab countries are recognised as commonly manipulating elections and the media, as well as oppressing non-governmental organizations.

This story of the Middle East's struggle with democracy and of the forces that have made the region resistant to democratization for such a considerable period of time, as well as those that are increasingly pushing for change today, is the subject of this paper's investigation. What factors - external and internal - explain the current level of (non)-democratization in the Middle East? Moreover, given recent democratic stirrings, what are the prospects for successful transition to democracy? The basic answer of this study is that the contemporary weak state of democratization in the Middle East is as much a result of international influences as of domestic forces and calculations. For decades, external influences have provided financial and legitimacy resources that have supported autocratic regimes in the Arab world. Meanwhile, authoritarian governments in the Middle East have proved proficient at allocating power and wealth in the hands of the central state, heavily investing in coercive security apparatuses to suffocate external as well as internal pressures for democratic reform. However, international pressures for democratization coupled with the wide reaching effects of globalization and the tremendous changes in the region's demographics, have increased political awareness throughout the Middle East and provoked a relentless momentum for change. Thus, although the region still faces major obstacles to successful democratization, demands for just and transparent government will likely remain a central part of Arab political life.

1.1 Methodology of Research

This paper seeks to contribute to the aforementioned literature on democratization in the Middle East by analyzing the interplay of internal as well as external factors that has shaped the political environment in the Arab world. It dismisses the assumption that democracy is incompatible with the Middle East because of cultural reasons. Instead, it argues that the lack of democracy in the Arab world can be explained by its strategic situation that has attracted foreign involvement, the ever-lasting presence of regional and international conflicts, as well as deep rooted economic and social factors that have inhibited democratization. On the other hand, contemporary forces shaping political change in the Middle East are increasingly emanating from the inside and are pushing for greater political participation and just representation. To investigate these assumptions, a qualitative research methodology is used, relying on the analysis of primary and secondary academic

sources. This is done through textual and content investigation of books and articles published by academics specialized in Middle East politics, as well as through the examination of reports, print and web-based, of such organisations as the United Nations that actively shape the political environment of the Middle East. In this, the yearly Arab Human Development Report and the Freedom House criteria are particularly relevant in understanding the issue of democracy in the Middle East.

For the purpose of this study, the terms Arab Middle East and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) -region are used interchangeably, representing the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. This paper therefore uses the membership of the Arab League as spatial delimitation, excluding the following five countries that are located further south on the African continent: Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia and Sudan. The Middle East is understood as a historical, social as well as geographical concept. It has witnessed Islamic conquests and Arabic empires, the Crusades and Western and Mongol invasions. It was under Turkish and then European domination before becoming home to a variety of new nations in the twentieth century including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. This definition of the area that is being studied provides the spatial delimitation of this dissertation. Temporally, the study focuses on the current state and level of democratization in the early 21st century. However, explaining this requires going back in time, and analyzing events and developments that have affected the current circumstances. Thus, the paper relies on orthodox historical and contemporary analysis. Historically, it will therefore go as far back as the 1970s, the beginning of the third wave of democratization that saw more than five dozen countries throughout Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia undergo some form of democratic transition.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The aim of this study is to make clear the interplay of external and internal forces that explains the Middle East's democracy deficit as well as the recent push for democratic change. To a certain extent, the difficulty in explaining the source of the Arab world's democracy

deficit resides in the complex meaning of the term democracy itself. Therefore, it is crucial to first make clear some of the basic terminology and assumptions of this paper – starting with the terms 'democracy', 'democracy deficit' and 'democratization'.

For the purpose of this paper liberal democracy is defined as a type of regime that secures personal freedom and private property, and governs according to the rule of law through representative government responsive to the people in regular elections. There is, however, wide disagreement among scholars of international relations on the current definition of the term democracy. Payne argues that the word democracy has become indefinable because it has too many meanings. Whereas, Williamson advocates the importance of Plato's Republic for anyone seeking to understand the enduring challenges facing democratic societies. In the words of Alain Touraine, democracy 'does not reduce human beings to the status of mere citizens' but 'recognizes them as free individuals who also belong to economic or cultural collectivities'. An accurate investigation of the debate surrounding the term democracy would of course require a massive volume. In the context of this study, however, one can explore the term's popular conceptions in order to set the scene for a proper analysis of the Middle East's democracy deficit. Despite the variety of pertinent definitions regarding the term democracy, the most significant aspect for this investigation remains that it is a form of political system in which the ordinary citizen is endowed with the right to influence the course of his government through the process of free elections. Put briefly, "democracy is a system in which incumbents lose elections and leave office when the rules so dictate'. It is a form of government 'in which political freedom is guaranteed and in which members of the democracy have equal, effective input into the making of binding collective decisions[…] it thereby combines the notions of "government by the people" and "government for the people"'. In other words, democracy is a political system whose legitimacy stems from the principle of popular sovereignty. This being that ordinary citizens have the right to govern themselves.

Given this definition of democracy, the notion of democracy deficit must be viewed in terms of a question of legitimacy. Legitimacy is defined as the right to govern based on public consent. In other words, the notion of democracy deficit implies the exclusion of citizens from the political process. It entails a process of decision making from above that does not represent the interests of the people and finally, it suggests limited accountability of government leaders. Thus, a democracy deficit insinuates a form of government that does not provide for a minimum of delegation and a maximum of information and transparency.

Political democratization on the other hand, entails 'an expansion of political participation in such a way as to provide citizens with a degree of real and meaningful collective control over public policy'. It is also important to distinguish this notion of democratization from that of political liberalization. Political liberalization in fact, involves 'the expansion of public space through the recognition and protection of civil and political liberties, particularly those bearing upon the ability of citizens to engage in free political discourse and to freely organize in pursuit of common interests'. The distinction is important given that elements of one can exist independently of the other. Political repression can be relaxed without simultaneously increasing political participation. In fact, far from accompanying democratization, such methods of political liberalization can be used to avoid genuine democratic reform. Likewise, governments can restrict political freedom whilst claiming widespread popular participation. Political freedom however, is essential to a functioning democracy. Without political liberty citizens are unable to effectively organize and take part in the decision making process. Moreover, elections are viewed as a crucial part of a democratic system. However, the existence of elections must not be confused with the substance of democratic politics. Elections conducted under 'highly distortional systems of electoral representation or amidst widespread electoral fraud may not in fact provide citizens with any effective say in political decision making'.

In sight of current democratic stirrings in the Middle East, there has been an increase in academic interest in the processes and prospects of democratic transition. This has become apparent in the upsurge of publications and discussions on the subject. In this, while partial case studies abound, there have been relatively few attempts to identify the key issues arising from the study of political change in the Arab world. This project is an attempt to address this deficiency by paying particular attention to the interplay of international and domestic forces in shaping the

course of political change in the Middle East.

The following analysis of the Middle East's democracy deficit rests on the assumption that states and regimes are not isolated entities, but that they exist in an international system that can both undermine as well as support political change.

Moreover, the contemporary international system is shaped by the process of globalization that creates a diffusion of democratic values, raising the prospects of regime transition whereby political events in one country trigger effects across international borders. Thus, explanations of domestic political dynamics require reference to forces emanating from an external environment. Nevertheless, despite the growing influence of external forces, their ability to manipulate regimes of sovereign states is limited. Therefore, the paper suggests that it is impossible to analyse the political situation in the Middle East in isolation from domestic actors, institutions and events. In fact, although regime incumbents and their domestic political opponents may be influenced by external forces, political developments in the struggle for state power are largely to be explained in terms of domestic forces and calculations. In the case of the Middle East, this has become particularly apparent during this year's Arab revolts that have occurred in the name of democracy and were triggered by domestic actors.

In order to address the question pertaining to the forces shaping the current state and level of democratization in the Middle East, this paper is divided into three sections. The first section explores the external forces that have played a major role in stalling as well as advancing democratization in the region. In particular, it looks at US foreign policy, which has shaped the contemporary political environment in the Arab world.

The second section analyses the domestic forces that explain the region's resistance to democracy, as well as those internal dynamics that have been pushing towards democratization. Finally, the third section looks at recent developments in the Middle East in an attempt to examine the prospects for democratic transition and the changes that have occurred throughout the region. The paper concludes that any examination of democracy in the Middle East must take into account the complexity of this political geography - international and domestic interaction of forces – as well as the prospects and challenges that

face the progress of democratization in the region.

2. External Influences and Middle East Democratization

2.1   Stability verses Democracy

This part sets out to explore the external forces that have shaped the democracy deficit in the Middle East. In this, the focus is on US foreign policy towards the region and the ways in which it has inhibited political change. US policy has played a major role in shaping the contemporary political environment of the Arab world, in particular because of the US' historical involvement in the Arab-Israeli peace process and the articulation of the global War on Terror in 2001 that centred on a 'forward strategy of freedom' in the Middle East. This involvement translates into the fact that for many years the region has received the bulk of US bilateral foreign aid. In 2008, the share of US foreign assistance consumed by the Middle East amounted to 34%. Moreover, out of the six primary recipients of US foreign aid, four countries are located in the Middle East: Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq. On the other hand, this analysis also shows that to a certain extent, US policies have provoked increased political awareness in Arab countries. Similarly, the chapter demonstrates that globalization as an external force has allowed for the diffusion of democratic values in the Arab world.

> **Western strategy in the Middle East has helped maintain the stability of authoritarian regimes by providing material and legitimacy resources.**

Contemporary Western and especially US attitudes toward Arab democratization and international support for authoritarian regimes are a core impediment to democratization. In this, Western strategy in the Middle East has helped maintain the stability of authoritarian regimes by providing material and legitimacy resources. In fact, external actors have long favoured policies of stability over regime change, given that, regardless of the character of the opposition, political change is always accompanied by a period of turmoil and insecurity. This could threaten Western economic and security interests by a disruption of energy supplies, lesser collaboration

in the fight against terrorism and migration control. Moreover, the fear of the rule of Islamist groups, understood as 'parties and political organizations that promote social and political reform in accordance with Islamic religious principles that may lead them to oppose US or EU foreign policy' , has long provided a rationale for supporting authoritarian regimes.

In their extensive study of Middle East authoritarianism Sean Yom and Mohammad Al-Momani use the case study of Jordan to explore the relationship between international support and domestic regime stability. They find that the cessation of the democratic reform program initiated in Jordan after the 1989 financial crisis is directly linked to mounting levels of foreign assistance provided by the US and its allies. During the 1990s, a wave of civic unrest swept across Jordan, threatening the authority of the ruling monarchy through growing political opposition. For the US and its allies 'the prospect of executive power turnover from the conservative state apparatus to a potentially hostile, Islamist oriented ruling alternative ran counter to long term strategic interests'. In fact, Jordan was to play a crucial role in American political endeavors across the Middle East, particularly with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. When the monarchy signed the peace treaty with Israel in 1994, the US poured substantial amounts of economic aid and security assistance into Jordan. Thus, regime stability was upheld in order to maintain the peace accords with Israel at the expense of any democratic agenda in Jordan, especially because major democratic groups in the kingdom voiced their opposition to the truce. For the monarchy, external assistance reinforced its fiscal capability and security apparatus, enabling the regime to constrain the opposition without fearing international repercussions. Since 2001, Jordan's collaboration with Washington's War on Terror further increased the amount of economic and military support to the country and weakened prospects for change.

The Jordanian case alone cannot provide for a general causal explanation of the democracy deficit in the MENA. However, it is helpful in that it demonstrates the extent to which foreign forces play a role in shaping the domestic balance of power between the ruling regime and the opposition in Arab states. In fact, external economic and military assistance can strengthen the power of ruling elites and ensure the continuity of the autocratic system.

Prior to September 11, 2001 US policy towards the Middle East viewed authoritarian regimes as a bulwark against Islamist opposition movements that were spreading during the 1990s. Brown and Shahin argue that even unfriendly repressive establishments, for instance Syria's, Libya's and Iraq's, were favoured by the US to Islamist alternatives.

> **Paradoxically, countries receiving immense amounts of US aid have succeeded in dissuading democratization initiatives.**

Nevertheless, democratization was not completely ignored. During the George H. W. Bush administration, small scale Arab world democracy aid programs were launched. They were designed to encourage accountability, good governance and the rule of law. The underlying principle of these projects was that they would support the market-based economic modernization policies that at the time were the top of the US' agenda in the Middle East. The Clinton's administration's emphasis on democracy promotion later gave rise to various larger projects in Egypt, the West Bank and Gaza, drawing on funds from the massive share of financial aid allocated by the US to these places. These long-term projects aimed to develop parliament, the court system and NGOs. They reflected the general sense that democracy promotion would weaken Islamic fundamentalism and advance economic liberalization. Nonetheless, these projects remained largely superficial, avoiding controversial issues, such as political Islam, that could be perceived as an intrusion into domestic politics and upset friendly regimes.

Paradoxically, countries receiving immense amounts of US aid have succeeded in dissuading democratization initiatives. Since 1975, economic and development assistance to Egypt through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) amounts to over $28 billion. It is the largest US development assistance program in the Middle East. Additionally, US military aid to Egypt totals over $1.3 billion annually since the wake of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979. However, according to the terms of the bilateral aid relationship, the Egyptian regime had the right to veto

all democracy promotion projects, putting democracy initiatives directly under the control of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. According to Brown and Shahin, democracy and human rights issues were never placed on the agendas of meetings with Arab leaders prior to September 11. Former director of policy planning at the US Department of State, Richard Haass, asserted that previous administrations have not attributed sufficient priority to democratization and declared that:

the United States has avoided scrutinizing the internal workings of countries in the interest of ensuring a steady flow of oil; containing Soviet, Iraqi, and Iranian expansionism; addressing issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict; resisting communism in East Asia; or securing basing rights for the U.S. military […] yielding to what might be called a "democratic exception" in parts of the Muslim world – the United States has missed an opportunity to help these countries adapt to the stresses of a globalizing world. In this, he claimed that continuing to make this exception in the Arab world was no longer in the interest of the US and that future policies 'will be more actively engaged in supporting democratic trends in the Muslim world than ever before'. Thus, to a certain extent, the attacks of 9/11 triggered a re-orientation of Middle East policy, consigning democracy promotion to the forefront of the debate surrounding the fight against global terrorism. By the same token, Powell announced the creation of the US-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in 2002 that would provide American support for various democracy promotion programs, encouraging civil society and political participation. Then, in November 2003 Bush announced a 'new policy' toward the Middle East: 'a forward strategy of freedom'. This new policy included initiatives such as the MEPI and the Broader Middle East and North Africa Partnership Initiative (BMENA) announced in June 2004 at the G8 Summit, both aiming to promote reform in the political, social, cultural and economic sphere of Arab nations. Efforts of democracy promotion were also made on the level of public diplomacy, encouraging bilateral meetings between US officials and their Arab counterparts. Former US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, held a speech at the American University of Cairo in June 2005 declaring that 'for 60 years, the United States pursued stability at the expense of democracy in the Middle East -- and we achieved neither'. The most drastic expression of the Bush administration's interventionist foreign policy was the military invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in 2003. The core rationale for the war in Iraq was pre-emptive self-defence against presumed weapons of mass destruction and global terrorism. Yet, democratization was also part of the rhetoric surrounding the invasion, given that a democratic Iraq was perceived as an example that would promote reform across the entire region.

However, although the administration's initiatives were hailed as ground-breaking they were very little different from those put forward by the Clinton administration and did not provide a major momentum for political change. In fact, Dalacoura argues that MEPI projects resemble those carried out by USAID, especially because USAID is responsible for the implementation of most of the MEPI programs. There are no indications that MEPI's approach has profoundly altered US democratization strategy in the Middle East, also because the initiative only receives limited funds. The Brookings Institution noted in 2004 that MEPI had received a total of $264 million, of which it had spent just over $103 million. In this, it is dwarfed by US expenditure in Iraq, estimated at $806 billion, and the war on terror generally, which runs into more than one trillion dollars. Besides, MEPI's lack of a coherent strategy for pursuing reform initiatives and meeting its objectives has led to a general failure of gaining solid US government support for its programs. Subsequently, this impedes the program's ability to have a substantial impact on deeply ingrained social issues and uncooperative regimes.

The intervention in Iraq has thus far not produced apparent results on the democracy front. In sight of deep ethnic cleavages dividing Iraqi society and their violent expression that has caused hundreds of thousands civilian casualties, prospects for a stable democracy in Iraq, eight years after the invasion, remain extremely doubtful. Although the country no longer suffers under authoritarian rule, the post-invasion period has been much more difficult than previously anticipated and the war has inflamed anti-American sentiments across the region, 'strengthening the hand of Islamic radicals and complicating the life of pro-Western Arab democrats.'

The United States and Europe assert that pushing for democracy in the Middle East is part of a new security imperative and have introduced a variety of pro-reform policies, but Western governments remain inapt at putting this commitment into practice

through efficient policies.

2.2 Democratic Diffusion

To a certain extent however, external efforts of democratization, such as those pursued by the United States during the Bush administration have triggered a debate across the Arab world about the need for political change. Indeed, it has been argued that the Bush administration's public democracy promotion rhetoric has 'shaken the Arab world out of its apathy and forced reform on the agenda in an unprecedented way'- even though this debate is accompanied by criticism of US policies in the region. Analysts argue that US emphasis on reform has made it possible for opposition movements in the region to act more boldly. The desirability of political change is also being discussed throughout the Arab media. Especially Arab satellite television channels, such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, have defined democratic reform as a core Arab issue. Al Jazeera sought to give voice to a 'deep Arab frustration with the perceived failures of Arab regimes. In 1999 alone, almost a dozen Al Jazeera talk shows criticized the absence of democracy in the Arab world'. In this, Arab media today represents a powerful force encouraging a pluralistic political culture. Similarly, debates in the Middle East about political reform have 'multiplied and taken on a freer, franker character' even if there is still more talk about the imperative for democracy, than action to bring it about. The debate on democracy has also prompted an examination of Islamist movements and their standpoint concerning democratic reform. Responding to the debate initiated by US foreign policy, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood revealed its own political reform initiative in March 2004. They demanded democratic freedoms, the limitation of the sweeping powers of the president, and the suspension of the emergency law.

In May 2002, the publication of the United Nations Development Program's Arab Human Development Report enhanced the legitimacy of reform as a pressing pan-Arab issue. The report condemned the deficits of education, good governance, freedom, and women's empowerment and advanced political and economic reform as crucial to solving the multiple difficulties facing the Middle East. The fact that it was drafted by well-respected Arabs and also had the expertise of the United Nations to support it, contributed to the authority of the report, leading Arab governments to establish a committee in the Arab League in order to study its recommendations.

External pressures have pushed certain Arab regimes to initiate democratic reform, albeit in a limited and highly controlled way. Restricted political openings have been introduced in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria and Morocco, at different times and to various degrees, advancing civil rights and allowing for more political participation, mostly through elections. In Qatar for instance, citizens voted for a constitution in 2003 that gave rise to the establishment of a 45 member parliament and in Saudi Arabia the first municipal elections in more than 40 years were held in 2005. Likewise, in 2005, Egypt held its first ever presidential elections and Kuwait introduced women's suffrage. Herein, although hailed by the West, democratization efforts have largely been exploited by Arab governments. Elections have allowed regimes to open political space without changing the status quo and have ultimately ensured the power of ruling elites. However, these limited political reforms have offered Middle Eastern societies a glimpse of what democratic politics might look like and have encouraged awareness in civil society of the question of political change.

In turn, Middle Eastern society's awareness of the need for political change is being amplified by the wider effects of globalization. Globalization has contributed to a shift from tribalism to citizenship as the defining characteristic of the political order in the Middle East. It has given rise to gender politics, challenging traditional conceptions of the role of women in Arab society. Efforts to empower women are bearing fruits for instance in Saudi Arabia where women now 'own more than 20,000 companies and establishments'. Further, the participation of women as political candidates, such as in Kuwait's 2006 parliamentary elections, has inspired women in neighbouring countries, generating a change of attitude that is likely 'to strengthen demands from civil society for a greater political voice for women'.

Moreover, new social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, the wider blogosphere and innovations in communication technologies have provided citizens with new vehicles to participate in international debates and mobilize. The region's satellite-based media has also been involved in creating a political culture of engagement and awareness. Television stations such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya have

Members of the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly celebrate the adoption of the new constitution in January 2014. (Aimen Zine/AP)

contributed to the creation of a more 'pan-Arab cultural space in which developments in one country have a more immediate and profound influence on outcomes elsewhere in the region'. The effects of globalization through the growth in information and communications technologies, and in particular internet access, has increasingly exposed the Middle East's young generation, to norms and values which are prone to result in greater political awareness. This type of exposure has fostered a better understanding among Arab society, of political and social practices on an international level. Thus, growing frustration with autocratic systems has the potential of translating into domestic political activism in favour of democratization.

In this, external influences have provided financial and legitimacy resources that have supported autocratic regimes, inhibiting political change. Yet, recent international pressures for democratization combined with the wide reaching effects of globalization have increased political awareness throughout the Middle East providing a momentum for change. Having explored the international environment in which Arab regimes operate, this paper turns to the analysis of the specific domestic politics that have restrained democratization, as well as those internal forces that have pushed towards it.

3. Domestic Forces and the Struggle for Democracy

3.1 The Resilience of Authoritarianism

The primary dependant variable for scholars of Middle Eastern politics has long been authoritarianism. However, in sight of contemporary anti-authoritarian uprisings sweeping across the Middle East, political scientists are forced to rethink their endeavour. Egypt and Tunisia have experienced peaceful political revolutions which will lead to major change, Yemen and Syria are repressing their populations forcefully, Libya is torn between international war and civil war and others like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are suffocating the democracy movement. Whilst experiments in liberalization, even democratization, are occurring in several countries, others are closing up. The political situation in the region is now far too multifaceted to be explained by a few selected theories. Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge the significant role of the interplay between a variety of external and internal forces that is shaping the politics of the region. This chapter explores the social, economic and political domestic forces that have impeded democratic progress in Arab countries, as well as those that are currently demanding transparent and just government.

Fundamentally democracy is shaped by the historical

and cultural context out of which it arises, but the use of the political culture concept in attempting to explain the democracy deficit in the Middle East is controversial because of its frequent abuse. The region has been subjected to blatant overgeneralizations and reductionist stereotyping. This is the case for instance in Patai's well known piece, The Arab Mind, which asserts that 'the Arabs are the least willing of nations to subordinate themselves to each other, as they are rude, proud, ambitious, and eager to be the leader'. Similarly, Kedourie describes Arab society as accustomed to 'autocracy and passive obedience, and therefore incapable of upholding the democratic culture necessary for civil society'. Huntington's response is that the Arab and Islamic world more broadly, lacks the core political values that triggered the emergence of representative democracy in Western civilization: 'separation of religious and secular authority, rule of law and social pluralism, parliamentary institutions of representative government, and protection of individual rights and civil liberties as the buffer between citizens and the power of the state'. In this, claims about how Islam is inimical to democracy are insufficient to explain the political situation in the region, given that Islam like other religions is open-ended, subject to interpretation, and widely varying in practice across both the dimensions of time and distance. The topic of this paper is Arab political regimes, and the category 'Muslim' is too broad to be analytically meaningful.

Much of the literature seeking to explain the lack of democracy in the Middle East falls into the structural category. In this, the patriarchal and tribal mentality of Arab society is said to be one of the core factors hindering the development of pluralist values. The continuation of extended kinship ties is said to impede the emergence of a sense of national unity, which is posited as a prerequisite to successful democratization. Similarly, Michael Herb finds that sectarian cleavages in Jordan are reflected in a structuring of electoral districts that prevents large sections of the population from having equitable representation in the legislative body. In Bahrain the royal family limits the powers of the parliament because the country's majority population is Shiite, whilst its royalty is Sunni.

A study from the Centre of European Studies finds that in several Middle Eastern countries, political parties are organised along ethnic and sectarian lines. Therefore, identity politics are more important than 'views on the common good or the well being of state and society'. More importantly, a recurrent theme within Middle Eastern societies is that of clans in power oppressing non-dominant clans and withholding from them the right to socially organize. Communal, religious and ethnic identities remain strong forces in social life, as do patron-client relationships and patterns of patriarchal authority. Thus, they present formidable obstacles to democratization in the Middle East. Yet, although ethnic divisions may explain the lack of democratization in countries such as Iraq, Jordan and Bahrain, the theory fails to explain the long resilience of autocratic governments in countries with more homogenous societies, such as Egypt and Tunisia.

In his instructive article, "Why Are There No Arab Democracies?," Larry Diamond advances a range of factors that have inspired this year's Arab Spring protests. Among them are the:
Arab states themselves, who reinforce one another in their authoritarianism and their techniques of monitoring, rigging, and repression, and who over the decades have turned the 22-member Arab League into an unapologetic autocrats' club. Of all the major regional organizations, the Arab League is the most bereft of democratic norms and means for promoting or encouraging them. In fact, its charter, which has not been amended in half a century, lacks any mention of democracy or individual rights.

Eva Bellin argues that the region's true exceptionalism lies in the robustness and overwhelming ability of Arab authoritarian regimes to remain in power. Their willingness and ability to build coercive apparatuses to crush democratic initiatives has smothered the possibility for reform. Authoritarian regimes in the Middle East are characterised by their unrestrained spending on security, creating extremely sophisticated intelligence apparatuses and secret polices. These are used to keep the masses depoliticized through intrusive methods of surveillance, media control and intimidation. In general, the security apparatus is divided into various factions (army, police, intelligence), which each report directly to the ruler. In this, the ruler has the monopoly of control over the security forces and is indispensable to their coordination. Likewise, contact between the state and foreign governments, is limited to the ruling elite, which therefore controls the influx of foreign aid and investment.

Patrimonialism is a crucial factor underlying the

resistance to democracy in the Middle East. In this, 'demobilizing the opposition and building a loyal base through selective favouritism and discretionary patronage' is one of the core tactics of authoritarian rulers. Goldstone refers to them as 'sultanistic dictators' and explains that while they may uphold certain democratic practices such as elections, political parties, a national assembly or a constitution, they preside over them by appointing their supporters to key positions. Indeed, much of the wealth amassed by these rulers is used to buy off support and crush opponents. In Egypt for instance, former president Mubarak is said to have built up a fortune of between $40 billion and $70 billion, and 39 officials and businessmen close to his son Gamal are claimed to have accumulated more than $1 billion each.

Nevertheless, social repression through the coercive apparatus or patrimonial organisation alone is not what has enabled the extreme longevity of Arab authoritarianism. Instead, what is particularly remarkable is the ability of these regimes to combine authoritarian structures and practices with mechanisms of representation and consultation. In other words, practices of guided pluralism, manipulated elections and selective repression that have occurred in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria and Kuwait are not merely part of a strategy for regime survival, but represent a type of liberalized autocratic system 'whose institutions, rule, and logic defy any linear model of democratization'. In times of social pressures from within their societies or from the outside, Arab rulers have proved particularly efficient at allowing for temporary openings in civic activity and improvements in human rights. However, as soon as political opposition appears, the regime limits political space and returns to methods of repression. In this, Middle Eastern autocrats have become proficient in containing, disarming and exploiting democratic practices.

There is an economic basis explaining this ability of Arab regimes to contain democratic pressures, namely that of the rentier state. A rentier state is understood as one that receives on a regular basis 'substantial amounts of external economic rent'. In other words, a rentier state's economy depends on unearned income derived from the export of natural resources abroad. In the case of the Middle East this includes countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Qatar, Iran, Libya, Sudan, Yemen and Algeria. All of which derive their income primarily from the export of oil and gas. Together, these states account for 65 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and 45 percent of natural gas reserves.

The theory of the rentier state contends that authoritarianism prevails in countries where profits from natural resource exports replace taxes in government income. In fact, the public is not involved in the creation of wealth in a rentier state, because wealth is almost entirely generated by oil revenues. Thus, the theory is often summed up in Samuel Huntington's aphorism '"no taxation without representation" was a political demand; "no representation without taxation" is a political reality'. Given that external rent liberates states from the need to extract income from their domestic economies, the result is a heavily centralized state in which government leaders buy off political dissent. The relationship between oil and politics is analysed by Ross who uses cross-national data from 113 states between 1971 and 1997 to find that 'the oil-impedes-democracy claim is both valid and statistically robust […] oil does hurt democracy'. It is hereby argued that resource-rich states in the Middle East are financially autonomous granting them immunity from democratic pressures. These states use low tax rates and patronage to repress popular movements. Likewise, oil wealth enables rentier governments to strengthen their internal security apparatuses and hence keep social factions in check. Consequently, Middle East states that base their economic growth on the export of oil and other natural resources are unlikely to bring about the social and cultural transformations that tend to push towards democratic government.

However, explaining the democracy deficit in the Middle East goes well beyond the oil factor. The oil-impedes-democracy claim does not explain the lack of democratization in resource-poor countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria and Jordan. In these countries instead, exogenous rents exists for strategic reasons in the form of foreign aid. This dynamic shapes domestic politics in the region in similar ways as rent derived from the export of oil and gas. Strategic rent is provided by Western governments in order to guarantee the steady flow of oil and gas supplies, secure cooperation in the global fight against terrorism, encourage peaceful relations with Israel and control migration. In other words, large amounts of financial aid are poured into countries of the Middle East to ensure security, stability and cooperation. In the case

of Egypt for instance, US development assistance to the country has amounted to $28 billion since 1975. In Jordan, US economic and military assistance annually amounts to around $650 million since 2001. Given that these countries do not dispose of transparent democratic institutions to effectively administer foreign aid, the money is used to maintain extensive security apparatuses that repress potential opposition to authoritarian regimes. Thus, similar to oil and gas, foreign aid acts as strategic rent making possible 'the regime's key political strategy of spending massively on public jobs without imposing steep taxes'. The aid is absorbed by government leaders and 'financially enables the maintenance of illegitimate institutions of internal surveillance and repression, on which autocratic regimes heavily rely'.

> The Middle East region is the principal buyer and consumer of lethal arms in the Third World, spending an average of 100 billion annually over the last two decades, without settling most of the above mentioned conflicts.

The predicaments of democracy in the Arab world are further exacerbated by the region's soft spot for militarism, which manifests in old and new unresolved regional and internal conflicts. Among the deep-rooted persistent problems are lingering conflicts such as the Arab-Israeli, Iraqi-Iranian, Libyan-Chadian, Lebanese, Sudanese, Somali, Saharan conflicts. Some of which have broken out into armed conflicts on and off for decades. According to the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, the Middle East is a region of high military spending relative to gross domestic product (GDP) and has 'correspondingly high levels of arms imports'. Military spending in the area increased by 34 percent over the period 1999-2008 and '7 of the 10 countries with the highest military burdens in 2007 were Middle Eastern'. The area, which makes up for around 3 percent of the world's population, accounted for 21 percent of world imports of major conventional weapons between 2004 and 2008.

Relevant to our main concern – the Middle East's democracy deficit- is the dismal presence of conflict within the Arab world. Goldstone contends that war hardens regimes and impedes democracy. Noland's

> **66 Wars tend to concentrate power in the hands of the executive… Wars make it easier to stigmatize as treasonous, and then suppress, opposition forces. 99**

causal analysis finds that greater militarization is associated with less democracy and Gause argues that internal and external conflict is used to enable undemocratic rule:

Wars tend to concentrate power in the hands of the executive…Wars make it easier to stigmatize as treasonous, and then suppress, opposition forces. War preparation leads to greater state control over the economy, limiting the power and autonomy of private sector economic actors who might press for democratic reform. War preparation requires building a coercive apparatus that then can be used internally.

Likewise, Bellin asserts that unrelenting internal and external conflict provides rhetorical legitimization for coercive regimes and allows for the maintenance of prolonged states of emergency that suppress civil liberties in many MENA countries. Regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, Anderson suggests that the 'prospects for democracy seem to increase in direct proportion to the distance of a country from the Arab-Israeli and Persian Gulf arenas'. All of these conflicts are costly in material and human terms. The Middle East region is the principal buyer and consumer of lethal arms in the Third World, spending an average of 100 billion annually over the last two decades, without settling most of the above mentioned conflicts.

Along with militarism the democracy deficit in the Middle East can be explained by the fragile character of civil society in the region. Saad Eddin Ibrahim defines civil society as an 'organized collective participation in the public space between individuals and the state'. It includes non-state actors, non-governmental organizations as well as political parties, trade unions, professional associations and other interest groups, which serve as intermediaries between the individual and the state. The connection between civil society and democratization rests in that democracy is intended to enable government through peaceful

organization of competing groups and conflicting interests. Democracy is ultimately a question of checks and balances, as Mehran Kamrava explains democracy is an issue of 'balance between state and society […] it comes about when a state's powers are held in check over time by procedures and by institutional mechanisms grounded in and supported by society'. Herein, it is mainly through civil society that citizens 'protect their rights as individuals, force policy makers to accommodate their interests, and limit abuses of state authority'. Civil society brings about a culture of bargaining, providing future leaders with the skills to articulate ideas, form coalitions and govern. Therefore, a strong civil society gives rise to a high level of institutionalized social pluralism.

However, in the Middle East autocratic regimes have reached bargains with certain social and economic actors in their societies. This confers them a sort of superficial legitimacy that pacifies potentially oppositional actors and enables the regime's survival. Moreover, Arab dictators have successfully silenced civil society in their countries by weakening the outreach of the news media, stifling intellectual inquiry, regulating the arts and banning political parties. In Egypt for instance, renowned human rights and democracy activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim was accused of defaming Egypt and sentenced to two years of prison in 2008.

This chronic weakness of civil society insinuates that viable Arab democracies, or leaders who could govern them, will have difficulty emerging anytime soon. In this, Timur Kuran claims that the more likely immediate outcome of current uprisings in the Middle East is a new set of dictators or single-party regimes. Nevertheless, it is worth to mention that within the last decade there has been an 'unprecedented increase of various civil society organizations and of associational life in the Middle East'. Yet, although civil society may have developed in the region, it has hitherto failed to provide a long term shift in the balance of power, away from the state and in favour of society.

3.2 The Collapse of the Authoritarian Bargain
However, despite the robust character of authoritarianism in the Arab world and its ability to impede democratic progress, the collapse of the authoritarian bargain has provided for an impetus for political change. In fact, dictatorial regimes are said to rely on an 'authoritarian bargain', that is 'an implicit

arrangement between ruling elites and citizens whereby citizens relinquish political influence in exchange for public spending'. It implies a link between redistributive policies and political control. Analyses of these bargains have been evoked in comparative politics to explain the stability or breakdown of various types of non-democratic regimes. In their study of the logic of the 'authoritarian bargain', Resai Olofsgard and Yousef find that authoritarian regimes choose the 'lest-cost bundle of economic benefits and political openness necessary to sustain their rulership and secure public support.' These bargains are often fed by the existence of external rents that allow autocratic regimes to maintain generous welfare and public-employment programs, whilst retaining firm control over political life.

The case of Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s under the regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser, best illustrates this idea of an authoritarian bargain. Nasser's populist as well as authoritarian government made a ruling bargain with labour and the middle class, whereby political parties were banned and civic organisations and trade unions were put under direct control of the regime. In return, the state guaranteed the provision of social and welfare packages in the form of 'subsidies for food, government employment, energy, housing, and transportation as well as free education and health care'. In the 1990s however, unsustainable levels of external debt brought about an economic crisis that forced Hosni Mubarak's regime to adopt the World Bank's economic reform program. In accordance with neo-liberal principles, social benefits were cut; state-owned enterprises were privatized, the long-time guarantee of state employment for university graduates was suspended; trade was liberalized; and subsidies for various commodities were put off. In addition, public spending on education, health care, housing and transportation declined, deteriorating the quality of the services. As a result, wealth was concentrated in the hands of the few, while the majority of the Egyptian population became increasingly marginalized.

Meanwhile, as the cost of social benefits and other programs used by the regime to appease its citizens inflated, keeping the masses depoliticized became ever more difficult. As the economy expanded and education spread in countries of the Middle East, the number of people with higher aspirations and growing concern about intrusive methods of police surveillance increased. The population grew rapidly

and inequality and unemployment rose. Urbanizing and expanding populations suffered from food prices that rose by 32 percent in 2010 alone, while wages and opportunities have remained low. Yet, as Goldstone explains, revolutions are not simply fuelled by a lack of growth or rising prices, instead they arise from the 'persistence of widespread and unrelieved poverty amid increasingly extravagant wealth'. High levels of unemployment have contributed to regional discontent, stemming partly from the major youth bulge in the Middle East.

It is currently estimated that around 30 percent of the population living in the MENA region is aged between 15 and 24. This percentage ranges from 38 percent in Bahrain and Tunisia to over 50 percent in Yemen. Additionally, the overall population of the region is growing at approximately 2 percent a year, which is higher than the world average. Thus, the sharp increase in the share of 15-to-24 year olds in the total population, referred to as the 'youth bulge', combined with the rapid expansion of the total population, has resulted in the most acute increase in the number of youth in the region's history. A great number of these young people have been able to attend university. According to Goldstone, college enrolment has soared across the region in recent decades, 'more than tripling in Tunisia quadrupling in Egypt, and expanding tenfold in Libya'. However, the numbers of students acquiring education has not translated into higher rates of employment and wages. In Egypt, 'college graduates are ten times as likely to have no job

as those with only an elementary school education'. In the Middle East, regional youth unemployment hit 26 percent in 2005, representing twice the global average. This is partly due to the fact that educational systems in the region are set to preparing students to serve in the public sector, which used to be the principal employer of workforce entrants in most MENA economies, but is no longer able to secure this role. Studies estimate that MENA's labour force will increase by nearly 80 percent between 2000 and 2020. The inability of the region's regimes to cope with this wave of new entrants, combined with the fact that about 23 percent of the 300 million people in the Middle East and North Africa live on less than $2 a day, is one of the major reasons for the recent push towards democratization.

Overall, the domestic perspective demonstrates that a variety of factors such as ethnic and sectarian divisions, repression through the coercive apparatus, patrimonial organization, practices of liberalized autocracy, rentier economics, militarism and a weak civil society, explain the current level of non-democratization in the Middle East. The core argument being that the democracy deficit in these states is largely caused by the unfair manner in which power and wealth are allocated throughout the polity, allowing the regime to actively suppress its opposition. Nevertheless, the collapse of the authoritarian bargain and the tremendous changes in the region's demographics have provided for a relentless push towards democratic change.

Tunisian protesters filling the plaza in front of the Prime Minister's office in January, 2011. (KYODO/LANDOV)

The question arising from this investigation of the Middle East's long-standing political stagnation is whether democracy actually represents a primary value for the people of the region. The Arab world has been plagued by long-lasting external and internal conflicts that threaten social security and stability. Most importantly, the Israel-Palestine conflict that has endured for over half a century, embroiling the Middle East in six major wars, costing tens of thousands of Arab and Israeli lives, diverting financial and energy resources from productive ventures to the purchase of weaponry, and finally, significantly impeding regional cooperation. The conflict has left the Middle East with the burden of sheltering Palestinian refugees, the world's largest and longest-standing refugee community in the world. In addition, the recent displacement of the Iraqi people after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 has triggered the worst humanitarian crisis since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. In Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, Palestinian and Iraqi refugees are creating an almost insurmountable social and economic problem, fuelling regional tensions. Moreover, the region is geographically surrounded by the dangers posed by nuclear and biochemical weapons proliferation taking place in Israel, Iran and Pakistan and pursued intermittently in Libya, Syria and Iraq. From an economic perspective the unemployment rate in the Middle East has been recorded the highest in the world, with populations struggling daily for basic social and economic survival. Coupled with perceived global threats to Arab culture and identity since the articulation of the Bush administration's War on Terror, these lingering problems have long prevented the emergence of a solid opposition movement demanding just and accountable government.

Arab Spring is not an ideological revolution. Instead people are demanding respectful and accountable government, plunging into a pluralistic discourse..

However, the democracy deficit in the Middle East has taken a new turn. Since December 2010, a revolutionary wave of demonstrations is sweeping across the region with hundreds of thousands of people marching the streets, demanding legitimate government and the resignation of autocratic leaders. Known as the 'Arab Spring' or 'Arab Awakening', it was sparked by demonstrations in Tunisia following the self-immolation of jobless graduate Mohamed Bouazizi in protest of police corruption. The success of the Tunisian revolution subsequently triggered a wave of protests in Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Libya and Yemen and then spread to Oman, Morocco, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria and Kuwait. The protests led to the overthrow of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali who had been in power for over 20 years, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak who resigned after 18 days of mass demonstrations, ending his 30-year long presidency.

In Libya, Muammar al-Gaddafi refused to surrender his powers causing a civil war between regime supporters and rebels, and most importantly a foreign intervention by NATO forces. In Syria, Yemen and Bahrain, governments have countered protests with violent repression and military raids causing a great number of civilian casualties. These recent revolts suggest that people in the Middle East have begun to view their problems of justice, security and identity as linked to the lack of democracy in the region. Pro-reform grass roots movements have manifested themselves, publicly criticising the autocracies in place. The combination of demographics and unemployment is a central motivation for domestic protests. For instance, n Saudi Arabia one person out of three was under the age of 14 in 2007, and in Egypt 60% of the population was between 18-30 years of age in 2008. Therefore, economies in the region will most likely be unable to cope with the huge influx of people expected to enter the labour market in the coming years and unemployment will become an even more pressing issue.

This year's revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan and Libya, together with protests in Morocco, Algeria, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Syria indicate that Arab societies are willing and able to express, and in some cases peacefully put through, their demands for change, such as in Egypt and Tunisia. Herein, the balance of power between state and society is shifting as popular participation in politics increases and the power of the police state diminishes.

It is important to keep in mind that the Arab Spring is not an ideological revolution. Instead people are demanding respectful and accountable government,

plunging into a pluralistic discourse that has engaged whole populations. Protesters are demanding respect from their governments and the acknowledgement of their rights as citizens, as well as a form of government that has responsibilities towards its citizens. It is ideological only in the sense that this generation of people believes that governments are there to serve them, but they are not swept up in ideological movements of any kind.

4. Democracy in the Middle East: Prospects and Challenges

4.1   The Arab Spring: Challenges Ahead

Given the difficult history of democratization in the region, what are the prospects for successful political change in the countries that have ousted their regimes? The aim of this chapter is to identify the future challenges that will shape the level of democratization in the region, focusing particularly on the diverse character of Arab states and the different outcomes they will produce. Further, the section looks at the issue of the military's crucial role during the transition period, as well as the principle developments that have already changed the way in which we think about democracy in the Arab world, namely a new kind of pan-Arabism and a new generation of leaders.

The study of the current state of democracy in the Middle East highlights that generalisations about the region are difficult because every autocratic regime is different. Similarly, the protests in the region are extremely diverse and they are likely to result in completely different outcomes. In this, while there is reasonable optimism about a transition to democratic government in Tunisia and Egypt, that is not the case in Libya and Syria for instance.

Certain political analysts highlight the fact that for the moment, the most organised groups in Arab societies are on one hand, the army, various other factions of the security apparatuses and Islamist entities on the other. According to the President of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, secular liberal parties are mostly weak and divided, and it is not likely that they will manage to prevail in any political competition in the near term: 'Facebook and Twitter matter but not enough'.   The difficulty lies in the fact that these countries have to completely rethink their political systems. Their constitutions need to be rewritten and checks and balances must be created.

Herein, there is an argument to be made that political instability in the Middle East will allow disruptive influences to gain power, impeding the emergence of a stable order. According to former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence, Michael Doran, the porous character of Arab politics will provide hostile transnational networks such as al Qaeda, with new fields to plough. Western governments have long argued that democracy in the region would inevitably allow Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood to take power. The Brotherhood is said to be the most organised opposition party in Egypt, because it has been active since several decades in contrast to other groups. On the other hand, in face of the regime's collapse, for which it was not prepared, and the rise of reformist groups, the role of the Brotherhood seems less clear, fuelling the generational cleavage between its members. In this, the influence of the Brotherhood should not be overestimated as it is merely one of many groups demanding democracy and human rights.

Meanwhile, conservatives, populists, Islamists, and modernizing reformers are fiercely vying for power in Tunisia, Egypt, and possibly Libya, meaning that those countries will likely face extensive periods of abrupt government turnovers and policy reversals. Most importantly, countries that have experienced democratic revolutions will have to grapple with establishing political institutions such as constitutions, parties and electoral systems. Libya will have the even more difficult task of building a civil society after a civil war. Egypt specifically will struggle with the legacy of military rule, given that the army is deeply interwoven into domestic politics and economics. Tunisia will have to ameliorate the relationship between its privileged urban areas and its destitute rural hinterlands.

Peaceful transition to effective democratic government is therefore not a given. In 2005, the Cedar revolution ended three decades of Syrian military occupation in Lebanon and brought a new Western-backed anti-Syrian government into power, giving hope for a complete break with the past. Yet, six years later, Lebanon's chronic predicaments persist: 'sectarianism, corruption, the insecurity brought by a weak central state, foreign meddling and armed party militias'.

Although the case of Lebanon does not necessarily provide for predictions on the outcomes of this year's Arab revolts, it does highlight that recent

> **"After the post-revolutionary honeymoon period ends, divisions within the opposition start to surface."**

events might not automatically result in successful democratization. Fact is that after two generations of political stagnation, the Middle East faces many challenges and the period of democratic transition might take a long time. As Goldstone phrases it: 'after the post-revolutionary honeymoon period ends, divisions within the opposition start to surface'. During the transition, essential debates over the type of government, whether presidential or parliamentary; taxation, state spending or the role of the military, will come onto the agenda and increasingly divide reformers competing for power in Tunisia and Egypt.

4.2 The Role of the Army in the Transition Period

Democratic stirrings across the Arab world have highlighted the pivotal role of the military in shaping the outcome of popular protests. In Egypt, the military refused to shoot its own people and assumed a rather neutral role during the protests. Conversely, the Syrian army has proven loyal to the regime, brutally repressing pro-democracy demonstrations. The reason for these increasingly different outcomes lies in the differentiation between, on one hand, the army as an extension of the state, and on the other, the army as an extension of the regime.

In the study of international relations, a regime is known as the 'set of rules, cultural or social norms that regulate the operations of government and its interactions with society, including how its incumbents are selected'. In this, regimes are designed to create and regulate the government of a modern state. According to Max Weber, a political unit is a state, 'if and insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds a claim on the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence in the enforcement of its order'. In countries where the state is strong, such as Egypt and Tunisia, the militaries are loyal not to the regime but to the state itself, because affiliation to the state is extensive and clear cut. However, in countries where the identity of the regime is so closely related to the identity of the state, and where efforts to remove the regime are interpreted as a threat to the state itself, the military tends to be loyal to the regime

and not to the state. In this case, the military has more to lose should the regime fall; hence it is likely to violently crackdown opposition to the regime, as is the current case in Syria. In this, in Egypt the military has acted as a function of the state, whereas in Syria it has acted as an extension of the regime. In Tunisia the army was willing to defect because former president Ben Ali used the police as an extension of the regime, and the army strongly resented the role of the police. Moreover, in countries where the state is weak and does not enjoy the monopoly of violence, regime change causes state collapse. In Libya, regime failure has generated a collapse of the state apparatus, fuelling political opportunism and causing a division within the army between loyalists to Qaddafi's regime and supporters of the popular will.

Meanwhile, the role of the army in the post-revolutionary and transition period is already apparent in Egypt where the military has been ruling the country since Mubarak's ousting. The current vice-president, prime minister and defence chief are led by the armed forces. Half of the cabinet members are from the military and the country is still ruled by martial law and military courts. In this, the army is still in firm control of the country and in a position to dictate the terms of the transition to democracy. As of this writing, thousands of Egyptians have once more gathered in the streets of Cairo to protest against the military's slow process of implementing reforms. Parliamentary elections have been scheduled for October 2011 and it still remains to be seen whether the army will surrender its powers.

4.3 What has changed?

The majority of scholars of Middle Eastern politics did not foresee revolts that overthrew two Arab leaders at the beginning of the year and are still threatening several others. The region's demographic, economic and political issues were well known, but academics were mostly preoccupied with explaining the apparently exceptional persistence of authoritarianism in the Arab world. Until recently, certain Middle East specialists advocated support for Arab authoritarian allies, at the expense of democracy promotion, because they embodied stable bets for the future. These scholars approached the prospect of full-fledged democratic change with great scepticism, given the seemingly unshakeable character of the region's authoritarianism. Today, these scholars admit that they were 'spectacularly wrong'. Academics

were not able to predict the different ways in which various armies would react in face of peaceful popular protests, and the widespread assumption that Arab militaries and security apparatuses would never split with their heads of state was shattered by the events in Egypt and Tunisia. Similarly, Gregory Gause argues that the economic foundations of authoritarianism were misinterpreted by academics.

It was widely assumed that the large-scale Washington consensus-style economic reforms introduced over the past two decades in Cairo and Tunis would provide new bases of support for dictators. Instead, efforts to promote foreign investment and incentives to stimulate the private-sector created a new class of wealthy entrepreneurs that longed for a just and transparent government. In fact, the face of the Egyptian revolution, Wael Ghonim, was an executive for Google Middle East and North Africa, who decided to risk his career and life to create the 'We are all Khaled Said' Facebook page, which helped spark the revolution. In this, academics missed the destabilizing consequences and pivotal role that poorly implemented liberal economic policies could play within Arab societies.

The common political and cross-border appeal of Arab identity shared by citizens living in twenty different countries was also overlooked. Soon after a fruit vendor set himself on fire in protest of police corruption in Tunisia, the entire Arab world was overcome by revolts in the name of democracy demonstrating a profound pan-Arabism. In fact, when the Tunisians and the Egyptians overthrew their corrupt governments, they gave hope to other nations that the same could happen in their countries. These protests have provoked a new pan-Arabism, that of a younger generation that opposes a common enemy in the Arab world, namely corrupt domestic regimes that have grown out of touch with their societies. Thus, it has become increasingly difficult to approach countries in the Middle East individually, given that events in one country have the potential to trigger effects in neighbouring states.

In sight of these new developments, the international arena can and should act in order to contribute to the creation of effective democratic transitions in countries that are already moving towards regime change, such as Egypt and Tunisia. The international community should engage in safeguarding

independent and well-financed private organizations in the Middle East that are essential to the success of democratic transitions. Indeed, 'without strong private players willing and able to resist undemocratic forces, nascent Arab democracies could easily slip back into authoritarianism'. Genuine vocal support for democratization should be expressed, including the readiness to accept all groups that comply with democratic rules. The post-revolution period should be used to teach reformers about democratic practices and upon request, to assist them in building their institutions. In providing assistance Western nations and particularly the United States must consider their lack of credibility in these countries, given their history of support for autocratic regimes. In this, efforts to back certain political groups or influence elections will most likely be received with suspicion. Likewise, financial aid, such as that proposed by the Obama administration that includes up to $1 billion in debt relief and another $1 billion in loan guarantees, is useful in order to provide for an effective redistribution of wealth within Arab societies and a stimulus package for democratic institution building. However, these types of economic measures must be carefully implemented, given that pouring money into these countries before they have built an effective and accountable democratic government will likely encourage corruption and undermine the transition to democracy.

Moreover, the communal and pan-Arab character of current Arab upheavals demonstrates that Middle East studies can no longer be approached on a case-by-case basis. The extent of the Arab Spring has shown that events in one Arab state can shape others in powerful ways. Therefore, the international community can no longer choose to support democracy in countries like Egypt and Tunisia, while 'standing by as other allies, such as Bahrain, crush peaceful democratic protests'.

It is useful to bear in mind that Arab revolts were not sparked by policy decisions in Washington or other foreign capitals, but that they are the product of domestic social, economic and political dynamics. Therefore, as paradigms collapse and theories are challenged by contemporary events in the Middle East, academics as well as policy makers would do well to approach the region with great modesty about their ability to manipulate its future.

Conclusion

The above discussion highlights that the contemporary weak state of democratization in the Middle East is as much a result of international influences as of domestic forces and calculations. For decades, external and particularly US policies, have sought regime stability instead of democratic reform in the Arab world. The aim of these policies has been to assure the unconstrained flow of vital energy supplies as well as to form alliances using the Middle East's strategic geopolitical situation for military and trade purposes. Herein, the existence of exogenous rents derived from the export of natural resources and large amounts of foreign financial assistance has enabled government elites in the Middle East to become autonomous from their societies and has contributed to the fiscal health of some countries' security and intelligence apparatuses. This study demonstrates that authoritarian regimes in the region have proved particularly efficient at distributing foreign revenues in a manner that permits the concentration of power in the hands of a small group of elites. Meanwhile, the elites have focused on expanding and maintaining large coercive security and intelligence apparatuses in order to preserve their authority and turn opposition to the regime largely impossible. As a result, civil society in the Middle East has suffered from highly intrusive and violent intelligence bodies and has long been unable to organize and express its demands for political representation and just government. However, the increasing inability of Arab regimes to provide for basic services and their indifference to widespread unemployment and poverty has caused profound frustration within Arab societies, providing the impetus for this year's revolutions. In addition, international pressures for democratization, largely motivated by Western security interests, have initiated a few reforms throughout the Middle East since 2001. These have over the years presented Arab societies with an experience of what democratic government might entail, as well as an understanding of the practices of political participation and representation. Similarly, globalization has offered civil society greater means to inform itself and mobilise.

...the contemporary political geography of the region is far too multifaceted to be explained by a few selected theories.

What comes to light when studying the progress of democratization in the Middle East is that the contemporary political geography of the region is far too multifaceted to be explained by a few selected theories. As of this writing, the return of people power in the Arab world has surprised the vast majority of policy makers and academics. Although it was apparent that Arab regimes were profoundly unpopular among their societies and that they faced serious demographic, economic and political problems, nobody was able to predict the Arab Spring.

The recent revolts draw attention to fact that there is at least as much continuity as change in Middle East politics. They highlight the popularity of the concept of democracy in the Middle East and invalidate the idea of a passive Arab society that accepts authoritarian rule. However, an overthrow of the undemocratic regime in place will not be sufficient to lead to successful political change. Revolutions are merely the beginning of a lengthy progress and it will take years for stable regimes to emerge. Therefore, what is essential in order to bring about democracy in the Middle East is a long term shift in the balance of power, away from the state and in favour of society. In the words of Mehran Kamrava it requires the 'existence of competing groups scattered throughout the polity, both within the institutions of the state and the strata of society, among whom a consensus emerges regarding the mutually beneficial nature of democracy'. For the time being, the young activists of each country who have been sharing ideas and tactics across borders are confronted with different challenges. From the long shadow of military rule in Egypt, to the wide disparities between Tunisia's rural areas and its sullen hinterlands, and Libya's wrecked state, this year's Arab uprising will likely result in a variety of different outcomes. For such countries as Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates, were protests have either been brutally cracked down or swiftly contained, true democracy remains a distant target.

This paper has revealed that any examination of the state of democracy in the Middle East must take into account the complexity of the region's political situation, namely the afore mentioned international and domestic interaction of forces. In sight of this year's popular revolutions, the prospects of successful democratic transitions in the Arab world must equally

be understood in the context of an interaction of external and internal forces. In other words, although current protests were motivated by domestic forces and events, they will be influenced by the international political environment that surrounds them. In this, the international arena and especially such countries as the United States that have been particularly implicated in Middle Eastern politics, can and should cease this opportunity of change in order to contribute to effective democratic transitions and stimulate democratic progress in countries that are still stagnating. External governments should actively express genuine support for democratization, and should be ready to accept all groups that act in accordance to democratic rules. The post-revolutionary period in Tunisia and Egypt particularly, should be used to teach reformers about democratic practices and upon request, to assist them in building their institutions.

Despite the obstacles, there is reason for optimism regarding the prospects of genuine democratization in the Middle East. The popular unrests of the 1980s that had forced several regimes to allow for more political transparency have been followed by a wave of unprecedented protests sweeping the entire region this year and successfully ridding the Arab world from two of its most resilient dictators. The demand for transparent and just government will undoubtedly remain a central part of political life in Arab society. In the same way, the steady diffusion of democratic values from other parts of the world will persist. As noted by Zacek, "there is a 'contagion' of democratic development: events in some countries clearly impact on neighbouring ones". In this, although today's experiments with democratization do not indicate a complete break with the past and an effective transition to more transparent government, a profound desire for more accountable and just government will remain across Arab societies. Many of the difficulties facing democratization in Arab countries are similar to those faced by other parts of the world. There is therefore no reason to assume that these obstacles will prove insurmountable in the Middle East. In this, while there will inevitably be setbacks on the path to democracy, Arab governments will slowly be obliged to be more accountable to their citizens. Thus, one important set of questions, that arises when assessing the progress of democratization in a region that has historically denied its citizens political participation, pertains to the sort of government that will emerge from true political accountability. Will the norms and structures of democratic systems in the Middle East

be similar to those associated with the West, or will a different kind of democracy emerge, perhaps one that is particularly Arab or Islamic? What models of governance will be used, and what broad domestic and foreign policy goals will be expressed? Finally, are democratic regimes in the Middle East likely to express different foreign policy objectives from those of their more authoritarian counterparts and will democracy contribute to the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

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For Full Report and References Visit:
http://www.ir-ia.com/reports/Democracy-in-the-Middle-East.pdf

Anti-Mursi protesters chant slogans while carrying Egyptian flags during a massive protest in Alexandria, June 30, 2013. (Photo Credit: Reuters/Asmaa Waguih)

THE ARAB SPRING AND THE RISE OF NON-STATE ACTORS

Fadi Elhusseini

In the past four years, Arabs have been living in an endless Sisyphean ordeal, an unexpected nightmare after rising for what they called "the Arab Spring". The scenario was cloned in most Arab Spring countries. Alas, hopeful revolution turned into belligerence, then into strife followed by a war, as if a new regional order was endorsed to guarantee instability and chaos in the region. This new regional order has markedly new features and novel actors. The feature most starkly apparent is the rise of non-state actors, which have bolstered their presence and influence across the region, disregarding borders and ignoring the strategic equations that ruled the region for decades.

Non-state actors, mainly Islamic movements like Hamas, Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda, played a limited role in the pre-Arab Spring era. However, before looking at the new non-state actors and their role in the region, it is worth highlighting a number of facts concerning Islamic movements.

Firstly, any designations that labelled those movements, like political Islam or moderate Islam, are merely descriptive terms and have nothing to do with the core of Islam as a religion. Islam is a comprehensive and inclusive religion and attaching one characteristic, without a reference to others, may give the false impression that there are different forms of Islam, such as "non-moderate" Islam. One may argue, though, that such labels are simply "creative" terms to differentiate between the various Islamic groups.

For instance, several Western powers found in "moderate Islam" an acceptable term that may justify "dealing" with specific groups and not others; the limits of the word "dealing" can range from basic and regular contacts to alliances and common interests and agendas. On the other hand, several Islamic groups did not shy away from being labelled as moderate Islam or political Islam as long as this distinguished them from other groups that took a violent path to achieve their goals. Being distinguished as "moderates" gives these groups some kind of legitimacy, and hence more freedom to work in their societies to achieve their goals.

Perhaps designating these groups as "movements with Islamic orientation" would be a more accurate approach, as they tend to share one goal: the return of Islamic rule, either state or through Islamic law, the

shari'ah; the only difference is the time factor which implies their behaviour and reveals their strategy. If a group seeks to achieve its goals gradually, its behaviour and activities are characterised principally by peaceful means. Conversely, if the group seeks instant change, its policies and actions tend to be characterised by radical and violent means.

Returning to the role of non-state actors in general, one should concede that with the advent of the Arab revolts, their role has become more evident to a degree that it has surpassed the role of many regimes and governments in the region. These actors began to impose certain policies and agendas on regional and global regimes and are at the helm of every regional summit and international conference.

The emergence of these actors has turned the whole region on its head, broken many taboos and penetrated one country after another. Puritanism is now widespread across the Middle East and new vocabulary - such as apostates, infidels and heretics - has become common in daily conversations. In no time, these actors could abolish traditional political borders drawn in the early years of the last century (by the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement) when other ideas, concepts or phenomenon, like globalisation, took decades to find their way into the region.

Some regional powers opted to keep the card of "supporting or turning a blind eye to the activities and movements of those non-state actors" as a last gamble...

They and their offshoots spread throughout the region, taking various names: Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra Front, Daesh or ISIS or IS, the Houthis and so on. Their expansion does not appear to have any limits or borders. That being said, they have been seen to possess sophisticated organisation that does not reflect the limited number of their members and recruits. In other words, the number of their members can't, by any means, reflect the unprecedented "achievements" they have attained in such a short time. The most important element in this novel equation is their network of known and unknown allies who provide them with finance, logistics and arms, mainly away from the spotlight.

The situations in Iraq and Syria represent the starkest

Islamic State militants with a captured Iraqi army Humvee at a checkpoint outside Beiji refinery (Photo Credit: Reuters)

example of entangled interests and relations from one side, and regional and international hesitation from the other. Some regional powers opted to keep the card of "supporting or turning a blind eye to the activities and movements of those non-state actors" as a last gamble, lest things veer out of control on other fronts and so as to weaken groups like Hezbollah or the PKK, or even to harm the Assad regime. Similarly, many Western powers, who classify Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, ignored its outright intervention in Syria in order to weaken all those groups (the "bad guys") in a destructive conflict that took on a sectarian hue.

The US was able to pounce on this opportunity and use it to re-promote to its Arab allies the importance of its role as a supplier of weapons, as an adviser who provides them with information and expertise in fighting terrorism, and as a protector through US-led coalition strikes. The reports which showed the evolution in American weapons sales, mainly to Arab countries, are just a case in point.

> ### The consecutive successes of ISIS have encouraged others either to follow suit or to attach themselves to this "successful" model..

Russia, which is fully aware that a nuclear deal with Iran would definitely harm its economy (any agreement with Tehran would lead to the return of Iran as a major oil supplier which will eventually lead to a drop in oil prices), had no choice but to bless

this deal knowing the importance of Iran's regional network of relations, mainly with non-state actors.

Intriguingly, and despite regional dismay at the existence of non-state actors and their rejection of any talks about a new Sykes-Picot deal, one may realise that facts on the ground are going nowhere but to that end. Since America launched its campaign against ISIS, the latter has taken control of a large swathe of Iraq and Syria, whereas before the strikes it controlled relatively small areas. ISIS's fighters began to appear more equipped and trained and their media performance has improved a great deal. The consecutive successes of ISIS have encouraged others either to follow suit or to attach themselves to this "successful" model; as a result, not one single Arab capital has become immune, especially in the aftermath of the so-called Arab Spring.

Although many analyses questioned the conditions that brought forth most of those actors and their real goals, and despite the fact that many investigations have shown suspicious features in the activities of those groups, the region appears to be slipping inadvertently towards malignant ends.

In an attempt to evaluate the aftermaths of the existence and acts of the rising non-state actors, one may say that distorting the image of Islam was unambiguous. Secondly, some of these actors, who used to enjoy popularity among the Arab masses for resisting Israel, appear to have lost ground in the Arab streets as they were tainted by either violence or sectarian agendas.

Thirdly, Israel, which was isolated in the region for decades, was uniquely endowed and could enter the regional dynamics through the door of such actors. To elaborate, Israel remained unscathed on the fringes of the Arab Spring and its repercussions, and won triple-level strategic gains from the emergence of the non-state actors.

For a start, the government in Tel Aviv started to sow a network of relations with many Arab regimes that share, in theory at least, common fears, especially a potential Shia menace as represented by Iran and Hezbollah. Israel has also gained by the weakening of traditional Arab states, such as Iraq and Syria, which were a threat to Israeli decision makers. Furthermore, it benefits Israel when world attention is distracted from what is still the core issue in the Middle East, its ongoing colonial occupation of Palestine.

In sum, it appears that the region is in desperate need of a real leader, a new Saladin, who can put an end to the misery, the divisions and the schisms that afflict the Middle East; someone who is able to find a solution for the absence of a religious reference which has resulted in a chaotic and austere interpretation of Islam.

By Fadi Elhusseini

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Sunni fighters arm themselves with RPG missiles launcher and machine guns as they take up position in Fallujah city, western Iraq (Photo Credit: EPA

UNTOLD STORIES OF SYRIAN WOMEN SURVIVING WAR

Katty Alhayek

Introduction

What is now known as the Syrian Uprising began in mid-March 2011 as a peaceful social movement in the context of the so-called Arab Spring. In a few months the Uprising shifted from peaceful demonstrations to an armed conflict, mainly, due to the military reaction of the Syrian regime to the demonstrations, and Syria became a location for a national, regional, and international power struggle (Salloukh, 2013). While Syrian women were a main segment of the Syrian Uprising, their representations in the global and social media are dominated by an image of a powerless female Syrian refugee who is a victim of her family's actions of selling daughters off for money. In this dominant media representation, Syrian refugee women are robbed of their agency and are constricted to a representation of a single faceless victim/woman. Such representation is no different from the longstanding depiction of Arab women in Western media and literature as suppressed sexual objects by oppressive violent men and in need of saving (Abu- Lughod, 2002; Alloula, 1986; Said, 1979; Todd, 1998). Transnational feminist scholarship tackles such themes of representation, power, voice, privilege, and marginalization by deconstructing the dominant discourse of history and knowledge and taking seriously the concept of agency of women in different cultures and geographical locations.

Thus this paper will incorporate transnational feminist scholarship (Mohanty, 1984; Mohanty, 2003; Bhattacharyya, 2008; Nordstrom, 2005) to argue that there is no singular category that fits all "Syrian refugee women" in contrast to the dominant representations of global and social media. In terms of outline, this paper will first analyze the generalized representations of Syrian refugee women in global and social media; second, narrate and analyze six stories of Syrian refugee women who represent different marginalized groups based on the intersection of their class, age, education, family status, and place of origin; and third, highlight the ways in which online media representations rob Syrian refugee women of their agency and invisiblize their complex and various stories of struggling for freedom, suffering from violence and war, and resisting inequality and injustice.

Methodologically this paper is based on a larger research project in which three qualitative methods were used for data collection: interviews, observation,

and discourse analysis. This paper mainly covers fieldwork that took place in Jordan during the summer of 2013. Through purposeful sampling and network sampling, I conducted thirty-three in-depth interviews and I engaged in approximately 100 hours of participant observation. From these thirty-three interviews, I chose in this paper to focus on stories of six Syrian refugee women who represent various class, age, education, family status, and place of origin backgrounds. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to producing academic knowledge that makes visible some of the untold stories of Syrian refugee women in Jordan.

Transnational Feminism, Representations, and Marginalization

Transnational feminists engage in answering questions of representations, power, voice, privilege, and marginalization. They deconstruct the dominant discourse of history and knowledge, and take seriously the concept of agency of women in different cultures and geographical locations. According to transnational feminists, Western literature, including Western feminist literature, about women in developing countries is located in historical and colonial contexts of Western hegemony (McEwan, 2001; Mohanty, 2003). Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) plays a pioneering role as a transnational feminist in analyzing and problematizing the dominant representations of non-Western women in Western literature. Specifically, Mohanty criticizes the "production of the 'Third World woman' as a singular monolithic subject" (p.333).

Many Western feminists represent the issues and concerns of non-Western women from a simplistic dichotomous understanding. In this view, non-Western societies are seen as groups of repressive men and victimized women (Mohanty, 2003). Such a view led to ignorance concerning the complexity of the intersection between class, race, nationality, and sexuality, and also the effects of the unequal global economy and colonial power relations between the Global North and the Global South. Mohanty (2003) also points out that the dominant discourse regarding women in the Global South is not only produced by Western intellectuals but also by scholars from developing countries who adopt the Western dominant discourse.

To counter the dominant representations about

women from vic groups, transnational feminists promote alternative ways of knowledge production. Such alternative ways aim to make visible the stories of women from marginalized groups by writing and incorporating the struggles and experiences of those women in the academic work. Transnational feminists challenge the dominant representations about women, especially in the Global South as a singular powerless victim. Mohanty (2003) invites us to take seriously the concept of the agency of women in different cultures and geographical locations. Representing non-Western women as a homogeneous group "robs them of their historical and political agency" (Mohanty, 2003, p.39). These representations objectify women in the Global South, and exclude as well as distort their long history of different resistant experiences against power hierarchies.

Mohanty further highlights the continuous domination of the singular, monolithic representation of women from the Global South in discourse about globalization. Mohanty admits that there is an emerging image of active women from the Global South, such as images of female "human rights" activists and advocates, yet she invites feminists to critically examine the new binary representations of victimized/empowered Global South women. In this sense, Mohanty raises the question of what systems of power and privilege among Global South women make a few voices seen as empowered and a majority of voices represented as victimized.

Times of conflict are a repeated example of a situation where women are represented as faceless, nameless, and powerless victims. For example, Nordstrom (2005) discusses that despite the participation of women in the 1983 riots against the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the media representation of these women was limited to an iconic image of a nameless pregnant woman disemboweled by terrorists. Nordstrom (2005) argues "the use of this image as an icon effectively obscures all the many women and girls who die and fight without recognition" (p.400). Similar to Nordstrom, Bhattacharyya (2008) assures that emphasizing the diverse and complex experiences and roles of women in war complicates and reveals the propaganda of the political powers in the West in claiming to rescue women in the Global South. Drawing on a transnational feminist perspective, I will analyze in the following section representative examples of global and social media dominant

representations about Syrian refugee women.

Dominant Representations of Syrian Refugee Women

The representations of Syrian refugee women in global and social media are dominated by an image of a powerless female Syrian refugee who is a victim of her family's actions of selling daughters off for money. I have analyzed three representative examples of global media dominant representations of Syrian refugee women's issues in Jordan based on a Google web search of the phrase "Syrian refugee women." The first article was published by BBC (McLeod, 2013, May 10) under the title "Syrian Refugees Sold for Marriage in Jordan," the second article was published by CBS (Ward, 2013, May 15) under the title "Syrian Refugees Sell Daughters in Bid to Survive," and the third article was published by ABC (Mark, 2013, May 22) under the title "Syrian Refugees Selling Daughters as Brides." The titles of these three articles explicitly identify that Syrian families are selling/marrying their daughters off for money. These headlines tell the readers that, on the one hand, Syrian refugees are a backward people who sell their daughters at the first hardship they face, and on the other hand, Syrian refugee women are powerless victims of their uncivilized/barbaric society.

The BBC article is divided to three sections. The first section tells the story of Kazal, a young Syrian refugee woman who had been sold for marriage: "Kazal says she is 18 but looks much younger. She has just got divorced from a 50-year-old man from Saudi Arabia who paid her family about US $3,100 (UK £2,000) to marry her. The marriage lasted one week" (McLeod, 2013, May 10, para. 2).

The article illustrated that Kazal's eyes are blue to emphasise her Caucasian race "Her huge, blue eyes fill with tears when she talks about the marriage" (McLeod, 2013, May 10, para.4). The second section of the BBC article is an interview with Andrew Harper, the Representative of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Jordan who expressed his feelings of disgust for people who are engaged in marriage for money "I can't think of anything more disgusting than people targeting refugee women…You can call it rape, you can call it prostitution, you can call it what you want but it's preying on the weakest" (McLeod, 2013, May 10, para.10). The third section of the BBC article is an interview with Um Mazed,

a matchmaker who earns income by arranging marriages between Arab men and Syrian refugee girls. The CBS article is divided into two sections. The first section tells the story of Um Majed, a matchmaker who can be exactly identified as Um Mazed from the BBC article. Actually the article's writer just changed one letter in the woman's name (z instead of j). The CBS article starts with "Um Majed's cell phone rarely stops ringing these days. She calls herself a marriage broker; in reality, she sells Syrian girls to men looking for brides at bargain prices" (Ward, 2013, May 15, para.1). According to the article, Um Majed does not take any responsibility for her actions, and she blames the girls' families for selling their daughters. The second section of the CBS article, tells the story of "Seventeen-year-old Aya who fled Syria with her family just under a year ago. She was sold to a 70-year-old man from Saudi Arabia for $3,500. He left her after a month" (Ward, 2013, May 15, para.7). This description is exactly like the BBC article's description of Kazal except Aya is 17, not 18; was married off to a 70-year-old man, not a 50-year-old man; for $3,500, not $3,100; and the marriage lasted one month not one week. The woman in the image that is posted in the CBS article of Aya matches the woman in the image of Kazal that was posted in the BBC article, a niqabi blue-eyed young woman with exactly the same make-up on her eyes.

The ABC article is an interview with Andrew Harper, the UNHCR's representative to the Kingdom of Jordan, who was interviewed for the aforementioned BBC article. The article starts with an opening about how Syrian women are being sold in Jordan: "Reports are emerging in Jordan that some of the Syrian women and girls in refugee camps there are being sold as brides. In some cases it seems, it is their families who are selling girls aged 16 and younger

Syrian women wait in line to receive aid from an Islamic relief agency at a refugee camp in the town of Ketermaya (AP)

for just a few thousand dollars to men from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States" (Mark, 2013, May 22, para.1). Later in the article when the writer asked Mr. Harper, "And now we're hearing stories that some women and young children indeed are being sold, they're ending up in arranged marriages, how is it working? What's happening?" Mr. Harper, the UNHCR's representative in Jordan, clarified that:

"Sold is probably a very strong term. There are situations of dowry which is fairly traditional in many parts of the world and there can be agreements between families. But it is a situation where often the families will, due to their dire circumstances, see that they're not in a position to continue to care for the girl and they do get offers from other families or men who come along who sort of say 'look we wish to marry your daughter." (Mark, 2013, May 22, para. 6).

What is described by Mr. Harper is a form of early marriage that commonly happens in rural communities in Syria. However, the ABC article ignored the information that was provided by Mr. Harper and echoed, in its title and in its opening, the same dominant discourse that was manifested in the BBC and the CBS articles.

Similar to the global media dominant representations, mainstream Syrian social media activism regarding Syrian refugee women's issues robs Syrian refugee women of their agency and constricts their sorties to a representation of a single faceless victim/woman. For example, on September 2, 2012, the Refugees not Captives (RNC) campaign management team posted "statement number 2" explaining why they chose "Refugee Not Captives" as a name for the campaign (Lajiaat Lasabaya, 2012). The image that accompanied the text portrayed a faceless profile of a woman and under the woman's head there are just two words "Refugees/ Lajiaat in Arabic" and "Not Captives/Lasabaya." The faceless profile space of the woman and the words "Not Captives/Lasabaya" are in red to emphasise the powerless victim status of the Syrian woman. The abstract image of the woman's hair and the word "Refugees/ Lajiaat in Arabic" are in black to symbolize the flowing passivity and the femininity of the weak state of being a refugee.

The text of "statement number 2" defended and explained why the RNC team chose "Captives/

Sabaya" in the campaign's title. Here it is useful to mention that the Arabic language like the French language includes gender for all nouns and most pronouns. Sabaya "Captives" is a noun that was used in ancient Arab history to describe the female spoils of war who, based on their gender, were enslaved by the winners of any conflict. Sabaya "Captives" have historical sexual connotations that the women were enslaved in a war context for sexual purposes. This word is not used in contemporary Arabic similar to how words such as "Negro" are not acceptably used in the American context after the success of the civil rights movement. In "statement number 2", the RNC campaign management team explained that they chose the word Sabaya "Captives" to, first, "cause shock for all people who feel empathy with the Syrian people", second, "to fight those who want to marry Syrian women in exchange for money" under the pretext of rescuing them from being refugees. In fact, the RNC team stated that these marriages are enslaving women in the same way as if they were spoils of war. I recognise the good intentions in the RNC campaign discourse when the RNC team claims to defend the Syrian women's rights in marriage, and when they ask Arab men to donate money to build schools for young girls instead of marrying them off. However, similar to the BBC, CBS, and ABC representations, the RNC team used dominant representations to generalise about Syrian women and men. Syrian refugee women are robbed of their agency and constricted to a representation of a single faceless victim/woman. More importantly Syrian women's concerns and stories were not only minimised to forced marriage in exchange for money but also there was exaggeration of the volume of the forced marriage phenomenon, while ignoring the power structures that rule refugee families. To challenge the dominant representations of Syrian refugee women, the next section is devoted to actual Syrian refugee women's stories.

Untold Stories of Syrian Women Surviving War

The dominant representations of Syrian refugee women invisiblize the political and economic relationship issues as well as structural inequalities that impacted the ways Syrian women experienced the process of becoming a refugee. This article aims to make visible untold stories of Syrian women fighting for freedom and surviving the war. I narrate and analyze six stories of Syrian refugee women

in Jordan who represent different marginalized groups, based on the intersection of their class, age, education, family status, and place of origin.

The six stories of Syrian refugee women include:
1. Rim (26), an activist who descended from a middle class Damascene family;
2. Karima (40), a housewife from a lower class Homsi family;
3. Mona (30), a warrior from a small village in the Dara'a Governorate;
4. Sima (52), a fashion and crafts designer and trainer from Al-Tall, a small city in Rif Dimashq Governorate;
5. Hala (21), an activist and citizen journalist from a Damascene upper middle class family;
6. Maha (40), a housewife from a poor small village in the Dara'a Governorate.

Methodologically, these stories are based on in- depth interviews with each individual Syrian refugee woman, which took place in Jordan during the summer of 2013. For the interview process with Rim, Hala, and Sima, I interviewed them in public or private places that they identified, but I also accompanied them as they went about their activist activities. Unlike the previous three interviewees, I met Karima and Mona once and Maha twice. I interviewed Karima and Mona at their homes; Karima's interview was facilitated by two members of the Molham Volunteering Team, and Mona's interview was facilitated by one member of the Relief Syrian Refugees in Jordan group. Maha's interview took place in the Za'atari refugee camp with the assistance of Syrian humanitarian activists who helped me gain access to the Za'atari camp in order to interview women within the safety of the Qatar Red Crescent. Through the process of interviewing and communicating with refugee women, my own positionality as a Syrian woman and human rights activist, who left Syria in the summer of 2012 and currently resides in the United States to complete graduate studies, played a significant role in building trust to share mutual stories about surviving the conflict and fear for loved ones who are still in Syria. The analysis of the following six stories highlights what it means to be a refugee woman in Jordan and emphasizes that there is no singular category that fits all "Syrian refugee women" in contrast to the mainstream online media representations that robbed Syrian refugee women of their agency and invisiblized their struggle, suffering, and resistance.

Rim's story

Rim (26) is a representative of students and young people who participated in the social movements of the Arab Spring. When the Syrian Uprising began, Rim was completing her post- graduate studies in Accounting at Damascus University. She immediately engaged in organizing peaceful demonstrations, citizen media activism, and humanitarian aid activities to regions under attack and siege by the Syrian regime forces. Her middle class Sunni Damascene family knew about her activism, and they supported her choices regardless of the fact that none of her parents are politically active. Rim is a middle child in a family consisting of five children, two boys and three girls. In April 2012, Rim and her activist friends were about to drive back to their homes after a successful demonstration in Damascus City. While Rim and her male friend entered the car, Rim looked back toward her two female friends to check why they did not get into the car yet. She saw her two friends being dragged away by their hair by a police officer. It was a decision of life or death. Helping the two girls meant not only to endanger themselves but also their families and networks. Rim's friend drove away. During that month most of Rim's network who worked in media and humanitarian activism were arrested. The security forces twice broke into her parents' house, where she lived, searching for her. At that time Rim lived with the daily challenge of communicating with her friends' families to inform them that their children were arrested or died under torture. Rim's last day in Syria was May 8, 2012. She left Syria illegally:

I could not stay any longer! I considered staying inside Syria a selfish decision that put my whole family under great danger. My family was very worried when I was living my every day hiding in different places. They tried to check whether I can leave the country legally, but my name was placed on the border check- points on the Syrian regime wanted lists. Two days before the day I escaped Syria, an activist friend of mine was arrested while she was trying to leave Syria legally to go to Lebanon. I contacted some activists in Dara'a and went there through side-roads to avoid the regime's checkpoints alongside the main roads.

Rim stayed in Dara'a for four hours. She was alone. She did not know any one. The group she escaped with included mostly families, with many single mothers and their children. Rim said, "The mothers tried to look strong and relaxed; they did not want their children to feel fear and insecurity." The group started their trip in the dark guided by moonlight. There were a few men from the Syrian Free Army walking with them for protection. It was Rim's first trip outside Syria. Rim described her feelings:

It was a nightmare! I wished I could wake up and see myself in my house with my mother and siblings! Or in my bedroom looking at Qasioun Mountain! We were walking in orchards not knowing on what we were stepping. The Jordanian Army was at the border to help us cross into Jordan. There was a small hill that we had to climb, and a Jordanian soldier held out his hand to help us up it. When the soldier extended his hand, I wanted to pull my hand back! I wanted to go back! But I did nothing! I knew I must save my life and not risk my family's safety!

Similar to all other refugees, when Rim entered Jordan, she submitted her Syrian ID card but she kept her passport because she was planning to leave Jordan to go to Bahrain with her elder brother who works there and would come to Jordan to meet her. At 4 a.m. Rim arrived at Al- Bashabsha Camp[1]. She was "psychologically devastated." She bought a mobile phone card and called her brother. He had come from Bahrain, but could not come immediately and pick her up. Her brother did not know when she would arrive, and now asked her to spend the night at the camp and said that he would come to meet her in the morning.

Rim was both the only Damascene person in the refugee camp and the only single young woman. The other refugees were either from Dar'a or from Homs. To make Rim feel secure, a woman from Homs invited her to join her and her children in their room. Rim slept in the Homsi woman's room, "I slept very deeply! I do not think I have slept so deeply since that night! I was so tired and sad wishing to go back to Damascus." The rest of Rim's family, her parents and siblings, followed her to Jordan. Now, all of them live in a rented apartment in the suburbs of Amman. When I interviewed Rim in June 2013, she had been in Jordan for one year:

One year goes so fast! I overcame my psychological devastation through volunteer work! I feel that volunteer work filtered my soul! When I help someone to smile, I feel

positive energy and that I am continuing my activism for the Syrian Revolution! I feel that I am participating in building Syria's future!

Rim's strategy to survive the Syrian war and to cope with everyday life in her refugee destination was to actively volunteer in different humanitarian activist organizations which work in the Za'atri Refugee Camp and Amman region. Her work is mainly focused on psychological support for women and children. She sought training in this area with one of the international organizations in Jordan, and she also developed psychological support expertise through her work with her colleagues in an informal Syrian activist organization in Jordan. As a young, educated woman who descended from a middle class Damascene family, Rim's privileges continue to benefit her in Jordan. Such privileges make media coverage of Syrian refugee women's stories invisiblize Rim as a refugee woman because she does not fit dominant representations about refugee women as powerless poor victims. However, stories such as Rim's story have relative visibility in media coverage about Syrian activism; nevertheless one should keep in mind that such visibility is generally introduced to the audience out of the context of the refugee crisis.

Karima's story

Karima (40) is not the type of Syrian heroine that the mainstream media would like to interview. She did not participate in the Syrian Uprising. She did not lead a demonstration. In fact, she did not have anti-government sentiments in the first place. Karima is a Syrian woman from Homs City who lived a "simple life." She got married early in her life, around the age of 15, as many of the girls in her poor, conservative neighborhood would face as a destiny. Therefore, she did not finish her education. Karima had five children including two girls: Soha (20) who is married, Lama (15) who Karima referred to proudly on several occasions as being extremely smart and good at school and three boys: Mahmood (18), Raheem (11), and Kamal (5).

On March 12, 2012, Karima's life would change forever. Around noon she heard that a mission from the Syrian Army is searching the houses in her neighborhood for armed men. She prayed that they would not take her boys and husband because they were not involved in any military activities. Around 2.00 p.m. the mission entered their apartment asking them to surrender

their weapons. Her husband declared that they had no weapons. The officer ordered his soldiers to take her husband out. Another officer took her eldest son Mahmood (18) and he forced him to prostrate himself to Bashar al-Assad's photograph in front of his mother and siblings[2]. Then, they commanded Karima and her smaller children (a girl and two boys) to stay inside while they took the father and the son Mahmood with them. In a few minutes, Karima and her children heard gunshots. Karima held herself together because she was worried about the safety of her younger children.

Her husband's dead body was left next to their flat door, and her son was left dying on the stairs after they shot him in the head. Karima remembered how his flesh and blood had dispersed and stuck to the walls around him. Her daughter Lama (15) tried to give Mahmood water before he died because he was muttering "water," but he could not drink it. Karima told me this with a big sigh that even her son's last wish did not come true: "My daughter came back inside; her hands were covered with Mahmood's blood. I kissed her hands and I smelled my son scent." When the army mission finished investigating the building, they came again to Karima's apartment. She locked the door. They unlocked it by shooting it. Karima described her feelings at that moment:

I thought that our lives had come to an end. They were confused and shouting what they will do with the women. Thanks be to God they did not touch my daughter or me. I tried to strengthen my young boys. They were shaking and traumatised. The soldiers kept us for a half an hour and after that wandered in the building. When they finally exited our building, they shot Mahmood in the heart. He passed away then. I decided to leave my house under cover of the dark.

Karima described her daughter Lama's actions proudly: "Lama was so brave. She pulled the bodies of her brother and father into the house and covered them with white sheets. Around 5:30 p.m. we left our house forever. We left the door open hoping that good people would find the bodies and bury them."

It was winter and dark, and Karima, who has no experience in public spaces, felt scared and decided to stay the night at one of her neighbour's houses. When they entered her neighbour's house, they saw another dead body of a stranger. Karima learned that the

regime forces killed all men in her neighborhood, and they randomly threw all the dead bodies into different houses. They do so to ensure that the rest of the families are terrorized and humiliated and other anti-regime regions would look at this example and understand the consequences of rebelling against the regime. Once again Lama covered the dead body with a sheet, so the small children would stop looking at the body that was shattered by bullets. Karima continued her story:

> *At 6:30 in the morning we left the neighbor's house, the regime forces were shooting toward our feet and screaming at us to go back. I gestured with my hand that it is impossible to go back. We kept running through the shooting, and sometimes we hid in some buildings, but there were dead bodies in every building. When we passed our neighborhood, we met armed rebels. I expressed my disappointment with the rebels because they did not confront and fight the regime troops. But the rebel leader told me to thank God because no one touched my daughter or me and we had escaped with our honour. He said in the nearby neighborhood most women were raped.*

From that point Karima's displacement journey went through many stops. In Homs Governorate, Karima and her children went first to Safsafeh village, but she did not feel safe there. Thus, they moved to Khaldiahe where there were mortar shells falling in the area. So they moved to Baiiada and then to KafrAya where Karima's family live. Karima stayed at her parents' house for 40 days, but the daily sounds of shooting made her more nervous. She psychologically broke down. She informed her parents that she was leaving Homs Governorate and moving to Set Zaynab in Rif Dimashq Governorate where her sister-in-law had an available empty house where Karima and her children could stay. Karima stayed there for a few weeks and finally was able to sleep at night without the sound of shooting. However, Karima said that in the summer of 2012 around the second week in the month of Ramadan[3], Syrian regime missiles started falling on Set Zaynab, and 300 people died. She was displaced again with her children to Khan Alshe[4], where they stayed for 17 days at a school. Many schools in Syria were transformed from their original mission to become a refuge for the displaced people who had no place else to sleep. The living conditions were so frustrating that Karima decided to go back to Homs Governorate. For two and a half months she stayed in

Eastern Al Jadidah in Homs, an area that was under the Syrian regime control. Soon, a checkpoint for the Syrian regime troops was built right next to her house. From this checkpoint the soldiers launched missiles into the opposition neighborhoods. Despite these obstacles Karima and her children stayed for a little bit until an additional challenge faced them.

Karima described the day when her life destabilised again. She smiled slightly as she reported to me that her daughter Lama was watching Addounia TV[5]:

> *I was walking with my two little boys in the park next to my home. My daughter Lama was alone at home watching Addounia's series "Sabaia"[6], when I saw soldiers entering our house. I was terrified that they will do something to my daughter. I ran to the house to see that they were interrogating my other daughter Soha who had just arrived with her husband for a visit. I whispered in Lama's ears to delete all the TV channels and turn the TV off[7].*

Karima clarified to me that now she can tell these stories and she is fine thanks to the love and support of the Molham Volunteering Team[8], but at that time when Lieutenant "Samer" interrogated her, her eyes were always red and her face was extremely tired. Lieutenant Samer asked Karima where her husband was, she replied that he was working in Lebanon[9]. Samer accused Karima of being a liar, a killer, and a terrorist, and he told her to appear for an in-depth investigation at his office in two hours. Karima said good-bye to her children thinking that she was going to her death. She went to Samer's office with her son-in-law. Karima felt terrified and shy at the same time while she was entering Samer's office and the soldiers were looking at her with judgmental eyes. Karima described her experience with Samer:

> *He was feeling bored and wanted to mock someone for fun and he found me. He kept accusing me of being a killer and a terrorist. I kept silent first. I am not used to speaking with men! In my community women do not generally communicate with men or confront them. But later, I negotiated with Samer. I told him 'okay, if I am a killer, why do you not let me go back to my home and keep an eye on me until you confirm that I am a killer'. He agreed with my suggestion, but then tried to start interrogating my son-in-law who was so*

afraid that he did not say a word. To rescue him, I interfered and claimed that he is deaf. Samer believed me, and we went back home alive.

With tears in her eyes, Karima said that she prostrated to God for half an hour to thank Him for surviving again[10]. After this incident Karima decided to leave Syria and go to Jordan's refugee camp. She did not change her mind even when the next day First Lt. Zaidon called to try to make up with her because of Samer's annoying behavior (Karima clarified that he is Samer's boss and that he, like Samer, is Alawite by sect) Karima described her meeting with First Lt. Zaidon the next day:

First Lt. Zaidon asked me to forgive them. He had his six-year-old son with him, and he asked me to pray for his son. First Lt. Zaidon is a good man not like Samer. But, I could not trust him and I did not open my heart. When he kept asking me to tell him my wishes and he will try to make them come true. I told him my only wish right now is to leave Homs and go to Damascus. He said that I can leave and that he hopes that I meet good people on my way for the sake of my orphaned children.

Karima did not wait until the next morning to leave. In the afternoon of that same day she left Homs City and headed to Jordan with her children. Their trip lasted a few weeks from Homs to Kazaz in Damascus to Jordan. In Damascus, they waited for 12 days because the road was closed due to explosions. Then they continued heading south toward Dara'a Governorate where they traversed Tafas, Al-Ajameh, and Tiba, then on November 5, 2012 they crossed the border into Za'atri Refugee Camp in Jordan. Karima who had grown up in a city described her experience in the Za'atri Refugee Camp in the desert:

It was a shocking experience! I stayed in Za'atri for three months and ten days. There I met the Molham Volunteering Team, who used to visit me and help me financially. They are like my children! After three months and ten days, my tent collapsed from the rain and we could not live in it anymore. I escape from Za'atri illegally with the help of another Syrian family. My refugee tent was my life tragedy!

In comparison with other Syrian refugee women, Karima's story had a happy ending. Later, the Molham

Volunteering Team contacted her and helped her to rebuild her life in Amman. They matched her with a Palestinian-Jordanian family who officially sponsored her, gave her an available apartment that they owned, and helped her to register her children in school. Additionally, the Molham Volunteering Team found a Qatari woman who provided monthly financial support for Karima's family.

Karima's strategy to survive the Syrian War and to cope with everyday life in her refugee destination was to challenge her traditional gender role and lack of experience in public spaces and resist long stages of injustice and internal and external displacement. As an uneducated mother from a poor urban region, Karima went through a significant, mostly depressing transformation when she became a female head of a household. Thus, Karima represents one of the categories of Syrian refugee women most in need of help and support from organizations that provide financial and psychological resources. One should note that in comparison with the other five Syrian refugee women stories that are presented here, the place of origin plays a huge role in Karima's suffering and in her long internal and external displacement journey. Coming from an urban poor conservative Homsi environment, Karima's life experiences were limited to the border of her house. Although women, like Mona[11], also came from a poor, conservative environment, their rural origins equip them with experiences in the public space through mainly working in farming. Additional challenges related to the place of origin are the geographical proximity of Jordan's borders. Travelling from Dara'a, Rif Dimashq, or Damascus governorates was relatively more manageable than travelling from Homs Governorate especially because, depending on the time and place of departure, the sectarian tension and armed confrontation in Homs were comparatively higher than in Dara'a, Rif Dimashq, or Damascus.

Mona's Story

Mona is a warrior (both figuratively and literally) who does not match the mainstream media and Refugee Not Campaign's representations of Syrian refugee women as passive powerless victims in the ongoing conflict. Mona (30 years old) is from a small village in Dara'a Governorate. She studied just until the sixth grade, and got married at the age of 15 as did most of the girls in her village. She has an 11-year-old daughter who has growth hormone deficiency

disorder and thus physically appears to be 7.

Mona actively participated in the armed rather than peaceful phase of the Syrian Uprising. She used to work smuggling defected soldiers from the Al-Assad regime's army and helped many of them join the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

When I interviewed Mona, she resided with many members from her close and extended family in a small modest apartment on the outskirts of Amman. Unlike many other women and activists who I interviewed, Mona actively participated in the armed rather than peaceful phase of the Syrian Uprising. She used to work smuggling defected soldiers from the Al-Assad regime's army and helped many of them join the Free Syrian Army (FSA). She was also an informant for the FSA and had a satellite phone in order to communicate with them and inform them about the Syrian regime's military locations that they should target. When most of her female relatives and friends left her village seeking refuge in Jordan, Mona was one of very few women who stayed in the village working alongside the male fighters in the FSA. Mona confessed that Al-Assad regime army was tolerant, at the beginning, with women, and the soldiers did not investigate or suspect women. Therefore she and another woman used to hide weapons and ammunition under their clothes and thus passed the regime's checkpoints without inspections. However, Mona's actions were uncovered by the regime, and her name, among other women's names, was placed on the wanted people lists. At that time, Mona's father, who supported his daughter's engagement with the revolution begged her to leave Syria. Realizing the increased danger, Mona escaped Syria with her 11-yearold daughter before the regime had the chance to arrest her.

Mona did not tell me an exact timeframe for her story because of different security issues regarding her husband and father who are still fighting in Syria with the FSA. She left Dara'a Governorate with approximately 1500 persons heading to Jordan during a night when the regime launched an intensive bombardment of her region. They walked for four hours under the bombing to reach the Jordanian borders. A group of Free Syrian Army soldiers accompanied them, and they gave the children sleep-inducing drugs to prevent them from crying and thus disclosing their location to

the Al-Assad regime troops. Mona stayed in the Za'atri Refugee Camp for 12 days, and then she fled from the camp with her extended family who were already in the camp. She described her experience at the camp:

The Jordanian army welcomed us at the border and took us via buses to the camp. When I saw the reception tent and that we will sleep on the bare ground, I was shocked. I wanted to go back to Syria. We were given a thin sleeping mattress, a pillow, a blanket, and a meal for each individual. It was so freezing cold, and the blanket did not warm us! I gathered all the young children in my family around me and tried to put all our blankets together as layers to warm us a little more!

The direct reason for Mona and her family to escape the camp was, similar to Karima's reason, the snowstorm that hit Za'atri Camp in the winter of 2013. The storm crushed their tents. Mona and her extended family slept in one of the camps' school buildings for three days. When they went back to their tent locations, the tents had been stolen[12]. The family escaped Za'atri with the help of an activist group.

In Jordan, Mona had to face daily economic insecurities that took away her time and reduced her quality of life. It was true that Mona and her family escaped Za'atri but this did not mean that they survived the frustrating housing conditions. Mona and her daughter shared a one-bedroom apartment with several members from Mona's extended family, which included Mona's mother, Mona's mother-in-law, Mona's two brothers with their wives and children. The apartment rent was 140 JD (about $200) per month and the monthly bills such as electricity and water exceeded 13 JD. In Jordan, a Syrian legal work permit in Jordan is extremely difficult and expensive to obtain. So people such as Mona's brothers were subject to shadow work exploitation (they worked illegally in construction jobs). The UN aid plus what Mona's brothers earned was very far from enough to provide the family with enough income for survival. Despite this challenging housing condition, Mona and her family do not wish to ever go back to the Za'atri camp.

A few months before I interviewed Mona, she was with her mother-in-law who had a diabetes medical checkup at Akilah Hospital[13]. In the hospital corridor, Mona was waiting with her daughter when a man called Amr approached them to say that he helps Syrian

women without a male provider. Amr told Mona that he has apartments available for such women that were donated through a philanthropist. Mona was attracted to the idea but before going with the man to see the apartments, she covertly called her brother to inform him about the situation. Once Mona left the hospital with Amr, 11 other women also in the hospital did the exact same thing. The man grouped them based on their Syrian region of origin. Mona and her daughter were grouped in a taxi with three other women from Dar'a. In the other two taxies were 4 women from Homs and 4 from Damascus' outskirts. The promised place was in Al-Zarqa Al-jadidah[14]. When Mona got into to the taxi, Amr was in the same car as she was. He called the apartments' donator to inform him that he "has good news" and that he "brought women from Dar'a." Mona felt insecure about this call, and she felt that the man's accent and tone had changed when he talked on the phone. She whispered in her daughter's ear to pretend to play with their mobile phone and to take a photo of Amr. Mona's daughter did that, and they had the photo. Amr told the women in the taxi that he just has checks and no cash and asked them to pay now for the taxi and he would reimburse them once they arrive. Mona paid her only 5 JD (about $7) and was left without money. The car took different long side roads, so Mona was not able to memorize the travel route. When they arrived to the promised apartments, Mona and the other women discovered that they were brought to a house for prostitution. An old man was running the place and he was angry with Amr when he discovered that Amr brought older married women with him not young virgin women. Mona was furious. She urged the other women to not eat or drink anything[15]. She threatened Amr and the old man with actions by Free Syrian Army. The old man said that they do not force women to prostitution and they are free to go. Mona and the other women left without any money. They walked a few blocks until they saw a shop where the owner felt solidarity with the women and gave them money to pay for a taxi to take them back to Amman. Mona told her story to a Jordanian Palestinian male activist, who is known to be connected to international media, asking him to publish the mobile photo of Amr and warn other women and the authorities about him. The male activist took Mona's mobile phone, transferred the photo to his mobile phone, and then deleted it from Mona's phone. Mona was left without evidence and she was not able to continue her attempts to investigate the case of Amr and the prostitution house.

Mona's strategy to survive the Syrian War was manifested in different forms of resisting political and patriarchal oppression in both Syria and Jordan. In Syria, she did not only challenge her traditional gender role by smuggling both small arms and defected soldiers but also she was an active participant in the armed conflict by working as an informant for the FSA and engaging in military planning. As an uneducated mother from a poor rural region, Mona already had experiences in public spaces inside Syria through working in farming for almost her whole life and later through working with the FSA. Thus, when she arrived in Jordan, it was more likely that she would embrace her new role and life easily and quickly in comparison with women who were from her same class but from urban regions and thus may have lacked experiences in public spaces. Such experiences empowered Mona to act appropriately and immediately when she was trapped in the prostitution network. However, similar to all other refugees from lower classes, Mona continued to suffer from severe daily economic insecurity in Jordan and increasing hostility from the hosting community.

Sima's Story

Sima (52) is an example of skilled refugee women who moved to Jordan with proficient expertise but they were marginalized from Syrian mainstream activist organizations because of their place of origin and age. Sima is a widow from Al-Tall, a small city in Rif Dimashq Governorate. Sima got married to a male cousin at the age of 17. It was a first-cousin marriage, thus two of Sima's six children have mental and physical disabilities. Once Sima got married she moved with her husband to Saudi Arabia where her husband was working. She got her Baccalaureate certificate (high school) a few months after her marriage, and then she fulfilled her passion in pursuing courses in fashion design. A few years before the Syrian Uprising had started, Sima and her family went back to Syria where she established a fashion and crafts design training institute in her hometown Al-Tall. Sima's children have professions in medical, engineering, and teaching. When the Syrian Uprising began, all Sima's children were involved in it.

All Sima's children stayed involved in the Syrian Uprising, and they joined the Free Syrian Army groups in Damascus.

One of Sima's children, Nizar had "an identity crisis for many years," and he joined contradictory extremist groups. Nizar joined a Satanist extremist religious group while he was attending medical school for surgery in Jordan. Because of this, his family transferred him to a university in Bahrain where this time he joined a branch of Al-Qaeda and through them got involved in terrorist bombings in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government imprisoned him, and later he was transferred to a Syrian prison in Damascus. Thus, in mid-March when the Syrian Uprising started, Nizar's name was immediately placed on the most-wanted lists regardless of the fact that he had abandoned his affiliation with Al-Qaeda. However, Nizar along with 15 other persons from Al-Tall participated in one of the Umayyad Mosque early demonstrations in Old Damascus. Sima accused Nizar's uncle of reporting him to the intelligence. Nizar was imprisoned again and severely tortured. March 25, 2011 was the first time Sima was requested for interrogation. On the one hand, the Syrian intelligence aimed at terrorising Sima to disclose any information about her son's activities, and on the other hand, to put pressure on her son to cooperate with them. Nizar was released early in June 2011 after Bashar al-Assad issued a general amnesty that covered political prisoners. Though such harassment of Sima by Syrian intelligence did not stop. All Sima's children (male and female) stayed involved in the Syrian Uprising, and they joined the Free Syrian Army groups in Damascus suburbs where they all carried out tasks of fighting and/or securing medical assistance in field hospitals. Thus, Sima was continuously a subject of security harassment and interrogation.

In September 2012, Sima's house and her son Nizar's house were invaded by the Syrian security, steeling everything, and destroying what they could not take. Her son Nizar's house was burned.

Sima showed me pictures of her house and family. She was sad as she pointed to a handmade carpet that she had made in 1987 and which was stolen on that day. Late in September 2012, Sima left Syria for good legally to Jordan to stay at a female cousin's house. Sima explained her moving to Jordan:

I wanted to travel to stay with my foster daughter by breastfeeding[16] in Saudi Arabia. While I was waiting for the visa, I sought activities that I could do to serve the revolution and the refugees. I was excited that a group of women learned about my work and they wanted me to find a place and be the manager of a workshop similar to the fashion and crafts design training institute that I ran in Syria. The aim was to train refugee women to produce handicrafts and then generate income by selling them. I found this a great work opportunity. I had no money. We are not a poor family, but we invested all our money in serving the revolution.

Sima's excitement turned to frustration very soon. Her female cousin was not happy with what seemed like professional success that Sima was achieving. In the beginning, she stole Sima's money, and then suddenly she threw Sima out of her house in the middle of the night. With so little money, Sima walked through the streets of Amman until she reached the Al-Ammer building where there are rooms for cheap rent. The building had no rooms that were available. The Egyptian concierge who was working through the night told Sima she could safely stay in his room until the morning. The next day, Sima met a woman from Dara'a who told her that she can move into her apartment with her. Sima's visa to Suadi Arabia was on hold as were all other Syrian citizens' visas for the Arabian gulf countries, and the fact that Sima had lived there for more than 20 years and had a foster daughter there did not help her. Inside the Syrian women's organization that Sima worked with, she became frustrated and felt marginalized. She was underpaid, and the employers did not put her in charge of the crafts project as they had promised. The director of the organization was a young Syrian woman who was raised and educated in the United Kingdom, and she had descended from an upper middle class Damascene family. Although Sima had supervised the selection of furniture and other equipment for their workshop space, the director hired project managers who were Western-educated Syrian women who had no experience in working inside Syria with lower class women. Sima expressed her opinion: "We started the Syrian Revolution because we wanted to get rid of classicism and for all of us to become equals. They underestimated me, ignored my experiences and treated me as if I am nobody." Furthermore, Sima had a dispute with her flat mate over the rent. Her flat mate wanted her to pay the entire

rent for both of them because Sima was working. As a result, Sima moved to Raghadan Complex in Amman where many Syrian refugee families resided. When Sima worked with refugee women in both Amman and Za'atri Refugee Camp, that give her fulfillment. However, Sima's poor living conditions in a small room without basic appliances such as a refrigerator as well as the marginalization at work made her make plans to travel to Egypt before the beginning of the month of Ramadan in 2013. I interviewed Sima two days before her scheduled flight to Cairo.

Sima's strategy to survive the Syrian War was her attempt to recruit her own skills and talents in Jordan to make a living, on the one hand, and to serve other refugee women and the broader cause of the "Syrian Revolution," on the other hand. However, because of her age, rural origin, and lack of proper education, Sima's attempt was restricted and marginalized by the Syrian women's organizations that she tried to work with. As a Syrian woman from a rural upper-middle class family, Sima's family wealth was embodied in owning properties and land rather than having money in cash or in bank accounts. Therefore, in Jordan, she lacked money to live comfortably and thus depended on relatives and other people close to her to secure housing. However, later even relatives and people who were close to her rejected her. Such rejections highlight the ways in which host communities' attitudes change from welcoming refugees at the beginning of the crisis to rejection and hostility later. In Sima's case when her situation became significantly depressing, her privilege enabled her to move to Egypt to stay at a house owned by her family.

Hala's Story

Hala's story is like one of many Syrian journalists' stories who were detained and tortured in prisons during the Syrian Uprising[17]. Hala is 21 years old. She is from a political family. Her father was one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Hama City during the 1980s, and since then he lives in exile in Saudi Arabia. Hala did not seem committed to her father's political Islamic heritage. She is secular and does not wear any religious symbols. Hala lived in Damascus with her two brothers and mother. They had a Damascene upper middle class life. However, Hala's family life changed sharply after the Syrian Uprising. Her two brothers were detained early in the uprising. One of them

died under torture and the other one is still in prison.

Since the beginning of the revolution Hala worked as a journalist. She filmed news reports covering the peaceful phase of the revolution and the activism of youth and college students. She sent her video reports to Arabic news channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya. She also organized demonstrations and delivered humanitarian aid. In July 2012, many of the activists and journalists in Hala's circle were arrested. She left her house and lived in hiding for seven months in a female cousin's house. Hala's cousin was married to a high-profile Syrian government employee and lived in a fancy pro-regime neighbored. Hala's cousin-in-law did not know about her revolutionary activism, just his wife did. On February 10, 2013, one of Hala's last activist colleagues who had not fled Syria, been killed, or been imprisoned called Hala from a "fake number"[18].He told her that he was in great danger and asked her if he could come and hide in her mother's house. Hala agreed. When they arrived at Hala's family house, Hala's friend made a long call (more than 16 minutes) from his "fake number." This long call was the reason that the security forces were able to locate his location. The intelligence agents came searching the building for him. Hala helped him escape through the roof of her building, but the security forces captured him. He immediately confessed about Hala. The security forces invaded Hala's house. They broke everything and they stole all the money (around $10,000) and valuable possessions including Hala's cameras and videotapes that she used in her media activism. The security forces arrested Hala along with her friend. They accused them of being armed terrorists. They took Hala in one car and her friend in another. As soon as they put Hala in the car, the verbal and physical harassment started. When they arrived at the Forty Intelligence Center in the White Bridge neighborhood, an agent gave her a dagger and ordered her to stab her friend to prove loyalty to the regime. Hala refused, and she denied that she knew "her friend." The agent took the dagger and stabbed Hala's friend in the back. They severely beat Hala and then took her to a separate room. There, Hala was subjected to a technique of torture called Strappado. Her wrists were tied with a rope behind her back and then she was suspended in the air for six hours. After one and half hours, she lost consciousness. When they let her down, they threw her body over flour bags and four men hit her small body extremely hard with rifle shoulder stocks. After that they put

her in a tiny single cell (Monfareda in Arabic)[19]. Hala was tortured with various interrogation techniques such as electric shock, sexual assault, threat of rape and shaming, and food deprivation. Hala described her experience in a low and shy voice:

> They severely hit me and harassed me. They said they would rape me! It is so difficult for a girl's psyche to be subject to all of that. They made me feel that they knew everything about my most personal life details. They threatened that they would inform my family that I was not a virgin and that I was a slut who slept with the Free Syrian Army soldiers.

Hala stayed in the Forty Intelligence Center for two nights in which she did not sleep due to the unbearable conditions of the single cell but also because of the sounds of torturing other detainees around her. Yet what was most difficult was that the intelligence agents put her friend in the facing cell where they tortured him day and night. From the Forty Intelligence Center Hala and her friend were transferred to Al-Khatib Intelligence Branch. Hala emphasised that Al-Khatib Branch was "a horrible place that there are no words to describe." The intelligence agents forced Hala on her knees to climb down seven floors of stairs located underground until they reached the single cell where they imprisoned her again. Hala was then subjected to three days of interrogation and torture to force her to name and locate all the networks of activists and journalists that she knew. Hala was born with a heart disease. The methods of torture that the intelligence agents tried on Hala and her friend were significantly harsh. For example, they were subjected to the Chair of Torture, where their wrists, neck, and feet were tied to a chair and then water and electricity were thrown on their bodies to be electrocuted. Hala was able to smell the burning nails and hair. She temporally lost her sight for 24 hours, and she started bleeding from her nose. Furthermore, Hala was food and water deprived for four successive days. On the fourth day in the middle of the night, she cried loudly for any food or water. A patrol of two persons came. One gave her a little water. So she asked for little food too. The other person caught one of the cockroaches that were running around in her cell and put it in her mouth forcing her to eat it as food. After three hours Hala was still muttering "food." A watchman came with a steel can of rotten food that could not be open without a can opener. Hala complained asking how she was supposed to open it. Her nails

were long. The watchman mocked her asking to open it with her fingernails. When she answered that it is "impossible," he called his fellow guards to come and watch. He ripped off her first two fingernails. She lost consciousness while he ripped off the rest[20]. The psychological and physical torture, especially the beating on her lower abdomen, caused Hala to have a gynecological hemorrhage for a month and 18 days. After 8 days of torture, the head of the Al-Khatib Intelligence Branch was checking the detainees when he saw Hala bleeding and about to die. He ordered her to be transferred to a civilian prison. In the process, Hala was asked to confess on the Syrian national news channel that she was a terrorist and that she regretted her deeds, but she refused. Then, she was transferred to the Terrorism Court. There, one of the employees recognized her and called her well-connected cousin. Hala's family came in one hour after the call, they paid 150,000 Syrian pounds (around $3,000), and Hala was released. Hala went to stay in a cousin's house in Qudsaya, a town close to Damascus. Hala mentioned:

> The neighborhood was mostly Alawite and pro-government. They knew that I was an activist and a political detainee. They threatened my family with kidnapping me. This had already happened many times in that town. There were civil militias (Ligan Sha'abiah in Arabic) that kidnaped pro-revolution people, most kidnapped people were women and girls who would be held, tortured, and maybe raped in civilian prisons. Many of these prisons are the kidnappers' houses.

Because of these threatening circumstances and fearing a new arrest, Hala decided to flee Syria. She escaped through the Lebanese border, and from Beirut she flew to Amman. At the end of my interview with Hala, I asked her what helped her to stay brave and strong. She answered, "I have hope that I will go back to Syria and that our cause will win."

Hala's strategy to survive the Syrian war and to cope with everyday life in her refugee destination was to continue her activism by volunteering with different humanitarian activist organisations in Jordan and, at the same time, she was looking for a job. Whem I interviewed Hala, she had recently arrived in Jordan, and she expressed her interest in wanting to be interviewed for my research. While she was telling me her story, Hala mentioned that no one, not even her mother, knows about various details in

her story. Hala's effort to share her story underlines her endeavour to survive passivity and empower herself. Such an endeavour was strengthened by Hala's background as an educated young Damascene woman from an upper middle class family. One should note that Hala had completed her higher education in Damascus; however, due to her political activism she was denied her degree certificate or transcript when she asked for them before leaving Syria. Therefore, her efforts to find a job in Jordan were restricted by both Jordanian strict employment regulations of Syrians and the Syrian regime's "revenge" tactic of depriving opposing activists from their education certificates.

Maha's Story

Maha (40) is from a village in Dara'a Governorate. She is a mother of seven children (3-16), four boys and three girls. Maha got married early in her life and has no experience in the public sphere. Her life centered on serving her family in the private sphere. Maha's husband was an English language teacher in a local governmental school. He provided the only family income, which was 20,000 Syrian Pounds per month (around $400). Maha and her husband had no political opinions supporting the revolution whatsoever. In fact, they preferred the safety under Syrian regime rule to the chaos after the revolution. However, these previous pro-regime sentiments did not protect their children and them from being victims of the Syrian regime's hostility. On February 16, 2013, Maha escaped from Dara'a with her seven children. On that day, one of the fragmentation bombs hit their village, and a piece of metal that dropped from the sky fell next to her son while he was in the kitchen. For Maha and her husband, this incident was the final signal from a series of signs that seemed to indicate that Maha and the children should leave as soon as possible. Before that and for many months, Maha's children had suffered psychologically from the armed conflict that lasted until the time when I interviewed Maha during June 2013. The psychological scars of war on Maha's children had been manifested in different forms. For example, one of her sons had sudden bouts of crying and screaming in the middle of the night, and one of her daughters had a reaction to any loud noise that reminded her of bombing sounds and caused her to run and hide her head under several layers of sheets and pillows or crawl under tables and begin crying loudly. When she and the children arrived in Jordan, Maha's

suffering through economic and food insecurity began. The humanitarian aid was not only far from enough for Maha's family to survive on. But, also Maha complained that the UN food aid was generally "rotten." This situation severely affected Maha's and her children's physical and psychological health. The food aid included canned foods, bulgur, rice, and lentils. There were no fruits, vegetables, eggs, or meat. This diet caused Maha's children to have constant bouts of diarrhea and vomiting. Both Maha and her children had Anemia and severe loss of weight. In four months, Maha's weight dropped from 134 pounds (60 kg) to 90 pounds (40 kg). To combat malnutrition, Maha, as did many other women in the Za'atri camp, developed a strategy of surviving by selling food aid at low prices in the Za'atri market[21] and instead buying "edible items." Maha complained about the corruption of the street leader[22]. in the section of the camp where she lived. She revealed that her street leader did not distribute the non-food aid on her street, such as caravans and cleaning supplies, which generally came through individual and non-UN donors. Instead he sold these for money. Maha said that she could not buy a caravan from him because she did not have enough money. However, she bought soap from him several times because her family was so much in need of materials that would keep them clean.

Maha refused charity as a solution for her situation[23]. She said "I want to work and make my living honestly. I do not beg. I want to eat bread by the sweat of my brow." Maha confirmed: "I wish to die instead of being humiliated." Thus, she went to Nour Al-Hussain center asking for a job cleaning public rest rooms. The manger agreed to Maha's request after she listened to her story. Maha signed a contract to work for a monthly salary of 150 JD (around $210). However, her contract was ripped up when another manger came and hired a woman he knew.

Maha's husband did not accompany them at the beginning because he wanted to keep his income as a teacher inside Syria. However, after he knew about their hardship and misery at the Za'atri camp, Maha's husband wanted to join his wife and children. He left Syria and reached the Jordanian border. However, he could not pass the border because single men are not allowed to enter the Za'atri camp. Maha's husband confirmed with the Jordanian officials that his family was inside Za'atri camp, but they did not sympathise with his case. For three days, Maha waited in front

of the Za'atri camp manager's office until she could meet him. She told the camp manger her husband's story, and later she knew that for her husband to pass the border, he needed to pay 200 JD (around $282). Maha and her husband could not afford such an amount. Nevertheless, Maha was still hoping that her husband who she occasionally communicated with via mobile phone would join her soon. At the same time, she hoped that the products of an embroidery workshop that she joined might be sold in the future and that would bring her some income.

Maha's strategy to survive the Syrian War and to cope with everyday life in her refugee destination was twofold: to sell her food aid and instead buy what she needed and also to register in embroidery training program at an international organization in the Za'atari camp. As an uneducated mother from a poor rural region who suddenly became a displaced female head of a household, Maha went into severe depression and psychological distress that was reflected in her becoming increasingly violent to her children. Thus, she expressed that spending her free time in a productive way at the embroidery training workshop and talking to a Syrian psychological counselor at the organization made her forget her troubles.

Maha's story highlights the daily suffering of female heads of households inside the Za'atari refugee camp, and the importance of providing cash assistance for them, in the short term, and professional training, in the long term, to achieve their economic empowerment and independence. Additionally, Maha's story calls attention to the obstacles for family reunions when an individual adult Syrian male needs to cross the borders into the Za'atari camp.

Conclusion

Drawing on a transnational feminist perspective, I have argued in this paper that, in contrast to the dominant representations of global and social media, there is no singular category that fits all "Syrian refugee women." Based on my fieldwork in Jordan during the summer of 2013 that included thirty three in-depth interviews and approximately 100 hours of participant observation in addition to discourse analysis of global and social media, I have analyzed representative examples of global and social media dominant representations. To challenge such representations, I narrated and analyzed six stories

of Syrian refugee women who represent different marginalized groups based on the intersection of their class, age, education, family status, and place of origin.

Thus, stories similar to the examples of Maha, Sima, Mona, Rim, Hala, and Karima are invisible in global and social media representations. The stories of Maha, Sima, Mona, Rim, Hala, and Karima show how, through the process of becoming refugees, Syrian women have heterogeneous experiences. Such experiences refute the dominant global and social media representations that minimized the stories of Syrian women to not only passive victims of war but also subjects of forced marriage in exchange for money by their families. While all these women faced forms of structural violence by the Syrian regime, the intersectional relations of their class, age, education, family status, and place of origin made their experiences significantly different.

Each one – Maha, Sima, Mona, Rim, Hala, and Karima – finds her own way to survive the Syrian War and to cope with everyday life in her refugee destination. Women like Rim and Hala, who are both educated, young, and from upper/middle class families, find a purpose in continuing activism in Jordan to help bring justice and positive change to the lives of refugee women. Women like Karima, who is a mother, uneducated and from a lower class family, find a purpose in protecting their children and securing the best future that they can afford based on their circumstances. In Karima's case, this means escaping Syria as well as the Jordanian refugee camp and, in Amman, sending her children again to school. The individual experiences of each one – Maha, Sima, Mona, Rim, Hala, and Karima – tell us multiple aspects about the main challenges that Syrian refugee women undergo and highlight women's historical and political agency in coping with these challenges.

The dominant representations of Syrian refugee women invisibilise the political and economic relational issues as well as structural inequalities that impacted the ways Syrian women experience the process of becoming a refugee. The lives of Syrian refugee women are impacted by systems of power and privilege that make their voices and stories largely marginalized both in media and reality. In the media, representations of Syrian refugee women are limited to only victims of forms of oppression by their "backward men" with no visibility of forms of exploitation that blame, for example, policies of

international organizations and corruption as was highlighted in Maha's story. Syrian refugee women's political and historical agency is manifested in different forms of resisting political and social injustice in both Syria and Jordan. However, there are systems of privilege and power that silence and marginalize some women's voices more than others. For example, women such as Rim and Hala who have education and class privileges have more visibility in comparison to women such as Maha and Karima who lack such privileges. Additionally, women such as Sima are – because of their rural origin, age, and lack of proper education – marginalized among Syrian mainstream activist organizations in comparison with young Damascene women such as Rim and Hala. This paper highlights the ways in which online media representations robbed Syrian refugee women of their agency and invisiblized the complexity and variety of such stories of struggling for freedom, suffering from violence and war, and resisting inequality and injustice.

By Katty Alhayek

The paper "Untold Stories of Syrian Women Surviving War" is a part of a broader study based on Ms. Alhayek fieldwork during the summer of 2013 in Jordan, where she conducted ethnographic research as well as thirty-three in-depth interviews with Syrian refugee women and activists.

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A Syrian woman displaced by her country's civil war walks with her child on Nov. 9, 2013 in Beirut, Lebanon. (Photo Credit: Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

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1. This camp is the first refugee camp for Syrians in Jordan. A family called Al-Bashabsha donated buildings they own for Syrian refugees. With the increasing flow of Syrian refugees, the UN took over operation of the small camp. Then, the UN established the Za'atari camp to accommodate the continuing influx.

2. This is a practice that the regime soldiers force people to do to humiliate them.

3. Ramadan: is the holy month for Muslims where they believe the Quran was revealed. Muslims fast during Ramadan days from dawn to sunset. According to the Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar, Ramdan is the 9th month. In 2012 when Karima was at Set Zaynab, Ramadan occurred between July 20 - August 18.

4. Khan Alshe: is a historically Palestinian refugee camp.

5. Addounia TV is a private television station that is famous for promoting the Syrian regime's propaganda. I believe the role of Addounia TV in the Syrian conflict is similar, to some extent, to the role of RTLM Radio in the Rwanda Genocide. Thus, when Karima mentioned that her daughter was watching Addounia. My reaction was: "Really?". Karima said that she did not mind, because she loves her daughter to watch and do the things that make her relaxed and happy after all the suffering that they went through.

6. "Sabaia": is a popular Syrian TV series that was produced before the start of the Syrian conflict. It is similar to the American HBO series "Girls" and even the translation of "Sabaia" from Arabic to English would mean girls.

7. These spontaneous reactions reflect the fear from the media censorship of the regime who consider TV channels such as Al-jazeera and Al-arabiya conspiracy tools against Syria's security.

8. Molham Volunteering Team: is an informal activist organisation of young Syrian volunteers who fled Syria after the Uprising and now work with Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey and inside Syria.

9. The reason for Karima's lying is the fear that if Lieutenant Samer knew that Karima's husband is dead so he will think that he was a rebel and that will endanger her family.

10. During my interview with Karima, she did not cry, with one exception, when she told her story about Samer. This reflects the humiliating effects that have stayed deep in her heart. Karima generally tried to sound strong while I interviewed her, especially because two members of Molham Volunteering Team accompanied me during the interview, and they tried to maintain a friendly environment that kept Karima comfortable.

11. Please see Mona's story in the following section.
12. Although Mona accused the regimes' agents inside the camp of stealing the tents, this idea was based more on ideological beliefs than facts.

13. Akilah Hospital is a Jordanian private hospital that provides free medical services for Syrian refugees based on donations from private businessmen.

14. Al-Zarqa Al-jadidah (New Zarqa): is one of the new suburbs of Zarqa city, which is located 25 km northeast of Amman.

15. Mona was afraid that food or drink would be drugged.

16. A foster child by breastfeeding (Radaa'ah in Arabic) is the only allowed form of an adoption relationship under Islamic Sharia'a law. It is not necessary that the parents of the foster child by breastfeeding are dead. In fact, when any woman has breastfed any child under the age of two years five times, this child is considered her child. However, this child would not usually live with the breastfeeding mother. Thus, this is an adoptive relationship and not a literal adoption. But, under Islamic Sharia'a law this situation affects legal issues such as marriage. For example, Sima's birth son is considered a brother to Sima's breastfeeding daughter and they cannot get married.

17. The systematic torture by the Syrian regime against detainees is gaining international media visibility especially after the report that the CNN exclusively published at the beginning of 2014. The report showed thousands of photographs which were leaked by a Syrian government defector. The photographs document the killing and torture of detainees in Syrian regime prisons (Krever and Elwazer, 2014).

18. A fake number (Khat Madrob in Arabic): is an appellation that Syrian activists use to refer to a phone that they operate through a SIM card phone that they take from a dead security agent or any equivalent person whose SIM card would not be monitored by the regime forces.

19. The Syrian regime is known for using this technique of torture in which the regime agents put a prisoner in a very tiny, dirty single cell where there is no sunlight. The tiny space of the cell allows the prisoner to just sit in a squatting position.

20. In the middle of my interview with Hala, I noticed her fingernails. She realised that I had seen her fingernails when she explained to me what happened. She also showed me other effects of torture on her body.

21. Za'atri market: some refugees (who have money and connections) established market-like structures on the camp's main street where they sell goods like vegetables, meat, clothes, and cleaning equipment, among other things. Many families go to the market shops' owners to sell their food aid and, in exchange, buy goods that they need.

22 The street leaders were men who were chosen by international organisations inside Za'atari to be in charge of each street of the camp. The mission of these leaders would be to help organisations to distribute daily food aid and materials such as clothing, tents, caravans, and cleaning supplies.

23 When Maha told me about her situation, I wanted to connect her to some humanitarian activist groups that I knew in Jordan but she refused and said that what she needs is to work not to depend on charity.

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Cover Photo: Displaced Yazidis in Iraq, along with other
persecuted groups, are fleeing their ancestral homelands
(Photo Credit: Juliana Jiménez Jaramillo)

Back Cover Photo: Syrian Refugees
(Photo Credit: Carsten Koall/Getty Images)