المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

DOHA INSTITUTE
FOR GRADUATE STUDIES

ALMUNTAQA

Vol. 5 | no. 2 | September/October 2022

Souhail Hbaieb

Redefining Secularism and its Problematics in Arab Contexts: Azmi Bishara's Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

Rana Barakat

How to Read a Massacre in Palestine: Indigenous History as a Methodology of Liberation

ALMUNTAQA

Vol. 5 | no. 2 | September/October 2022

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Amal Ghazal	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies/ Doha Institute for Graduate Studies

EDITORIAL SECRETARY

Yara Nassar	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

EDITORIAL BOARD

Azmi Bishara	The General Director of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.
Haider Saeed	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
Mohammed Al-Masri	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
Rajaa Bahloul	Doha Institute for Graduate Studies
Omar Ashour	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies/ Doha Institute for Graduate Studies
Dana El Kurd	University of Richmond
Morad Diani	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
Hani Awwad	Arab Cenetr for Research and Policy Studies
Eid Mohammed	Doha Institute for Graduate Studies
Abdelwahab ElAffendi	Doha Institute for Graduate Studies
Ahmed Hussain	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
Marwan Kabalan	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
Mouldi Lahmar	Doha Institute for Graduate Studies
Abderrahim Benhadda	Doha Institute for Graduate Studies
Abdelfattah Mady	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Ahmad Helmy	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
Souhail Jellaoui	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

TRANSLATION AND EDITING

Abby Al Zoubi	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
Nick Lobo	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

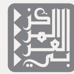
THE DESIGNATED LICENSEE

The General Director of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

For correspondences kindly contact us at: almuntaqa@dohainstitute.org

ALMUNTAQA

Vol. 5 | no. 2 | September/October 2022



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

The views and opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect the views and positions of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and Doha Institute for Graduate Studies.

ALMUNTAQA

Vol. 5 | no. 2 | September/October 2022

CONTENTS

Articles

Souhail Hbaieb

9 Redefining Secularism and its Problematics in Arab Contexts: Azmi Bishara's Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

Rana Barakat

26 How to Read a Massacre in Palestine: Indigenous History as a Methodology of Liberation

Ammar Shamaileh | Alan Aloskan | Mohammed Zahr

45 Regime Elite Turnover in the Waning Syrian Civil War (2016-2021): A Socio-Economic Approach

Abdennour Benantar

64 Algeria's Security Policy: Transformations and Dilemmas in the Context of Regional Unrest and Internal Ḥirāk

Eltigani Abdelgadir Hamid

85 The Sudanese Revolution and the Horizons of Democratisation

ALMUNTAQA

Vol. 5 | no. 2 | September/October 2022

CONTENTS

Analysis from the Arab Opinion Index

Hicham Raïq

109 The Digital Divide and Political Apathy: A Multivariate Logistic Regression Analysis of a Sample of Arab Opinion Index Data

Book Reviews

Hikmat al-Abdulrahman

129 The European Union and the Arab Region: A Realistic Portrait of Challenge

Lotfi Aïssa

140 Arab History and Arab Historiography: Past and Present Forms of Writing

ACRPS Conferences

154 Past Conferences

155 Upcoming Conferences

EDITOR'S NOTE

This volume of *Almuntaqa* features five articles, one Arab Opinion Index analysis, and two book reviews. They revisit important paradigms in modern Arab history and provide new insights into contemporary issues, with three of the articles interrogating state and regime politics and policies following the latest popular revolts in the Arab region.

The first article is by the Tunisian scholar Souhail Hbaieb who skilfully brings together different threads of Azmi Bishara's thoughts on secularisation, democracy, sectarianism, state formation in the Arab region, and Islamism to highlight Bishara's novel contributions to the study of secularisation in the Arab context. Hbaieb illustrates how Bishara centres the modern state in his comparative analysis of secularisation in the West and in the Arab region, arguing that differentiation between the religious and the mundane occurred within the realm of the modern state and concurrently with its formation. Even contemporary Islamic movements and modern patterns of Islamic religiosity are manifestations of secularisation, as they embody this differentiation.

The next article features an innovative methodological intervention by Rana Barakat that deploys the literary and artistic renditions of Palestinian stories in order to make the case for an Indigenous history of Palestine wrought with Israeli settler colonial violence but not completely defined by it. Focusing on Radwa Ashour's novel *Al-Tanturiya* and Samia Halaby's exhibit/book *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre*, Barakat highlights Indigenous voices of defiance and existence, usually erased in colonial archives.

Moving from Palestine to Syria, Ammar Shamaileh, Alan Aloskan, and Mohammed Zahr dissect changes within Syria's political and social elites during Syria's Civil War (2016-2021) as the Assad's regime started to (re)consolidate power. They argue that Syria's Assad regime, due to its state of "precarious stability" finds no need to engage in power-sharing with powerful elites. Instead, it makes frequent changes to the elite landscape in order to prevent the rise of networks that can be potentially threatening to the regime.

Abdennour Benantar's article on Algeria's security policy fills a gap in the literature on Algeria's state policies in the context of the *ḥirāk*. Benantar's analysis rests on an examination of the tensions between ethical-normative imperatives and security ones on one hand, and non-intervention and non-interference concepts on the other. He concludes that Algeria's security policy and doctrine have undergone minor adjustments lately as Algeria adapts to regional security imperatives.

The last article by Eltigani Abdelgadir Hamid outlines the challenges facing the civilian-military coalition in Sudan in the aftermath of the Salvation regime's collapse. Hamid posits that the current arrangement involving world powers and regional authoritarian regimes is to steer Sudan into a hybrid system that keeps members of the old regime in key positions while maintaining a minimum degree of democracy. This arrangement, Hamid argues, may not be sustainable due to serious internal challenges, including the lack of an experienced political leadership capable of making independent decisions and the absence of effective political institutions that can support the transition to democracy.

Hicham Raïq's analysis relies on data from the Arab Opinion Index provided by the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies to evaluate the digital divide and its impact on political participation in selected Arab countries. Using a multivariate logistic regression analysis, the paper assesses the role of demographic and socio-economic status (SES) in unequal access to the internet, concluding that gender, age, income, and educational level play a major role in the level of Internet access, and that vulnerable social groups are more reluctant to participate in political activities.

In the Book Review section, Hikmat al-Abdulrahman reviews Ahmed Hussein's book on *The European Union and the Arab Region: A Realistic Portrait of Challenge*, describing it as an exceptional study with rich contributions to the field of International Relations. Meanwhile, Lotfi Aïssa reviews the proceedings of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies' Third Annual Conference for Historical Studies, held in Beirut on 22-24 April 2016, and published by the ACRPS under the title *Arab History and Arab Historiography: Past and Present Forms of Writing*. Aïssa provides a detailed assessment of this volume's contributions to Arab historical knowledge production that reconsiders Western historical periodisation, engages with universalist historical concepts, challenges state and populist narratives, and examines the complex relationships between memory and history.

ARTICLES

Souhail Hbaieb*

Redefining Secularism and its Problematics in Arab Contexts

Azmi Bishara's Theoretical and Methodological Contributions**

إعادة فهم العلمانية وإشكالاتها في السياقات العربية

المساهمات النظرية والمنهجية لعزمي بشارة

Abstract: This study explores Azmi Bishara's contributions to the study of secularisation in the Arab context. It argues that Bishara's analysis of the processes of secularisation in the West opens new horizons to approaching secularisation in Arab countries. After a close reading of the last five centuries of European history, Bishara concludes that the modern state is the basis of political and social secularisation, differentiating the religious from the mundane, and providing space for new forms of religiosity to emerge. Bishara argues that contemporary Arab and Islamic countries are not an exception to the same processes of secularisation, rejecting the widely held assumption that Islamic religiosity represents an intrinsic religious or civilizational peculiarity in adapting to the differentiation of the mundane from the religious. The specificity of these countries is historical and is related to the conditions of the modern state's emergence and its legitimacy in the Arab context, a point Bishara emphasises in his book *The Arab Question*. This specificity explains the nature of contemporary patterns of Islamic religiosity, including those perpetuated by contemporary Islamic movements, as being one element of modern secularisation in Arab countries. Although ideologically resistant to secularism, these movements ultimately submit to the framework and logic of the modern state, embodying the differentiation of the mundane from the religious. Bishara's theory proposes a re-evaluation of political Islam and sectarianism in contemporary Arab countries, treating them not as indicative of the absence of secularisation, but as two of its possible manifestations. In the end, they are a manifestation of the compound union between religion and the realms differentiated therefrom as part of modern secularisation.

Keywords: Secularism, Azmi Bishara, the Arab Question, the State, Secularisation, Political Islam.

الملخص: تسلّط هذه الدراسة الضوء على مساهمات عزمي بشارة في فهم العلمنة في السياق العربي، وتُحاجّ بأنّ فهم صيرورات العلمنة الغربية يفتح آفاقًا جديدة لإعادة مقاربة إشكالات العلمنة في الدول العربية. فمن خلال استقراء مسار القرون الخمسة الأخيرة من التاريخ الأوروبي، يستخلص بشارة أنّ الدولة بمفهومها الحديث هي قاعدة العلمنة السياسية والاجتماعية التي تمايزت بموجبها مجالات الدنيا من الدين، والتي نشأت بموجبها كذلك أنماطٌ جديدة من التديّن. وانطلاقًا من رصد مختلف تجلّيات صيرورات العلمنة الحديثة، يظهر كيف أنّ البلدان العربية والإسلامية المعاصرة لا تمثل استثناءً من هذه الصيرورات، كما لا يمثّل التديّن الإسلامي خصوصية دينية أو حضارية جوهرانية في التكيّف مع وقائع التمايز الدنيوي من الديني في العالم الحديث كما يُعتقد. فخصوصية هذه البلدان هي خصوصية تاريخية تتعلق بشروط نشأة الدولة الحديثة واهتزاز شرعيتها في السياق العربي، وهو ما يكثّفه بشارة في مفهوم المسألة العربية. وتفسّر هذه الخصوصية طبيعةَ أنماط التديّن الإسلامي المعاصرة، بما في ذلك الأنماط التي تكرّسها الحركات الإسلامية المعاصرة بمختلف تلويناتها، وهي جزء من ظواهر العلمنة الحديثة في البلدان العربية. فرغم أنها تتبنى أيديولوجيا مقاومة العلمانية، فإنها تخضع في المطاف الأخير لإطار الدولة الحديثة ومنطقها، وتستبطن بأشكال مختلفة حقيقة تمايز مجالات الدنيا من مجالات الدين. تقترح نظرية بشارة إعادة فهم ظواهر الإسلام السياسي والطائفية في البلدان العربية المعاصرة لا بوصفها ظواهر دالّة على انتفاء العلمنة، بل باعتبارها صورة من صورها الممكنة. فهي، في نهاية المطاف، صورة من الصور التي تندرج ضمن مقولة الوحدة المركّبة بين الديني والمجالات المتمايزة منه في العلمنة الحديثة.

كلمات مفتاحية: العلمانية، عزمي بشارة، المسألة العربية، الدولة، العلمنة، الإسلام السياسي.

---

* Researcher, Kairouan Islamic Studies Centre, Tunisia. Email: hbaieb_souhail@yahoo.fr

** This article was originally received in Arabic and translated by Nancy Roberts.

Introduction

It is perfectly legitimate for any researcher or thinker, of any national or cultural background, to attempt a new understanding of the processes of secularisation in modern western societies, and to formulate a new epistemic paradigm to account for its various phenomena. Such phenomena remain permanently open to epistemic reconsideration, and to a review of the ways in which they are understood as well as their conclusions. Nonetheless, when an Arab thinker who has dedicated his intellectual and research career to issues of concern to Arab societies engages in such an endeavour, examining the processes of Western secularisation in order to help readers understand those processes, it raises questions. To ensure that the picture is clear to readers from the start, it should be noted that Azmi Bishara's *Religion and Secularism in Historical Context* is not an ideological work similar to that of Islamists who see secularism as symbolic of absolute human corruption in opposition to Islam (symbolic, in turn, of absolute divine goodness), or as a product of a specifically Western Christian culture. From the very first pages, it is clear that Bishara is writing from a humanist and academic standpoint: that is, from an *anthropological* perspective. Hence, he approaches religion and religiosity as examples of broader human phenomena, assuming that secularism is a set of objective processes that have taken place in all modern human societies.

Bishara's attempt to reconceptualise Western processes of secularisation does not begin with the question of whether secularisation and transformations of religion are universal in Western societies. Instead, he departs from how this universality is commonly represented and understood, how its foundational elements are identified, and how its transforming phenomena are to be read. The prevailing conceptualisation of secularism as the separation of religion from state/politics implies the exclusion of religion from the public sphere and its transition to a private affair. The problem with understanding secularism in this sense is that it reifies the prevalent notion in contemporary ideological and academic literature that Arab-Islamic societies have been exempt from modern processes of secularisation, since it is assumed that the state in this context has never been separate from religion (i.e., Islam), which is strongly present in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres.

In the first and second parts of his book, *Religion and Secularism in Historical Context*, Bishara reconceptualises the processes of Western secularisation, re-exploring its most foundational and universal elements – the separation of religion from state and politics and its exclusion from the public sphere – in such a way as to put the problematics of secularisation in contemporary Arab-Islamic societies back on the table. Moreover, he does so not on the assumption that these societies are exempt from processes of secularisation or transformations in the modern world, but rather that the processes of secularisation affecting them have taken place under specific historical conditions.

A Historical Reconceptualization of European Modernity

The Emergence of the State as the Basis of Modern Secularisation

How does Bishara define secularisation? Near the end of the first part of his book, he states that secularisation is a historical process that affects various social fields, as well as human thought. It is an ongoing process of differentiation among sectors redefined by said differentiation, such as science and myth, the sacred and the profane, religion and the state, and others.[1] Bishara employs the term "differentiation"to presuppose the existence of elements that were at one stage combined into one organic unity, but later diverged through a known historical process. Understood in this way, differentiation is the mainstay of Bishara's understanding

[1] Azmi Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya fī Siyāq Tārīkhī*, Part 1: *al-Dīn wa-l-Tadayyun* (Doha/ Beirut: ACRPS, 2013), pp. 406-407.

of secularisation. Hence, it may be said that "secularisation everywhere is a process of differentiation in areas or domains in the world".[2]

Differentiation thus understood is "a process through which all societies pass".[3] One of the most important turning points in this process in ancient civilizations was the emergence of monotheistic religions that deemed the Divine to be above the world.

> *monotheism in this sense constitutes the process of God's separation from the world, only for the two to reunite again through revelation (the prophets and apostles), scripture, the religious establishment, and, in the case of Christianity, through incarnation. In every case, relationships exist in areas that were once distinct and separate, but which became more compound units after mediation brought their elements together.*[4]

Bishara believes that if the differentiation of worldly elements from the domain of religion is an objective process that takes place in various historical and civilizational contexts, then the differentiations within Western modernity over the past five centuries constitute the turning point at which the secular idea began taking on all the dimensions that we are currently witnessing. What is the distinction between the differentiations present in modernity, and those in pre-modernity? Bishara states that:

> *much can be said about the difference [between differentiation in modernity and differentiation in pre-modernity]. However, this can all be summed up in two points. The first is the emergence of modern science, which has changed the interpretation of human life and its natural environment in one field after another. The second is the emergence of the modern state, to which we might add changes in culture and the accompanying patterns of consciousness.*[5]

Science and the state in their current senses are the foundations of the processes of secularisation in modernity. The former triggered the emergence and increasing independence of specific patterns to deal with natural and human phenomena by understanding, explaining, and controlling these phenomena through the use of cognitive tools, disregarding religious interpretations and teachings. The latter (the state) constituted the basic factor that led to the independence of the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres from the sphere of religion in modern societies. The state here is "that sovereign political entity which possesses the sole authority to enact laws for society, and to use violence legitimately against a particular people. In the modern state, this sovereignty is tied to a particular people and land".[6] This definition applies to the state as a modern phenomenon, in contrast to the ethnological and Marxist definitions which equate the state with power and authority as a phenomenon deeply rooted in history. Among ethnologists, this phenomenon is associated with the emergence of urban life and, among Marxists, with the emergence of social classes and private property.

Bishara's extensive exploration of European history shows that the establishment of the modern state in European societies "required at least two centuries of internal and external conflicts to impose the concept of the state on the empires' major ruling families, on the feudal class of principalities and dukedoms, and on the papal system".[7] More importantly, his intensive analysis of the intellectual, political

---

2 Azmi Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya fī Siyāq Tārīkhī*, Part 2, Vol. 2: al-*ʿIlmāniyya wa-Naẓariyyāt al-ʿAlmana* (Doha/ Beirut: ACRPS, 2015), p. 182.

3 Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya*, Part 1, p. 407.

4 Ibid., p. 409.

5 Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya*, Part 2, Vol. 2, p. 223.

6 Azmi Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya fī Siyāq Tārīkhī*, Part 2, Vol. 1: al-*ʿIlmāniyya wa-l-ʿAlmana: al-Ṣayrūra al-Fikriyya* (Doha/ Beirut: ACRPS, 2015), p. 305.

7 Ibid., p. 138.

and social trajectories of European modernity led Bishara to conclude that the process of secularisation/ differentiation in modernity contributed not only to the emergence of the modern state, but also to this state becoming a central factor in the transformation of modern societies. When we speak of the state as a "central factor", we mean it contributed actively and directly to the emergence and development of many basic transformations that characterise modern societies.

On the Relationship of the Modern State to Religion: More Compound than Separate

Bishara devotes large sections of his book to an exploration of the historical development of the relationship between Christianity and Europe's nascent modern states. Bishara pauses to examine particular situations, such as "the rise of the power of the state in absolute monarchies which married temporal authority to the Church"[8] (seventeenth-century England), and "the subjection of the Church to the national state, the latter being viewed as the seat of political and legal authority"[9] (eighteenth-century France). In Bishara's view, these historical conditions reflect stages in the evolution of secularisation, although they still reveal no "trace of secularisation in the modern sense of the separation of religion and state, still less the privatisation of religion—a rather late and, indeed, contemporary concept".[10]

After analysing these models of the state-religion relationship in the early stages of European modernisation, Bishara goes on to examine models from contemporary history. He observes that

> *the Catholic Church in Spain went from being an official state church to being one with no recognition or official endorsement, and active in a pluralistic civil society within a democratic system [...] Similarly, the Catholic Church in Brazil went from an elitist institution to a grassroots, civil entity, while Catholicism in the United States was transformed from a religious sect that was almost ethnic in nature [...] into one that was concerned with its parishioners' affairs within the framework of a secular system.*[11]

Based on his analysis of the manifestations of religion and patterns of religiosity in current Western contexts, Bishara re-establishes the theoretical categories that shape our understanding of the relationship between the sacred and the mundane in the various domains and contexts of secularisation. In this context, Bishara generates all the theoretical possibilities that might arise from the concept of modern secularisation as the process through which the modern state and modern science pass, and the resulting differentiations of numerous areas of life from the scope of religion. Bishara states that

> *these differentiations are manifested in the process by which non-religious patterns of knowledge and practice become embedded in various areas from which religious awareness and practice are withdrawing. They also lead to the rise of the state's power over the religious establishment, and the logic of the state over religion. [Such differentiations] take certain forms, such as the neutralisation of the state in relation to religious affairs in order to protect religious freedom; state control over religion; or state action to reduce the role of religion in the public sphere, as a result of which tension arises between the sacred and the profane in various spheres of life.*[12]

The definition of secularisation as various processes of differentiation diverges from the classical theory of secularisation on a key point, namely, that "differentiation does not mean the privatisation of the

[8] Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya,* Part 2, Vol. 2, p. 87.
[9] Ibid., p. 141.
[10] Ibid., p. 87.
[11] Ibid., p. 211.
[12] Ibid., p. 419.

religious sphere exclusively".[13] In other words, the decline of religiosity, the withdrawal of religion into the private sphere, and the separation of religion and state in constitutional and legal texts represent only specific cases of secularisation: processes in which the state exits from the sphere of religion and becomes an autonomous, worldly entity. According to Bishara, every instance of secularisation in modernity entails the differentiation of the state from religion and the prevalence of its logic over that of religion, with the state being viewed as an autonomous worldly entity. In the name of secularisation itself,

> *just as the boundaries between the public and the private change, so does the nature of the sacred and the mundane and their respective realms in the historical and cultural contexts (even if both are part of the world)... When the possibility of differentiation arose, so did the possibility of delineating new boundaries between the two spheres in the context of civilization, history, and the struggle among conflicting social forces and its representations.*[14]

Within this perspective falls the notion of a compound relationship between the sacred and the mundane, and especially between religion and state, which Bishara proposes as an alternative to the notion of separation. The notion of a compound relationship between the sacred and the mundane is an important theoretical implication of the concept of differentiation and a manifestation of its methodological, analytical, and explanatory richness. This richness is translated theoretically by Bishara in his reference to "approaching secularisation as part of the theory of modernity: that is, as a differentiation and articulation of social functions and institutions, which are then followed by a unity among these functions – not an organic or given unity, but a compound unity".[15] Therefore, the notion of "compound unity"is based logically on that of differentiation. Only when we affirm that "differentiation among the various areas of social and intellectual life is the foundation of modern society"do we allow for the possibility of arguing that "differentiation among visible elements that once constituted a single unit, then, produces a new, more compound unit in this world".[16]

In theory, Bishara insists on the distinction between an organic unit that contains no undifferentiated elements and a compound unit embodying the kinds of overlap that may occur among elements or fields that have been differentiated from each other. This is because the "overlap between two fields does not entail their unity, or that there is no separation between them. There is a difference between an original unit of undifferentiated elements, and an intrusion of one realm into the other".[17] The distinction between these two kinds of unity in its abstract and theoretical form may seem to be of no real significance. However, its significance becomes evident once it is embodied in the form of a systematic choice between contexts from the pre-modern secularisation era, and contexts from within modern secularisation. According to this choice,

> *secularisation [...] is supposed to be a historical process that includes the unity of religion, politics, society, morality, and knowledge, as well as their perpetual articulation and differentiation, the dialectic of the separated elements and their struggle, followed by their reconstruction into a richer unit (more compound and more developed), and their differentiation anew.*[18]

In practise, this assumption implies a crucial distinction (at least in terms of gaining a historical understanding of the dynamics of religiosity) between "human collectives that preceded society and state"in

---

13 Ibid., p. 216.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 203.
16 Ibid., p. 419.
17 Ibid., p. 216.
18 Ibid., p. 221.

which religion was not a "self-contained domain",[19] and societies in which the state and its realms (e.g., political, economic, social, and cultural) have differentiated themselves from religion. In the latter situation, religion might deviate from the state and its realms of operation; however, it might also be intertwined with them in the form of compound units as may be observed in secularised countries of the modern West (state control of religion, religious institutions active in civil society, and religious groups that exert political and social pressure, etc.).

In sum, Bishara articulates the notion of a compound unity between the sacred and the mundane which defines the conditions of modern secularisation compared to the conditions that preceded it (i.e., when religion was an organic unit that included the worldly). This unity simultaneously accommodates the possibility of multiple relationships between the sacred and the mundane (particularly the political), as the process of secularisation differs from one historical and cultural context to another. Needless to say, different contexts allow different patterns of religiosity to emerge, each with their respective forms of compound units in response to the differentiation process and the absence of organic unity.

New Horizons for Approaching Issues of Islam, State and Society in Contemporary Arab Contexts

The secularisation paradigm as formulated by Bishara opens up new horizons for understanding many of the transformations of our contemporary world, where religious matters especially overlap with the political and social dimensions, foremost among which are the phenomena known to contemporary and current Arab societies. Bishara's paradigm allows for a rethinking of such phenomena, not as exceptions to the processes of secularisation but as specific expressions of these processes. Bishara makes a distinction between two understandings of specificity. The first is the specificity of cultural identity as indicative of certain quintessential, fixed qualities, which generally form the basis of the argument that Arab and Islamic societies should be excluded from the process of modern secularisation. The second is historical specificity, which relates to dynamic factors that change from one social and historical context to another.

Bishara does not consider secularism—or more precisely, secularisation as a process of differentiation—a civilizational peculiarity, but rather a historical peculiarity. He says, for example, in this regard that,

> *just as integration [between religion and worldly domains] has existed in all civilizations, so too are the seeds of separation found in every civilization, and just as there is differentiation, there is also the reality of interrelatedness in every civilization, including that of Christianity. The question has to do with the historical phase under consideration, the nature of the social forces at work, and the prevailing intellectual structure—not a particular cultural essence.*[20]

The Arab Question and the Specificity of State Problems in the Contemporary Arab Context

The approach taken to the problematic of secularisation in Arab societies relates to the historical context in which these societies presently find themselves. This context is summed up by Bishara with the term "the Arab question". The essence of the Arab question, as a contemporary political issue, lies in the fact that Arab nationalism has not succeeded in transforming itself from a cultural nationalism into a political nationalism embodied concretely by a unified Arab nation-state. This could have happened in the nineteenth century or the early twentieth century, but it was hindered by internal and external factors. Hence, the

[19] Ibid., p. 220.

[20] Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya,* Part 2, Vol. 1, p. 804.

Arab question today has become multifaceted and more complex, considering that the failure to establish a unified state on the basis of a nationalist cultural bond coincided with the failure to establish territorial states that enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of their peoples.

This depiction of the Arab question is, in one sense at least, a description and analysis of the crisis of the modern state in the Arab region. It is a crisis of legitimacy for the territorial Arab states within the framework of the modern international state system. The Arab countries are still understood as having come into existence as part of a colonial scheme to fragment a single Arab nation. Consequently, Arab nationalist thought "has shown no interest in the emerging territorial state and has only known how to relate to it intellectually as a transitional stage towards unity, or as a legacy of colonial fragmentation. The catastrophic result is that Arab nationalist thought has sought to escape the theory of the state".[21]

The legitimacy crisis faced by the modern Arab state is a result of the incongruence between this state and cultural nationalist affiliation, as well as its synchronization and overlap with colonialist enterprises. After the eviction of colonial powers and armies, the legitimacy crisis persisted, and even deepened. Neither a united state congruent with cultural and nationalist affiliations, nor civil citizenship nations identifying with the existing territorial states came into existence. For, as Bishara notes,

> *if the territorial state had succeeded in forming a civil nation founded upon engagement in human rights-based citizenship as the safeguard against despotism rather than the clan or the sect, a praiseworthy separation—no matter how strange it may have seemed to some nationalists—would have occurred between a cultural Arab nationalism to which the majority of citizens in Arab countries belong, and a political nation based on citizenship in the territorial state, thus becoming a civil society inwardly, and a nation outwardly.*[22]

Bishara's primary intellectual project is to examine the Arab question and ways of resolving it. As for his historical analysis of modern secularisation and what becomes of religion and religiosity therein, it is an offshoot of the original project, although it could also be viewed as a self-contained endeavour. In order to understand the structural relationship between the two projects in Bishara's thought, we need to bring to mind the outcomes of his thinking on the Arab question, which are summed up in the following two statements. The first reads that "Arab nationalism can no longer apply itself by disregarding existing states. Therefore, it must meet with the democratic program to succeed and negate itself in democratic citizenship in the civil nation". As for the second, it reads "the Arab question means, among other things, that the elements that prevent the nation's realization inside and outside the territorial state are the same factors that impede democratic transition".[23]

This understanding of the Arab question, which links its solution structurally to democratic transformation in Arab countries, requires that we consider the relationship between religion and democracy given the important place Islam occupies in Arab societies. In the introduction to the first edition of *Fī al-Masʾala al-ʿArabiyya* [On the Arab Question], Bishara notes that his original plan was to write a book in two parts, but he then decided to turn each part into a stand-alone book. The first was *On the Arab Question*, while the second was to be published shortly thereafter (in 2007) under the title *al-Taḥawwul al-Dīmuqrāṭī: al-Dīn wa Anmāṭ al-Tadayyun* [Democratic Transition: Religion and Patterns of Religiosity].[24]

---

[21] Azmi Bishara, *Fī al-Masʾala al-ʿArabiyya: Muqaddima li-Bayān Dīmuqrāṭī ʿArabī* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2007), p. 217.

[22] Ibid., p. 200.

[23] Ibid., p. 246.

[24] See: Ibid., p. 8.

When Bishara published the first part of *Religion and Secularism in Historical Context*, he explained how his research and theoretical plan had changed once again or, rather, had expanded, and why "a radical change occurred in the project". The reason for this is that he quickly realised that the patterns of religiosity in current Arab societies cannot be analyzed outside of their historical contexts. Those are defined, first and foremost, by the process of modernisation, its shape and its circumstances, especially the ongoing process of secularisation.[25]

Religion and Secularism in Historical Context presents readers with several novel theories. They open up new horizons for understanding the phenomena of Islam in contemporary Arab societies as being modern and dynamic patterns of religiosity which, in essence, constitute the other side of the process of Arab secularisation and its historical peculiarities associated with the Arab question.

The Prospects for Understanding Islamic Religiosity vis-à-vis the Nature of the Existing Arab States

The intersection of Bishara's original project on "the Arab question"with his re-examination of religion and secularism within their historical context opens new horizons for construing the problematics of current patterns of Islamic religiosity in Arab countries. These patterns are integral to the difficulties surrounding the legitimacy of modern Arab states and their failure to transform into democratic states. We speak here of "new horizons"because they deviate from prevailing approaches that argue for "an Arab democratic exception"and the Arab countries' insusceptibility to secularism due to Islam's dominance in both state and society.

These new horizons first become evident when contrasted with the basic assumption underlying prevailing approaches, which stereotype Islam as a fixed, non-historical entity when, in reality,

> *from a sociological point of view, as it is embraced and practiced, Islam actually consists of numerous "Islams"which cannot be reduced to a single pattern, that is, an "essential pattern of religious entity"which is coherent, homogeneous, and impervious.*[26]

We cannot talk here about unique theoretical additions in Bishara's perspective, given that the statement that Islam is pluralistic in belief and practice is clear to any fair-minded researcher who gives serious consideration to direct, concrete data on the variables of society, politics, and ideas among Muslims throughout history.

However, the new horizons opened by Bishara's perspective are reflected, first of all, in the possibility of analysing and understanding pluralism in Islam as a phenomenon that reflects or translates historical dynamics constantly at play in the social, political, and intellectual structures of Muslim societies. More importantly, Bishara's perspective allows for an explanation of one particular aspect of these dynamics—one peculiar to modern and contemporary times: that these dynamics are inseparable from the global processes of the modern world, including those of secularisation. This aspect includes contemporary manifestations of Islamic religiosity that are usually viewed as emblematic of the stagnation and rigidity of Islamic thought throughout history, as well as evidence of resistance to secularisation and its impossibility in Islamic countries and societies. Such evidence includes the most problematic phenomena such as Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi and jihadi political movements, and sectarian groups.

---

[25] Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya,* Part 1, p. 8.

[26] Azmi Bishara, *Tanẓīm al-Dawla al-Mukannā "Dāʿish",* Part 1: *Iṭār ʿĀm wa Musāhama Naqdiyya fī Fahm al-Ẓāhira* (Doha/ Beirut: ACRPS, 2018), p. 50.

Bishara's new perspective on secularisation links the origin of these modern groups to the specific context in which the Arab question, as Bishara describes it, emerges in its various contemporary manifestations. In order to identify the horizons which Bishara's perspective opens up in understanding contemporary patterns of Islamic religiosity, we need to link the theoretical outcomes of Bishara's two works, *On the Arab Question* and *Religion and Secularism in Historical Context*. If the description and analysis of the Arab question reveal the nature of the modern state and its crisis in Arab countries, then the historical understanding of European modernisation proves that the moment we begin speaking of a modern state in Arab countries, said state will inevitably be affected by the processes of modern secularisation, regardless of the specificities of its inception, or Islam's political, social and cultural position within it.

In this context, Bishara clearly states that contemporary Islamic movements of all stripes are part of the phenomena of modern secularisation in Arab countries. Although they adopt an ideology of resistance to secularism, they ultimately submit to the framework and logic of the modern state. Bishara says:

> *an Islamist movement that emerges in the context of modernization and the nation-state is not simply following a fundamentalist script that has been playing itself out again and again ever since ibn Hanbal, ibn Taymiyya, or ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Even if fundamentalisms or calls for a return to the fundamentals recur in times of crisis, thus forming a pattern, they are still movements and currents that are part of a given historical and socio-political context. They emerge within the framework of a modern nation-state—with its army, flag, symbols, mass society, public sphere, media, political platforms, and power structure—which they hope to influence or even remove and replace.*[27]

Bishara's theory thus proposes a new understanding of political Islam's various manifestations in Arab countries, not as indications of the negation of secularisation or the desire to reverse it, but rather as some of its possible forms. In the end, these manifestations fall within a compound union between religion and the realms differentiated therefrom as part of modern secularisation. As conceptualised by Bishara, modern secularisation is more inclusive than classical secularisation (separation of religion from state, the decline of religiosity, and the privatisation and "individualisation"of religion); hence, it serves as a useful means of analysing, explaining, and understanding the variables involved in the evolution of religion and religiosity, their status, and their functions in present-day contexts.

Proceeding from the notion of a compound relationship between the sacred and the mundane in modern secularisation, the dynamics of Islamic religiosity in its contemporary manifestations can be viewed as an integral part of the dynamics of secularisation, including those manifestations which might otherwise seem to provide the clearest evidence of the impossibility of secularisation within an Islamic context. Foremost among these are what have come to be known as "Salafi", "political", and "jihadi"Islam, not to mention the religious, doctrinal, and sectarian conflicts that are ravaging many modern Muslim societies.

The notion of compound unity appears to be a theoretical key provided by Bishara's model for understanding contemporary patterns of Islamic religiosity and their dynamics as modern and essentially secularised phenomena. Bishara states that

> *the Islamic city of Yathrib or the first Christian groups on the one hand, and the call for the unity of religion and the state by contemporary Islamic movements and parties, or direct intervention in the affairs of society and the state by Protestant religious awakening movements on the other hand are all […] expressions (more or less shrill, extreme or moderate) of mediations*

[27] Azmi Bishara, *On Salafism: Concepts and Contexts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022), p. 79.

and dialectical relations among elements that were articulated and differentiated, and are no longer an unmediated, organic unit.[28]

In his proposed theoretical approach to the phenomena of contemporary religiosity, including Islamic religiosity, Bishara insists on the conceptual distinction between the organic unity that religion represented before elements such as the state, society and morals were differentiated from it, and the compound unities in which these distinct elements enter into a relationship with religion. Based on this differentiation, contemporary phenomena of Islamic religiosity become expressions of the dynamics of modern secularisation. This applies even to the most problematic and controversial of these phenomena today (i.e., political Islam, Salafi Islam, and jihadi Islam), the ideological stance of which is anti-secular and adheres to the ideal of the Islamic state. Bishara opens a new horizon for viewing such movements not as evidence of the impossibility of secularisation, but, rather, as specific types of modern secularisation in Muslim societies. These movements embody compound unities between sacred and mundane elements that secularisation claimed from the religious sphere, thus no longer representing the organic unity represented by religion before modern secularisation.

Thus, when Islamist movements and groups adopt an ideology of open hostility to secularism, this does not mean that they have not been secularised. By turning religion into an ideology and a tool of mass political action, these movements are, in practice, "secularising"religion by including within it some products of political modernity associated with the modern state. Thus,

when religion goes back to playing a role in politics and society after the emergence of distinct spheres that have differentiated from it, it can no longer influence modern society and the modern state unless it is influenced by them. Therefore, it adopts vocabulary, game rules, and values from outside of itself, having adapted to the fact that it does not, in itself, constitute a source of legitimacy.[29]

When groups that transform religion into an ideology and a tool of political action within the framework of the modern state present themselves as a return to the days prior to modern secularisation, they are delusional about the past. They are rebuilding the link between religion and "secular"spheres (e.g., state, politics, society, morals) within the framework of a compound unity that takes shape against the backdrop of these spheres' differentiation from religion. It is no longer possible to go back to the old situation in which religion was an organic unity that encompassed areas of life that are today counted among secular affairs. It is no longer possible to reproduce such an organic unity because the processes of differentiation in these spheres have already taken place, and the processes of returning them to the "fold"of religion can only take place in the form of compound unities. On this basis,

we can imagine that if religion as a dynamic political ideology governs the state in our day and age, it will be a governance completely different from the "religious state"that we know from history, which was not actually a state in the modern sense of the word. For not only has the understanding of religion changed in response to changes in its functions and boundaries, but the state too has undergone radical change.[30]

The works Bishara has published on Salafism, the Daesh experiment, and sectarianism in Arab countries may be viewed as practical samples of his theory of secularisation. In these works, he analyses the rhetoric of Salafi, jihadi, Brotherhood-linked, and sectarian groups and seeks to trace the "fundamentals"that these

28 Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya,* Part 2, Vol. 2, p. 216.

29 Ibid., p. 217.

30 Ibid., p. 411.

groups claim to be returning to or reclaiming from their original, traditional sources. Further, like all social movements, they claim to root themselves in the historical past, considering themselves "authentic". In this context he observes that

> *tracing Daesh's genealogy and intellectual origins does not mean that it is necessarily the product of those origins and influences. Daesh [and other such groups] are not just an idea or a text. They are a social phenomenon that is the product of historical circumstances, both social and political.*[31]

However, Bishara is not confined to a general discourse in which he links these groups to the historical, social, and political conditions that Arab societies are going through. Such discourse, though easy to make, offers little towards an understanding of the phenomenon. Hence, Bishara scrutinizes the nature of the conditions under whose influence these groups came into being.

One important aspect, if not the most important, of this analytical approach has to do with what it reveals about the Salafi discourse which some groups adopt, as it suggests that they are basing their practices on authentic old religious teachings untainted by modern secular ideas foreign to the Islamic tradition. An analysis of these groups' discourse shows that

> *the term Salafism, as [these groups] use it, does not mean an actual return to the Salaf [the righteous early Muslims] or the Islamic heritage in more than a highly selective, imaginative sense which is mingled with modern concepts, reactions to modernity, and modern interpretations of what the Salaf had to say, as for instance in the use of such statements to rebut contemporary opponents.*[32]

In this context, one of the most important methodological horizons opened up by Bishara's contributions to the theory of secularisation is the use of comparative discourse analysis, contrasting the content of terms and concepts as employed by Muslim scholars in earlier Arab and Islamic history with their content as reflected in contemporary Islamic discourse, especially that of groups claiming to adhere to an understanding of Islam consistent with that of the Salaf. One outcome of such analysis is the discovery of the semantic shifts in old terms and concepts as employed by contemporary preachers. Bishara states:

> *there is a difference between commanding [right] and forbidding wrong (al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahī ʿan al-munkar) as spoken of by ibn Ḥanbal and the recorders of Hadith and this same phrase when used as a slogan, or as a partisan political and ideological justification for use of violence against a ruler or against those who hold contrasting opinions. Even as used by ibn Ḥanbal, this adherence to the Qurʾan and the Sunnah against an oppressive ruler did not mean to revolt against him, nor did criticism of the ruler entail a call to carry out violence against him in the name of jihad and the like.*[33]

Another element of Bishara's discourse analysis involves comparing the old, traditional concepts adopted in the discourse of modern-day Islamist and Salafi groups with their practices on the ground, in order to show the disparity between the original concepts and the ways they are deployed in a modern context. For example, Daesh claims that its understanding of the state arises from the Islamic tradition and is based on the model of the state as implemented during the days of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. On this basis, it has demanded declarations of loyalty from all Islamic factions. In reality, however, the

31 Bishara, *On Salafism*, p. 60.
32 Ibid., p. 118.
33 Ibid., pp. 42-43.

state model adopted by Daesh is founded, even theoretically, on the caliphate of the so-called *mulk ʿaḍūḍ* (tyrannical rule) referred to in certain prophetic Hadith, and on *imārat al-taghallub* (authority usurped by force). Indeed, it is neither a rightly guided caliphate nor a tyrannical rule. It is not a caliphate that establishes its authority through pledges of allegiance by an Islamic council, nor a caliphate that conquers by brute force. Rather, it is nothing more than a violent political organization that exercises an authority outside the bounds of the state over a population living in one or more legitimate states.[34]

Generally speaking, it may be said that Bishara's goal is to employ an ideological discourse analysis, comparing the old and contemporary purports of the same concepts with concrete practices. Not only does he show how the old terms incorporated into the discourse of Salafi and jihadi groups conceal modern contents and practices, but he also shows how these modern contents are variables of secularisation itself. In other words, they are variables of the emergence of the modern state. For Bishara, the slogans employed by Islamist movements reflect a secularised ideological structure; they internalize the differentiation of the worldly (particularly the state) from religion while absorbing the political structure that has resulted from this differentiation. These movements

> *deal with the sharīʿa as if it were a set of man-made laws for application, with the rule of the Prophet and the rightly guided Caliphs as if it were a state, with Shura as if it were a Senate or a House of Representatives, and with the succession of the Prophet after his death as if it were a self-contained Islamic regime.*[35]

In short, the ideological structures of contemporary Islamic groups reflect the types of the compound relations that can occur between religion and the elements differentiated therefrom (especially the modern state) as part of the process of modern secularisation. They do not reflect a return, or even the possibility of a return, to a pre-differentiation era as these groups imagine, since

> *there can be no return to Islam as a religion and a state in keeping with the Brotherhood's conceptualization, firstly because this is not possible in the future, and secondly because Islam was never a religion and a state to begin with. The state envisioned in this phrase is a modern concept. It is by nature a modern, secularised entity which can, nevertheless, exploit religion as an ideology.*[36]

Bishara expends considerable effort on this type of discourse analysis and deconstruction in his quest to understand Islamist, Salafi and jihadi groups as expressions of Islamic religiosity within contexts of modern secularisation in Arab and Islamic countries. At the same time, there appears to be a clear preponderance of historical, social, and political analyses in his treatment of sectarianism and sectarian conflict in the Arab East, as Bishara has a clear inclination to

> *study the conditions under which modern political sectarianism was formed on the basis of existing, long-standing religious affiliations and to distinguish it from old, religious conflicts— conflicts that have taken on a religious or confessional-religious character in the past, or practised discrimination against followers of other religions.*[37]

Bishara aims to show how the sectarian conflict that divides Arab countries at present is not a religious conflict, nor does it represent a continuation of the struggle among Islamic sectarian groups in past eras

---

34 Bishara, *Dāʿish*, p. 52.
35 Bishara, *Mā al-salafiyya,* p. 132.
36 Ibid., pp. 132-133.
37 Azmi Bishara, *Sectarianism Without Sects* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2021), p. 192.

of Islamic history. "The struggle for power in the modern, postcolonial state takes place either before the process of building a nation on the basis of citizenship is complete, or after it fails".[38]

Bishara attempts to explain the conceptual difference between sects in past Arab-Islamic societies, which were essentially local groups bound by a common religious doctrine or craft, and sects in present-day Arab societies, which represent imagined socio-political entities closely connected to the conditions of the emergence and development of the modern Arab state: that is, to the particularities and complexities of the Arab question. In this modern sense, a sect, as

> *an imagined community, is based on affiliation with a religion or confession, including the production of narratives and consciousness of the self through membership in a community. The modern phenomenon of sectarianism connoted by the term is not determined by theological disputes but by historical, economic, political, and social context, and by the degree of competition and conflict between social forces and the forms of consciousness prevailing in that conflict. These are subject to change and variation.*[39]

The fact that sects in the current Arab context may be based on doctrinal-religious ties does not mean that they are the product of fixed, calcified religious creeds and views. Nor does it mean that these creeds and views base their existence and their "support"on their involvement in movements and conflicts that are frequently violent and bloody by nature. This is because

> *although sectarianism is a problematic social and political phenomenon, amenable to development and activation under specific conditions in multireligious, multi-confessional structures, there is no inherent relationship between the two. If the same factors are present but there is no religious or confessional plurality, other affiliations—tribes, for example, or other regional communities—may play a similar function and be transformed into imagined communities via politics of loyalty or opposition: consider, for example, the civil war in Libya ushered in by a failed post-revolutionary transition. All of this takes place in the context of a struggle over, and within, the state.*[40]

Bishara does not view sectarianism, sectarian conflict, or Islamist, Salafi and jihadi groups as evidence of a stable "religious culture"that renders Arab societies immune to the secularisation processes that continue to sweep the modern world. Rather, he views them as expressions of Islamic religiosity that operate through specific forms of secularisation that have emerged over the course of Arab countries' modern history. Although on the surface they may appear to identify with or reproduce old patterns of religiosity, these phenomena are actually modern, representing new patterns of Islamic religiosity. The mere fact that they take (or aspire to take) the form of active mass political and social movements or entities in the public sphere bears witness to the occurrence of differentiations as a result of which state, society and politics have become independent domains, beyond that of religion. Such movements and entities may at times break into these distinct arenas with religious ideologies and slogans. However, this does not mean that they embody or reproduce the organic unity in accordance with which they were once integral components of religion. Rather, they form compound units consisting of now-differentiated elements. This is because "conscious politicisation of membership of a religious community is a feature of a period in which religion is distinguished from politics".[41]

---

[38] Ibid., p. 212.
[39] Ibid., pp. 215-216.
[40] Ibid., p. 200.
[41] Ibid., p. 313.

Although Islamic movements and sectarian groups seem to perpetuate images of indoctrination and politicization specific to the current Arab-Islamic context, this does not preclude their being part of the overall process of secularisation of which identity-based religiosity is a key manifestation.

Identity-Based and Ideological Religiosity: Between the Universality of Secularisation and the Particularity of the Arab Question

Still, how can ideologies such as those espoused by Islamic movements and sectarian groups in Arab countries—ideologies based on the notion of religious governance, the rejection of secularism, and the denial of modern civil identities—be included in the overall process of secularisation and composites of the sacred and the mundane? Furthermore, how can one, if not the sole, component of the secularisation of political life in the modern Arab state be based on an ideology, the essence of which is hostility to the principle of excluding religion from politics and public affairs in general? How do we reconcile two mutually exclusive forms of secularisation: a secularisation in modern European societies which has led to the emergence of secular ideologies that combat the presence of religion in the public sphere, and a secularisation in Muslim societies which has perpetuated religious ideologies that fiercely defend the prerogative of religion to govern politics, society, economics and culture?

It should be noted that we have a perspective which describes these movements and groups as perpetuating specific types of Islamic religiosity, which might be termed "identity-based religiosity"(viz. the transformation of Islam into a collective cultural identity as opposed to other identities) or "political-ideological religiosity"(viz. the transformation of Islam into an ideology and a tool of political action). The issue here is related to religious phenomena and patterns that actually fall within the general realm of secularisation. From Bishara's perspective, the conflation of religion with the functions of embodying collective identity and ideology and lending meaning to political action may occur only in the context of secularisation. The association of religion with such functions marks a new type of religiosity which has emerged as a way of creating a place for religion within newly secularised political, social, and symbolic spheres. This is because, in Bishara's words, "in order for religiosity to entrench itself in secularised fields of this kind, it must penetrate them through a new type of religiosity: that is, a political religiosity that ideologises religion".[42]

Through this historical and evolutionary understanding of the trajectories of secularisation in Europe, Bishara has shown that the presence and effectiveness of religion in public affairs and its transformation into an identity and an ideological lever for political action are integral parts of the secularisation movement. They provide specific forms for secularisation itself to take in specific contexts and at particular stages. At the outset of European modernisation, religious or sectarian affiliation was transformed into a factor that contributed to one's identity, reinforced social unity, and helped construct modern state entities. In this context, then, the function of religious affiliation was to build the modern state, which led in turn to the establishment of the structure of societies, their forms of unity, and their political and social organisations as we now know them.

Bishara has shown how at least some essential aspects of the process by which modern Western states have secularised their societies have come about by employing religion, or elements thereof, to establish the sanctity of the state. Bishara notes the identity-related function which Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, has performed in the formation of the modern European nation-states. For example, he has shown how

42 Bishara, *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya,* Part 2, Vol. 2, p. 395.

> *it would not have been possible to form a fundamentally unified British identity without Protestantism as an identity for the popular masses, both those who attended church and those who did not. In other words, Christianity was important as a source of popular identity even when the elites were arguing over doctrine.*[43]

The issue here has to do with a new function being performed by the Christian religion in the context of modern secularisation. However, this function is not peculiar to the Protestantism prevalent in Britain, as evidenced by the fact that in France, "Catholicism coincided with a national identity as a means by which people distinguished themselves from surrounding countries, and against religious minorities within France".[44]

Islamic and sectarian groups in current Arab contexts are simply manifestations of the principle of coupling religiosity with collective identities, ideology, and political action in the secularised public sphere. Why, then, does the rhetoric of these groups take on an antagonistic tone toward the state and all manifestations of modern secularisation? After offering a theoretical response to questions like this in *Religion and Secularism in Historical Context*, Bishara went on in later publications to evaluate his theoretical assumptions in approaching specific topics relating to contemporary Islamic religiosity.

The theoretical answer assumes the possibility of "imagining the tension that results from top-down secularisation by the state in religious societies without any attempt to secularise patterns of consciousness. Might forced secularisation transform religion into a matter of authenticity and identity, a symbolic stockpile that provides strength in the face of oppression? It is also possible to infer other possibilities that could be examined in reality".[45] While formulating this idea theoretically, Bishara was undoubtedly thinking of the specificities of the Arab question, such as the role played by colonial powers in the inception of modern Arab states, and the specific historical conditions following the expulsion of the colonial powers because of which these states still lack legitimacy in the eyes of their peoples, particularly the despotic regimes.

Top-down secularisation, by which modern-day states exercise despotism over a religious society, creates objective conditions for the emergence of ideological structures such as those on which political Islam, Salafi-jihadi Islam, and sectarian groups are based. This is because resistance to manifestations of the failure, corruption, and despotism of the modern state may take the form of

> *resisting secularisation through the emergence of new religious ideologies that are transformed into political currents. Such developments are generally initiated by forces that have been harmed by modernity on the level of material living conditions as well as that of identity. They arise out of the modern reality itself and use its tools; as such, they constitute part of the process of secularisation itself.*[46]

Bishara explains the dominance and evolving dynamism of identity-based and political religiosity in Arab countries as a function of the secularisation process in the Arab context and the nature of the modern state emerging therein. He asks how "the distancing of religion from the state without secularising culture and society, and without an alternative ethical value tradition under conditions in which the masses are simultaneously being manufactured and marginalised, has deepened the role of religion in the public

---

43 Ibid., p. 114.
44 Ibid., p. 132.
45 Ibid., p. 421.
46 Ibid., p. 340.

sphere, and in politics in particular".[47] Bishara posits that within a relatively short time span, the process of secularisation in Arab countries has reached a point at which

> *the state itself, and the forces opposing it, use and depend on religion, not as an ethical system that commands justice, fairness, tolerance, and kind treatment of others, nor as the popular religiosity of self-sufficient groups that practise rituals and uphold their customs and traditions, but through various other functions which centre around issues of regulation, control, and dominance. Specifically, religion is treated as: (1) an alternative ideology, (2) a collective identity versus the culture of the ruling and beneficiary classes, (3) a source of individual dignity in contrast with the humiliation carried out by the state, and (4) a tool for mobilisation against the state, which itself went back to using, and contributed to the dominance of, religious discourse. These overlapping processes are embodied in political religiosity, and there are other important cases in which political religiosity has not constituted a popular alternative, especially in multi-confessional states where the sense of social and political dispossession has taken a sectarian form. Here, political sectarianism has emerged in the re-establishment of the religious confession as an identity that brings its members together in an imagined community which constitutes an alternative to the civil community. In these cases, secular and non-religious political forces often bank on sectarianism, whereas in other cases political religiosity itself bets on and intersects with political sectarianism, which negates the theory that religion serves as a bulwark against sectarianism.*[48]

Conclusion

Bishara's model presents an approach to the current issues of Arab countries beyond the claim that they are an exception to the trajectories of modern secularisation. However, this is not an attempt to "dilute"or "circumvent"the concept of secularism as one might imagine. The concept of secularisation, as Bishara uses it, retains its basic meanings as agreed upon in the contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences, whereby it refers to the process by which worldly realms differentiate themselves from and supersede religion. Bishara insists that this "profanation"cannot be reduced to separating religion from the state and privatising it in some absolute manner. Rather, it can also be manifested in the emergence of religious patterns that consecrate this worldliness and the superiority of its logic in the name of religion itself and in the name of defending its status (i.e., by reinterpreting it in new ways). The consecration of secularisation in this way is not peculiar to any one civilization. Indeed, before proposing it as a key to understanding Islamic religiosity in relation to the peculiarities of the Arab question, Bishara extrapolated it from the context of European modernisation.

---

[47] Ibid., pp. 317-318.

[48] Bishara, *al-Ṭāʾifa,* p. 319.

References

Bishara, Azmi. *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya fī Siyāq Tārīkhī*, Part 1: *al-Dīn wa-l-Tadayyun*. Doha/ Beirut: ACRPS, 2013.

______. *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya fī Siyāq Tārīkhī*, Part 2, Vol. 2: *al-ʿIlmāniyya wa-Naẓariyyāt al-ʿAlmana.* Doha/ Beirut: ACRPS, 2015.

______. *al-Dīn wa-l-ʿIlmāniyya fī Siyāq Tārīkhī*, Part 2, Vol. 1: *al-ʿIlmāniyya wa-l-ʿAlmana: al-Ṣayrūra al-Fikriyya.* Doha/ Beirut: ACRPS, 2015.

______. *Fī al-Masʾala al-ʿArabiyya: Muqaddima li-Bayān Dīmuqrāṭī ʿArabī.* Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2007.

______. *On Salafism: Concepts and Contexts.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022.

______. *Sectarianism Without Sects.* London: C. Hurst & Co., 2021.

______. *Tanẓīm al-Dawla al-Mukannā "Dāʿish"*, Part 1: *Iṭār ʿĀm wa Musāhama Naqdiyya fī Fahm al-Ẓāhira.* Doha/ Beirut: ACRPS, 2018.

Rana Barakat[*]

How to Read a Massacre in Palestine

Indigenous History as a Methodology of Liberation[**]

كيف نقرأ المجزرة في فلسطين؟

التاريخ الأصلاني بوصفه منهجية للتحرير

Abstract: This article is framed as a question about historical methodology that imagines another way of living with the stories of the past. By investigating two massacres in Palestine (Tantura and Kafr Qasem), the article presents an alternate reading of the past, both in terms of Palestinian voices and relationality with historical sources. By arguing from an understanding informed by Indigenous history as a decolonial praxis, this article relies on the voices and work of two women, Radwa Ashour and Samia Halaby, to map anew the stories of the past through the ongoing violence of the present. Their work forms the basis for engagement with the primary question: Can imagining Indigenous history, of which settler colonial violence is just one branch, be more than the victim's desperate plea that settlers recognise a people's humanity?

Keywords: Massacres, Palestine, Settler Colonialism, Indigenous History, Violence.

الملخص: نؤطر هذه الدراسة بوصفها تساؤلًا عن المنهجية التاريخية التي تتخيل طريقة أخرى للوجود عبر التعايش مع حكايات الماضي. فمن خلال التحقيق في مجزرتَي الطنطورة وكفر قاسم في فلسطين، تسعى الدراسة لطرح نوع مختلف من قراءة الماضي في ضوء الأصوات الفلسطينية والعلائقية مع المصادر التاريخية. ومن خلال المحاجّة في فهمٍ مستوحى من التاريخ الأصلاني بوصفه ممارسة لتفكيك الاستعمار، تستند الدراسة إلى صوتَي امرأتين، هما رضوى عاشور وساميةً حلبي، وعملهما من أجل ترسيم خريطة جديدة لسرد الماضي من خلال العنف المستمر للحاضر؛ فعملهما يشكّل الأساس لسجال السؤال الأساسي المطروح هنا: هل يمكن تخيّل التاريخ الأصلاني، الذي يشكّل فيه عنف الاستعمار الاستيطاني جزءًا من أجزاء كثيرة، أن يتخطّى مطالبة الضحية اليائسة باعتراف المستوطنين بإنسانية شعب؟

كلمات مفتاحية: مجزرة، فلسطين، استيطان، تاريخ أصلاني، عنف.

[*] Assistant Professor, Department of History, Birzeit University, Palestine.
Email: rnbarakat@birzeit.edu

[**] This study was originally published in Arabic in: Rana Barakat, "How to Read a Massacre in Palestine? Indigenous History as a Methodology of Liberation,"*Omran*, no. 39 (Winter 2022), pp. 149-172. *Omran* is a quarterly peer-reviewed journal of social sciences and humanities.

We have poetry

So we do not die of history.

Meena Alexander[1]

Introduction

In September 2018, “new revelations”of a massacre of Palestinians in 1982 reached global mainstream media. Although the Shatila massacre had occurred more than three and half decades before, and in spite of all of the literature about the events that had been produced since, there was still something “new”in these revelations. What was “new”in 2018 was the archival finds by Seth Anziska drawn from documents he discovered from the Israeli Kahan Commission report.[2] According to Anziska’s reporting, the newly available secret documents from the commission’s report reveal what most people already knew: the tactical relationship between Zionist forces and the Lebanese Phalanges and that the massacre in Beirut was a result of this collusion. What is it about this kind of archival material that makes for such a “historical”discovery? The massacres in Sabra and Shatila, unlike those that came before them, were actually well publicised, well documented (in real time) and widely exposed both as they happened and over time.[3] Moreover, it can be argued that given the context of the early 1980s, the massacres in Beirut served as a kind of historical affirmation of all of those that came before them at the hands of the Zionist military machine and were treated as such within all the literature produced. Why then was this treated as a “discovery”?

While this article is not about Sabra and Shatila directly, it is about how we think about the inexplicable violence of the past (and the ongoing present) in Palestine and how we imagine historical methodology as a potential tool to confront the paradox between the inexplicable/unspeakable and storytelling.[4] A great deal of work has been done on reading the archive as a historical source — this article is also not written in that vein. Rather, in this article I pose a different kind of inquiry, away from the state and interrogations about the state apparatus’ ability to frame history and produce (and exclude) knowledge. Rather, this article is an endeavour, posed as a question, to think about the stories of those who fall outside of the power the archive.

What happens when we move away from and exist outside of the power of the archives and the method of history that elevates that archive, even as a place of alternative knowledge? What kind of rendering of the past can we move into when we move away from the act of searching for documentation of violence through the archive of the perpetrators of that violence? Described through the “science of history”and using the annals of documentation, this kind of traditional historical method that prioritises the archives performs the task of settler colonial elimination of Indigenous people. If this is “history”, can history – or the representation of memory and the telling of a people’s history – be more than the documentation of defeat and destruction? Should it be? Can imagining Indigenous history, of which settler colonial violence is one part of many parts, be more than the victim’s desperate plea that settlers recognise a people’s humanity? The main question this article interrogates is whether Palestinian history can be (re)imagined as part of an ontological project to decolonise knowledge. How can Indigenous voices not be overpowered, overwhelmed, and over-written by the Zionist settler colonial narrative and its explicit and implicit frameworks?

---

1 Meena Alexander, “What Use Is Poetry?”*World Literature Today* (September 2013), accessed on 9/1/2022, at: https://bit.ly/34le3Lv

2 Seth Anziska, “Sabra and Shatila: New Revelations,”*New York Review of Books,*17/9/2018, accessed on 9/1/2022, at: https://bit.ly/34awItc

3 In particular, see: Bayan Nuwayhiḍ al-Ḥut, *Ṣabrā wa-Shātīlā: Aylūl 1982* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2004); Zakaria al-Shaikh, “Ṣabrā wa-Shātīlā ʿām 1982: Muqāwamat Majzara,”*Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Fall 1984), pp. 57-90; Jean Genet, “Four hours in Shatila,”*Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1983), pp. 3-22.

4 This study distinguishes between the concepts of “narrative”to describe the modern and official narrative related to history and derived from colonial legacy, and the concept of “storytelling”to describe the methodology of authentic historical narrative derived from the accounts of the country’s inhabitants. Accordingly, the expression “storyteller”does not refer to the profession of entertainers (storytellers), but rather refers to the practice of storytelling as an intentional and systematic act of providing authentic testimony of the past, present, and future.

To explore these questions, I examine the massacres of Tantura (1948) and Kafr Qasem (1956) as the scenes for this analysis. These massacres were part of the structural violence of settler colonialism that is both a part of Palestinian "history"and Zionist "history". In each location, this article covers the major historical literature to understand how settler narratives have become the dominant discourse, and to see how refuting this history opens up the possibility for Indigenous story/history of Palestine. That is, this is part of a larger story of how to read and un-read settler History through an Indigenous lens and methodology. The actual events of both Tantura and Kafr Qasem are well known and widely discussed in historical literature. Israeli "border guards"attacked and killed Palestinians over the course of an evening on 29 October 1956 in a massacre in Kafr Qasem, just as nearly a decade earlier Zionist forces had attacked and killed Palestinians in a massacre over the course of an evening on 22 May 1948 at the coastal village of Tantura. But both labelling the events as massacres and understanding them as Palestinian stories remain, at best, contested.

In order to question the usefulness of the traditional discipline of History, this article engages with the late Radwa Ashour's novel *Al-Tanturiya* (*The Woman from Tantoura*) and Samia Halaby's exhibit/book *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre*. Historians can learn a great deal from the imaginative realm of artistic creation, which tells the story of Indigenous defiance in the face of settler oppression in a way the confines of the history discipline often seem incapable of. Although these massacres are but two examples of Israeli settler colonial violence over the past seventy years, by reading the historical literature of these particular massacres and the debates that surrounded them, the dominance of settler narratives and the subsequent settler framing become clear. In the case of Palestine, the war is not only not over, but it also is an ongoing mission to eliminate the Indigenous people, targeting not only the land and the people, but also the story. This article works to understand how Ashour's and Halaby's attempts to imagine Palestinian stories through literary and artistic renditions were a trenchant rejection of the settler frameworks and power that dominate historical literature. Their respective works both tell an Indigenous story that is obviously wrought with settler colonial violence, but not exclusively defined by it.[5] In both cases, the work of fiction and art provide a historical account that cannot be conveyed or captured in what the history discipline legitimates.

History as Reconstruction: How to Discover and Cover a "Massacre"

The village of Tantura is located south of the city of Haifa on the Mediterranean coast. Israeli military forces of the newly declared state invaded and occupied Tantura in late May 1948. Between the nightfall of 22 May and the following dawn, these forces emptied the village of all its Palestinian inhabitants with force and intent, executing more than 200 people. More than seventy years later, these details are widely known. But how are these details framed in dominant historical narratives? The narrative of this expulsion and massacre is to this day a highly "contested"political and historical debate.[6] This section explores how this village — as one among many — embodies history's failure in its treatment of Palestinians.

Nearly a generation after the establishment of the state of Israel, a controversy erupted in in 2000-2001 in Israeli media about the massacre at Tantura. While once again struck within the prism of the settler state

---

[5] The question of "Indigenous and Indigeneity"in Palestine is one that requires a great deal of attention and is complicated. I have written about this elsewhere, but for the purposes of this piece I use the term "Indigenous"as a mythological intervention in how we engage the past and present in the Palestinian context. This is a politics of positionality and how knowledge production is engaged and distinctly not identity politics within the prison of coloniality and European modernity. I attempt to cover this wide-ranging debate in my forthcoming book: Rana Barakat, *Lifta and Resisting the Museumification of Palestine: Indigenous History of the Nakba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, [forthcoming]).

[6] For literature on the war between 1947-1949, see: Walid Khalidi (ed.), *All the Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1992); Nur Masalah, *The Expulsion of Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer"in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1992). The following section will go through much of the literature on this Tantura debate, but it should be noted here that even Benny Morris, a staunch advocate of what he described as a necessity for the use of violence in expelling Palestinians in 1948, recorded some details of the Alexandroni Brigade's (the unit of the Zionist army, the Haganah) work to empty the village on the night of 22-23 of May. See: Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 119-121.

and setter narratives, this episode is instructive in how material and methodology intersect in making history. That is, the details of this supposed controversy show just how ineffective history is in the Palestinian context. As Samera Esmeir explained in her reflection on the "legal case"of Tantura, "One of the difficulties in discussing the violence against Palestinians during the 1948 war is that "Palestine", the site of the violence, both persists and has ceased to exist".[7] Since 1948 is a marker of the "end"of something, "that moment when Palestine was ruined", and the beginning of something, the new state of Israel, it follows that, "the documents recording the birth of the state attempt to conceal the death of Palestine".[8] Esmeir's keen reflections, more than fifty years after the massacre in Tantura, grew out, in part, of the reactions caused by an MA thesis by an Israeli graduate student of Haifa University working on the history of five Palestinian villages, including Tantura. The storm of controversy that ensued was simple: a student wrote a thesis, based on research (from various Israeli archives) and oral testimonies, both from Palestinian survivors from Tantura and from members of the Alexandaroni Brigade, the military unit that seized the village in May 1948. The findings of the thesis hit the Israeli press in 2000, and because the issue seemed to challenge the Zionist national imaginary, push back came in the form of the Alexandaroni Brigade veterans' association filing suit against the student for libel. Put quite plainly, Tantura broke into Israeli public and academic discourse, not as its own story but rather as a libel case within Israeli courts. Of course, the narrative of Tantura is far more complicated, but it was reduced to a war of words over who produced more convincing "evidence"of the events that took place in 1948. Nevertheless, this controversy revealed a great deal, not only concerning the obvious elements of Israeli society's hard and fast inability to cope with the contradictions in their mythological origin story, but also, and perhaps more importantly, it revealed how warped a story can be if put into the hands of the oppressor's courts and forced into the straightjacket of "legal evidence".

Historians can easily find the limits regarding what passes as critique, as Ilan Pappe did in several of his reflections on this episode. First, and perhaps most obviously, is the importance of attending to oral history as an alternative method to archival research. According to Pappe:

> *oral history is not a substitute for written evidence, but it is particularly important in validating and filling in the gaps in the documentary evidence, which gives us the "bare bones". Thus, what is in the official Israeli record […] a brief reference to the act of occupying a village – or "cleansing"it, to use the actual term of the Jewish texts – becomes in Palestinian history a detailed account of assault, expulsion, and in some cases massacre. Indeed, in the case of Tantura, the massacre might not have come to light at all had it not been for the oral testimony on the Palestinian side – later corroborated by Jewish testimony – because the piecemeal evidence currently available in the Israeli archives is too fragmented […] to more than hint at what happened. In this case, then, it is the documents that fill out the oral history, rather than the reverse.*[9]

Though oral history has now become a more widely used methodological tool in the historian's arsenal, it is still handled with scepticism, with a main focus on how memory is both constructed and changes over time. But what often goes unsaid is whose memory is privileged. Pappe, who stood in the controversy over the student's thesis as one of his strongest allies on their university campus, underlines the importance that the student's interviews with Palestinians were "corroborated by Jewish testimony". As he explained, "Katz [the student in question] was able to overcome the suspicion and, indeed, delegitimization that is usually applied

7 Samera Esmeir, "1948: Law, History, Memory,"*Social Text*, vol. 75, no. 21 (Summer 2003), p. 25.

8 Ibid.

9 Ilan Pappe, "The Tantura Case in Israel: The Katz Research and Trial,"*Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 30, no. 3 (Spring 2001), p. 20.

in Israel to Palestinian oral history (and, indeed, to Palestinian history in general) only because he succeeded in obtaining testimonies about the massacre not only from Palestinian witnesses but also from Jewish soldiers who had participated in the events".[10] Evidence, in this sense, is as Esmeir described it, the crux of how legal practices relate to historical positivism. This leads her to ask, "How legitimate are the memories of the Palestinian survivors within the fields of law and history?"[11] Even if a historian adopts memory as a method, the need for corroboration of memory with archival evidence leads, once again, to the complete silencing of Palestinians.

Though it might seem farfetched to look at a libel case about an MA thesis to understand disciplinary understandings of "evidence"and "facts", it is quite revealing in how historical evidence is put into question in establishing "facts". Though the word "massacre"was not used in the thesis, the plaintiff's lawyer's strategy against the student thesis was to, in part, "establish that there was no admissible or reliable evidence proving the occurrence of the massacre […] [in doing so] the admissibility and reliability of the evidence provided by the survivors were questioned".[12] The courtroom setting in this case, represented what the discipline of history has done over time: filter sources to find what is deemed to be "reliable evidence"needed to prove facts. In this setting, oppressed people's memories will always be subject to doubt and oral history will remain secondary to archival sources.

Though the point of this article is to discuss how a "massacre"can come into appearance on its owns terms within Palestinian history, it is obvious that even indirect suggestions of the word "massacre"(like the word "Nakba") are subject to censorship.[13] Even ardent Zionist historians, like Benny Morris, weighed in on the issue of the court case:

> *the Katz-Tantura affair teaches us that one cannot base a reconstruction of events on the testimony of witnesses decades afterward. Faulty memory, political interests, flaws in transmission or translation — all impair credibility. In a case like Tantura, played out against the backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Palestinian demands for a "return", Arabs will "recall"Israeli monstrousness and Israelis their own blamelessness.*[14]

This clear obfuscation of memory serves the function of silencing and denial. Moreover, the notion of "reconstruction"appeared throughout the literature concerning the student's MA thesis and the subsequent interrogations concerning history. It is not without coincidence that an ardent defender of Zionist ideology like Benny Morris would cling to this kind of equation of credibility. Ilan Pappe, a historian who occupies a different end of the Israeli political spectrum from Morris, asked a similar question regarding history and Tantura, albeit with his own political trajectory in mind: "when the *Present* is enveloped by an on-going conflict, writing on the *Past* by way of history writing is an exceedingly difficult task, not always appreciated or anticipated by those who have written in theoretical and philosophical terms on the question of the reconstruction of history".[15] This is not about how to write, but about who is writing and why. The questions that both Morris and Pappe present, as different as they may be, are essentially Israeli positions and part of a debate about Zionist History and how it has affected Palestinians. Even as Pappe offers a path forward in showing how a historian might go about *reconstructing* the events that happened in Tantura between 22 and 23 May 1948, he suggests this as a model for other cases, arguing that writing the history of massacres is long overdue in Palestine. This description of "overdue"also ignores a number of Palestinian historians

---

10 Ibid., p. 21.

11 Esmeir, p. 29.

12 Ibid., p. 30.

13 see: "'Nakba Law' – Amendment No. 40 to the Budgets Foundations Law,"*Adalah* (2011), accessed on 9/1/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3mUuSTX

14 Benny Morris, "The Tantura 'Massacre' Affair,"*The Jerusalem Report*, 9/2/2004, accessed on 9/1/2022, at: https://bit.ly/33jIzEM

15 Ilan Pappe, "Historical Truth, Modern Historiography, and Ethical Obligations: The Challenge of the Tantura Case,"*Holy Land Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2004), p. 172.

who have meticulously reconstructed massacres, including Nur Masalah and Saleh Abdul Jawad.[16] Here, Pappe reveals another level of silencing, including his own complicity in it. In fact, the Arabic language academic journal, *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya* published a special issue devoted to the massacre at Tantura in the summer of 2000, contemporary to this entire debate.[17] This issue also included testimony from survivors gathered from various refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon. Tellingly, Elias Shofani, in his article in the special issue, mentioned and confronted Israeli historiography, from the official to the "new official"of the self-described "new historians". Not only is there on-going work among historians on the massacres, but these same historians, as in Shofani's case, devote space in their work to respond to these narratives, further highlighting another issue: When and how can a Palestinian historical narrative not be a response to Israeli historiography? Put another way, how can an Indigenous narrative not be framed by the settler narrative as a counter-narrative?

Out of this quasi-instructional manual for historians, Pappe influenced and partook in a subsequent project for oral history with the Israeli NGO Zochrot (Memories). With Evyal Sivan as the scientific curator, and Pappe as the assistant curator, Zochrot's project, "Towards a Common Archive", is a remarkable exhibit of Israeli history that both confronts the violence of the Zionist forces in the Nakba War (1947-1949) and challenges Israeli society's denial, ignorance, and ambivalence on the subject.[18] The testimonies of former soldiers are also archived and made partially public on the Zochrot website and You Tube. This project, as reflective of the overall work of Zochrot, is a clear challenge from within that is aimed at re-conceptualising the Nakba for an Israeli audience.[19] The testimonies in this archive are vast and range in clarity between the "why"and the "how"of the violence, and do truly try to map the violence of the war against Palestinians. Nevertheless, the notion of a "common"archive in this story (taken from the title and description of the project), obfuscates a major issue: with this kind of emphasis, where Indigenous stories have to be "tested"and/or "combined"in such a way, how can we understand Indigenous narratives that are not based on/in and not reliant on/responding to the settler narrative?

Radwa Ashour – al-Tanturiya and Storytelling as an Indigenous Historical Tool

Leaving behind all the fodder of proof and evidence and the horrible fate an Indigenous people face in the storm of history, Radwa Ashour puts forward another way of being and imagining through exquisite narration. Perhaps in the context of Palestine, asserting that Ashour provides a vision of liberation might read as exaggerated, but she certainly offers a useful and timely alternative to close the door on the silencing and suspicions that accompany the rules of history.[20] In *al-Tanturiya,* Ashour tells the story of Ruqayya

---

[16] The list of Palestinian scholars in this vein is long. For a sample of them, see the work working throughout the last half of the twentieth century see: Nur Masalah, Saleh Abdul Jawad, Rosemay Sayigh, Bayan Nawahid al Hut, and Walid al Khalidi.

[17] See: *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya*, vol. 11, no. 43 (Summer 2000).

[18] "Eyal Sivan,"accessed on 9/1/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3znNbG5

[19] A useful case to read, among many beyond the Katz affair, is the theatre production of *The Admission* by Motti Lemer, which in passing notes the land of Tantura as a site of Zionist violence in 1948, the play received critical attention and pushback, in particular, in the United States. See: Brett Abelman, "Ari Roth on The Admission at Theater J – Even in Good wars, Bad things Happen,"*Dc Theatre Scene*, 20/3/2014, accessed on 9/1/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3mWwxbt. This kind of work follows the line that discussing Palestinians in general and the violence of Zionist history need not negate the "righteousness"of the cause or the Israeli state. Doubling down on this kind of righteousness of Zionism even within a light discussion of violence of the state is a trope in Zionist literature, a pronounced version of this kind of Zionism can be seen in Ari Shavit's work as well. See: Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Speigel & Grau, 2013).

[20] Ashour's literary oeuvre includes several novels that deal with historical narratives including *Sirāj* and *Specters* (where she writes about the massacre in Deir Yassin of April 1948) and follow her own career from the time of her early engagement with African American literature, politics and her artistic intervention. See: Radwa Ashour, *Fī al-Naqd al-Adabī: Ṣayyādū al-Thākira* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-Arabi, 2001); Ira Dworkin, "Radwa Ashour, African American Criticism, and the Production of Modern Arabic Literature,"*Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Inquiry*, vol. 5, no. 1 (January 2018), pp. 1-19.

while Ruqayya tells the story of Palestine.[21] Published in 2010, more than six decades after the massacre in Tantura, Ashour writes the novel through the voice of a young girl, Ruqayya, who lived in the seaside village of Tantura. The reader sees the landscape through Ruqayya and follows her as she grows up from childhood in her homeland through the adult stages of her life in exile as a refugee primarily in Lebanon. The narrative of life, violence, and survival are localised through this young girl's experiences. The power of settler colonial modernity that imposes itself on historical documentation is completely non-existent in Ashour's historical story. As such, through Ruqayya, Ashour liberates the historian as a storyteller. In writing about her experience as a novelist, Ashour explicitly explored the role of a storyteller and history: "I do not historicize for ideological reasons but because I have no other means to conceptualize my existence and reconstruct it into meaningful categories".[22] Though this quote precedes her publication of the novel on Tantura, Ashour, nevertheless, spoke of how she perceived her role as a kind of storyteller:

> *because the free play of the imagination and the exercise of power to create, to draw characters, to construct space and temporality, to effect shifts, transitions, and changing time speeds, to manipulate words and sentences, is a reappropriation of a threatened geography, and a threatening history […] writing is a retrieval of a human will negated.*[23]

It is clear that Ashour saw herself in a way as a kind of historian, but one who might be called an anti-historian who undertakes the hard labour of fighting historical negation. In her own words she described her cultural resistance as attempting "to give history visibility and coherence, to conjure up unaccounted for, marginalized and silenced areas of the past and the present".[24] Ashour described her own relationship to memory in another essay about history writing through fiction, where she revealed that her fiction is not a suspension of reality as much as it is an intimate description of life in the past through the present.[25] Likewise, her work on Tantura is exemplary of this stance. To be sure, Ashour is not alone in these kinds of contemplations, as fiction and poetry have long been the medium for storytelling in the Palestinian and Arab context, but how Ashour does this through Ruqayya is worth exploring.

Out of Settler Time: Ruqayya's Beginnings

The story of Ruqayya did not begin with the devastation of 1948 as the novel is not linear, but rather framed by how Ruqayya remembers.[26] The back and forth in time is key to understanding how Ashour's storytelling works — breaking free from the linearity of history can, in part, be seen as challenging the settler distribution and destruction of time. That is, this approach challenges the notion of "settler time". This technique is not new to literature, including Palestinian literature, where novelists ranging from Ghassan Kanafani to Elias Khoury have played with time in interesting ways. Ashour invents Ruqayya as a storyteller, and as such, the reader as the listener need not think about the technique of the novel as much as the reader is enthralled with the storyteller and her tales. Instead of time, Ashour brings her reader into the story in space — opening with Ruqayya playing on the beach, the reader enters Tantura through the sea and Ruqayya's imagination. The romance of the water and her vivid imagination represents, in some

21 Radwa Ashour, "Eyewitness, Scribe and Storyteller: My Experience as a Novelist,"*The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 41, no. 1 (Spring 2000), p. 88.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., p. 89.

25 Ashour, *Fī al-Naqd al-Adabī*, pp. 57-70.

26 The novel was written in colloquial Palestinian Arabic (not modern standard Arabic). This is an important distinction that Ashour made as the words of Ruqayya were/are how conversations and memories occur over time, in the past and present, in Palestine and among Palestinians.

ways, the romance of what the settler army stole from Palestinians in stealing Palestine. By the time the reader reaches the military occupation of Tantura, the geography of Ruqayya's landscape and life is clear. Her relationship to the land was based on her ordinary life, until the ordinary became extraordinary.

The power of Ashour's literary style is fully on display in Ruqayya's storytelling of that day in May when her family was violently driven from their home by Zionist military forces. The day began when her mother woke her up and gave her a list of tasks to perform in the house. The young Ruqayya did not understand but performed the tasks her mother gave her:

> *wake up Wisal and Abed. Put fodder for the livestock that will last two or three weeks, and a lot of water. Scatter seed for the chickens, a lot. And the horse, don't forget the horse. Lift the oil cans off the ground so the moisture doesn't get to them, and put a cushion between the wall and each can. Dress in three layers…*[27]

While she sensed the danger outside the borders of their home, Ashour presented Ruqayya as she had been, a young girl who, along with her mother and their recent refugee guests from Qisarya, fled their home in a cloud of confusion and fear. Embedded within the details in this short description is the unspeakability of "becoming"a refugee. In time, Ruqayya would embody this unspeakablity. She had never before this moment even seen the door to her family's home locked, and as her mother closed the iron door, she locked it with a key that she had also never seen. Though that was the first appearance of that key in the novel and in her life, it would remain a material symbol throughout Ruqayya's life.

Describing the Indescribable: Settler Violence and Indigenous Narration

Forced removal, danger, and violent death had suddenly become her reality, but how little of it made sense, how much she could not understand, and how utterly illogical it all seemed to her is precisely the key to explaining the inexplicability of the massacre. That is, through Ruqayya, Ashour tells a story of unspeakable violence, but her stories are not defined nor framed nor confined by violence. The landscape of violence was clear enough in the dark of the night, Ruqayya felt it from the sounds of explosions and bullets coming from the east, south, and north. Just as they had taken refuge in another house, three armed men attacked the home. As the armed men forced the family to move to another area, Ruqayya saw the bodies of the "blind Hassan Abed al-Al and his wife Azza al-Hajj al-Hindi lying near their house surrounded by a pool of blood".[28] They were driven out to the beach, separated, men on one side and women, children, and some elderly men on the other. In this moment, Ruqayya described the scene:

> *it was the first time I saw female soldiers: women wearing a military uniform and bearing arms. They spoke to us in Arabic and began to search us, one after the other, taking any money or jewelry they found on us […] she noticed the rings in my ears as she was searching me. She yanked them out and blood flowed from my ears.*[29]

In this midst of these assaults, Ruqayya stood at the edge of the group, closest to the men. As she searched for any sign of her father and brothers, she witnessed murder: men were picked out of the group,

---

27 Radwa Ashour, *The Woman from Tantoura: A Novel of Palestine,* Kay Heikkinen (trans.) (Cairo: American of University Press, 2014), p. 44.

28 Ibid., p. 46.

29 Ibid.

taken in smaller groups, and disappeared. The soldiers then forced the women towards the cemetery of the town, where she was witness to further devastation of violence:

> *as they were leading us toward the cemetery, I noticed that the village has a strange odor, mixed with the scent of white lilies that grew on the islands and along their beaches at that time of the year. I couldn't distinguish the odor even though it remained in my nose after we left the village. Afterward it would sometimes appear suddenly, days or weeks later, without my knowing where it had come from or why the village had had that odor on that particular day.*[30]

Ashour's narrative allows room for describing what is indescribable, her style making the connections that traditional historical documentation cannot. As a storyteller, Ashour is free to use the power of the sensory and creates a scene that the reader can experience viscerally. Ruqayya's journey began before the night broke into early morning, but her life was forever changed by it:

> *at the cemetery two trucks were waiting. Threatening us with their weapons, they told us to get in [...] They crammed us into the trucks, and they began to move. Suddenly I shouted and pulled my mother's arm, pointing with my hand to a pile of corpses. She looked to where I was pointing and shouted: Jamil, my cousin, Jamil. But I pulled her arm again and with my left hand and pointed with the right to where my father and brothers were: their corpses were next to Jamil's, piled one next to the other at the distance of a few meters from us.*[31]

In the truck that forced her and her mother into a life without their home, young Ruqayya's last sight in Tantura was that of her father and brothers, murdered along with piles of others around them. Her mother never accepted that her husband and sons were killed; she would spend the rest of her life telling herself and others that they had escaped to Egypt and she simply did not know how to find them. Ruqayya, on the other hand, after seeing what she saw, stopped speaking. Her voice was left behind in the town of Tantura. As if confronting the forced silences in history, Ruqayya's physical being absorbed the violence as the temporarily loss of her voice. Ashour's novel follows Ruqayya and her mother through their refugee journey, east through Palestine, to Jordan, to Syria and finally, to the southern city of Sidon in Lebanon. In Sidon, Ruqayya found her paternal uncle, the man who tried to get his brother to leave on a boat with him before the settler soldiers invaded. Only then did she regain her voice, to inform him of the fate of her father and brothers.

The Story of Tantura is the Voice of the Woman from Tantura (Al-Tanturiya)

Ashour's imaginary voice of Ruqayya captured Palestinian reality in a way the evidence produced by the perpetrator's archive never could. The massacre was real. And Ruqayya felt it, smelled it, breathed it, and lived to relive it. Because the method of massacre was/is, as described earlier, part of an ongoing structure of settler colonial violence, Ruqayya lived to see more massacres. After meeting up with her uncle and his family, Ruqayya re-established her relationship with her beloved young cousin. When the settler soldiers invaded Lebanon, she explained, "what he did not live through with her on the sea of Tantura forty years before he now lives through on the sea of Sidon…it is as if history repeats itself, although the scene is larger".[32] She lived through it yet again, in Beirut, in 1982, at the refugee camp of Shatila. As if the linear passage of time was irrelevant, she re/lived the 1982 massacres in Sidon and again in 2000

30 Ibid., p. 47.

31 Ibid., pp. 47-48.

32 Ibid., p. 57.

when she travelled with others to the newly liberated southern border, when her younger son told her the story of her eldest son's lost love, and of how she was murdered along with 125 others in a school that was bombed by the Israelis in 1982. Ashour's remarkable description of the strength of Ruqayya reveals that in this form (the novel) and through this medium (Ruqayya's storytelling), one can be the victim of indescribable violence, but not be confined to the role of the victim. Ruqayya remains a powerful and complicated character *through* the violence.

Time and space, again, are complicated by how time freezes and continues to move in the life of a refugee whose relationship with space is defined by displacement. Throughout the novel, as Ruqayya's life moves from one site to another, from one context to another, the frozen aspect of time and dislocation remain. As she described it while with her children on a trip in Lebanon: "I was with the boys on the train and yet I wasn't, because ever since that day when they loaded us into the truck and I saw my father and brothers on the pile, I have remained there, unmoving, even if it didn't seem like it".[33] The movement of time, including time that seems not to move, follows Ruqayya from her generation to the next. The novel ends with another beginning, as Ruqaaya travels to the southern border of Lebanon, the northern border of her Palestine. When she sees her granddaughter on the other side of the border, she gifts the baby child the key that her mother carried the day they were forced to leave Tantura. Ashour's description of that border scene is the ongoing journey of every Ruqayya and the geography of displacement:

> *in the flash of an eye it was as if the barbed wire had disappeared from view, covered by the bodies of the residents on both sides. They were greeting each other, shyly at first, and then speaking easily. People were meeting each other:*
>
> *"We are from Haifa…"*
>
> *"We came from Ain al-Helwa, originally we're from Saffurya. From al-Zeeb. From Amqa. From Safsaf. From al-Tira. From…"*
>
> *"We're from Um al-Fahm…"*
>
> *"We're from the Mieh Mieh Camp…"*
>
> *"We're from Shafr Amr…"*
>
> *"We came from the Rashidiya Camp…"*
>
> *"We're from Acre…"*
>
> *"We came from the Burj al-Shamali Camp…"*
>
> *"We're from Arraba…"*
>
> *"We came from the al-Bassa Camp…"*
>
> *"We're from Nazareth…"*
>
> *"We came from Sidon…"*
>
> *"We're from al-Bi'na…"*
>
> *"We came from Tyre…"*
>
> *"We're from Jaffa…"*
>
> *"We came from Jezzin…"*

[33] Ibid., p. 61.

"We're from Sekhnin…"

"We came from Ghaziya…"

"We're from Lid…"

"We're from Deir al-Qasi…"

"We came from al-Bazuriya…"

"We're from al-Jdayda. We're from al-Rama. We're from…"

"And the lady is…?"

"From Tantoura."

Listing Palestinian towns, cities, and villages, along with places of refuge throughout Lebanon is the juxtaposition of being refugee from a nation that itself was made into a refugee.

The geography of this journey and the ongoing violence that she was witness to, that she experienced and that she survived, is the story of Tantura and its people. In her present, Ruqayya takes us on a journey through the past, from her earliest childhood memories, through the life of her refugee family in Lebanon, as she married and became a mother and then grandmother. She ends the novel with a beginning, as described earlier, when, after the Israeli army retreated from southern Lebanon in May 2000, she along with hundreds of other Palestinians travelled to the border to see beyond the barbed wire. The story does not have an ending, and the massacre of Tantura, like the all the memories of home, follow the reader as they follow Ruqayya from home to war and massacres and from one generation to the next — a Palestinian story.

The (On-going) Nakba: The Massacre in Kafr Qasem, a Massacre against Citizens?

As described earlier, the Nakba both as a reality and as a concept in Palestine did not end with the conclusion of the military war and its massacres, like that in Tantura, in 1949. On Monday, 29 October 1956, between the hours of 5 and 7 pm, Israeli "border police", upon direct orders from the army military command of the Central District, shot and killed 49 Palestinian Arabs from the village of Kafr Qasem: men, women and children. Based mainly on the published verdict of the military court, Emile Habibi's specific account of the massacre recounted that "border patrols guards"shot and killed nineteen men, six women, ten teenage boys (age 14-17), six girls (age 12-15) and seven young boys (age 8-13). One of the murdered women was pregnant and her unborn baby was also killed.[34] A few hours earlier in the day, the military command had issued a curfew to begin at 5:00 pm. The people coming home from the work in the fields and on the land to Kafr Qasem that evening did not know about the curfew or the military orders. According to Adel Manna, "the details of what happened in Kafr Qasem that day are well known and documented; there is no dispute over them…in contrast to other massacres (from Deir Yassin in April 1948, to Sabra and Shatila in September 1982, to Jenin in April 2002, and others)".[35] Though the military war supposedly ended in 1949 with the armistice treaties between the state of Israel and neighbouring Arab states, the violence of the Nakba and the massacres that define a core part of that violence did not end. With various nefarious pretexts, the military government has continued — until this very day — to attack, invade, and, if not emptied, tried to

---

[34] Emile Habibi, *Kafr Qāsim: al-Majzara-al Siyāsa* (Haifa: Arabesque, 1976). See: Shira Robinson, "Local Struggle, National Struggle: Palestinian Responses to the Kafr Qasim Massacre and Its Aftermath, 1956–1966,"*International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 35, no. 3, Special Issue: Commemorating the 1973 War (August 2003), pp. 393-416.

[35] Adel Manna, "Majzarat Kafr Qāsim,"in: *al-Filasṭīniyūn fī Isrāʾīl: Qirāʾāt fī al-Tārīkh wa-l-Siyāsa wa-l-Mujtamaʿ*, Nadim N. Rouhana & Areej Sabbagh-Khoury (eds.) (Haifa: Mada al-Carmel; Arab Center for Applied Research, 2011), p. 76.

empty Palestinian villages and towns. Before Kafr Qasem, for example, came the notorious special military unit 101, under the command of Ariel Sharon, whose main goal was to attack border villages and towns in the West Bank. On 15 October 1953, Sharon and his troops attacked the village of Qibya, killing 69-70 people, most of them women and children.[36] The same year, 1956, another Israeli military unit attacked Khan Younis in southern Gaza, resulting in another massacre.[37] Massacres, as Manna and others have described, were and remain a fundamental aspect of Israeli military policy and tactics.

It is important to frame these massacres as part of the structural violence of Zionist settler colonialism, but it is interesting as well to look into the specifics of Kafr Qasem. Just as the Katz controversy highlights aspects of how reconstruction functions (or does not function) in the telling of the narrative of Tantura, Kafr Qasem also has a kind of Israeli reckoning in the aftermath, albeit a more immediate one. As Shira Robinson points out, the exceptionalism of Kafr Qasem was Israeli exceptionalism. The state worked to render the events of Kafr Qasem an anomaly and, through this narrative of exceptionalism, worked to take the massacre outside of Palestinian history. That is, in the months and years after the massacre, the aftermath was, in part, fed by the internal political dynamics of the Israeli state, those who were murdered as well and those who survived in Kafr Qasem were part of this state, and the aftermath was very much about how, in the telling words of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, these "citizen strangers"fit into (or did not fit into) Israel.[38] Because of these internal political developments, the aftermath of the massacre was clearly the state's attempt to produce the historical narrative, reinforced through the tools of commemoration. That is, after a solid attempt at a complete media blackout of the event and total isolation of the village, enough internal agitation outside of Kafr Qasem forced official Israeli action in the form of a committee of inquiry and a military trial. This was a moment to see how contested memory played out in the narrowly defined public space of a settler state that was hostile to Palestinians whose status in the state was unclear and unwanted.

The weeks and months that followed the massacre were a time of clear mobilisation for Palestinian Arab communities throughout the settler state of Israel. According to Shira Robinson, "for residents of urban centers and scores of other villages the Galilee and Little Triangle, this period witnessed the transformation of a relatively unknown border village into the motive force of unprecedented grass-roots protest against military rule".[39] The mobilisation led to direct battles between the state's security forces and Palestinians in Israel who were acting as political groups, parties and communities throughout the various stages of the aftermath, from the beginning of the military trial into the first annual commemoration of the massacre. A battle over memory was at play — deciding how the massacre of Kafr Qasem would be memorialised and politicised (or de-politicised in the state's intentions). The state went as far as to impose a truce (*sulha*) on the residents of Kafr Qasem to put a final end to the "affair"and "cleanse"the state and its various apparatuses of any blame for the massacre. This forced truce was another kind of violent attack on Kafr Qasem; as Robinson describes it: "the *sulha* remains an indelible stain on Israel's historical record, an assault on the dignity of the victims and the Arab community as a whole".[40] Taking the massacre out of the context of the Nakba and the ongoing structural violence of settler colonialism, however, was the goal of the government manoeuvres in the aftermath of the massacre. This tension is seen in commemorative

[36] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), p. 91.

[37] Joe Sacco's oral archeology of the Khan Yunis massacre through the genre of the graphic novel *Footnotes on Gaza* is another exemplar of de-colonising Palestinian history. A graphic novel, here, is another way to tell an inexplicable story, that is, again, a story that holds unspeakable violence but is not defined by it. See: Joe Sacco. *Footnotes in Gaza: A Graphic Novel* (New York: Macmillan, 2009).

[38] Robinson, "Local Struggle, National Struggle,"p. 399; Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

[39] Robinson, "Local Struggle, National Struggle,"pp. 399-400.

[40] Ibid., p. 404.

activities in and about Kafr Qasem over the succeeding decades.[41] If it were a contest over historical memory, it is clear what the Israeli state intended. Given the power of the state to control the narrative — both in terms of commemoration and of the historical record controlled by the state's closed archives — history failed Kafr Qasem.

An Indigenous Story - Samia Halaby and Kafr Qasem

In her work on Kafr Qasem, the artist Samia Halaby, undertakes a form of storytelling that challenges history's erasure in a move similar to Ashour. Through Ruqayya, Ashour centres Palestinian narratives and ontologies, while Halaby is faced with a technical challenge in the visual representation of the massacre and how to depict the moment/act of violence without centring the perpetrators. In her book, *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre*, Halaby presented over a decade of her artwork on and in Kafr Qasem. The book is divided into three main sections under the titles "Researching the Massacre and the Aftermath", "Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre", and "Documentation Appendices". The book, therefore, is a material documentation of her journey as both an artist and a researcher. As such, this presents an opportunity to see how history has failed Palestine and how storytelling opens a methodological path to understanding the past and the present towards a future in/for Palestine. In the book's dedication, Halaby writes: "this book is the story of the workers facing great odds but determined to survive and persist…the victims of the Kafr Qasem massacre are one with all those who died fighting to defend Palestine, or died insisting that they have a right to live in their own homes on their own land, or died trying to return to it".[42] The positionality of the researcher and artist is set clearly first and foremost in this exceptional work of art. In fact, over her career, Halaby has committed to this positionality; on the liberation art of Palestine, Halaby writes:

> *palestinian artists of the second half of the 20th century […] sometimes speak of being the first to do this or that, or that theirs was the first Palestinian one-artist exhibition, etc. The trauma of the Nakba caused an absence in knowledge. Closer study reveals that, despite this perceived chasm in the continuity of Palestinian painting and sculpture, there were precious connections between the two halves of the twentieth century in Palestine art history that were so traumatically divided.*[43]

Focusing on continuity and connections between the breaks, is a history of a people. The story of Palestine, for Halaby, begins long before and continues long after 1948 — the story is connected, not broken, by 1948. In writing about fellow artist Abed Abdi, Halaby points out that whether working in symbolism, realistic drawings, or abstraction, the artist and their work is about Palestine - one artist's work that embodies both continuities and variations. Halaby has herself been an active artist through the eras or phases divided by traditional history, and her commentary on Abdi can easily be applied to her own work.

In her most recent work about Kafr Qasem, Halaby suggests her own articulated engagement of an Indigenous politics. In part one of the book, she described her research methodology, including gathering data in all forms available to her from oral interviews, archives, and secondary sources. She was performing historical documentation, but drawing on a line of questions that are neither about proving (as if doubt prevailed) or providing evidence. In fact, she spoke to the difficulty of working on a massacre, describing it as "like a hammer blow that shatters a hard mass to smithereens […] the town receiving the blow is

41 Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, Inea Bushnaq (trans.) (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976); Tamir Sorek, *Palestinian Commemoration in Israel: Calendars, Monuments and Martyrs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

42 Samia Halaby, *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre* (New York: Schilt Publishing, 2016), p. 8.

43 Samia Halaby, "Abed Abdi and the Liberation Art of Palestine,"*Jadaliyya,* 31/3/2013, accessed on 12/1/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3FmPlSh

shattered, broken to pieces".[44] Representing this description is what leads Halaby to combine narration with drawings, because, as she claims, this combination, "provides a more powerful understanding of events than either can do alone".[45] Halaby addresses a massacre, names it such without trepidation, and works within her medium to narrate it. As was the case in Ashour's reading of the massacre in Tantura, this kind of storytelling is a distinct departure from traditional history on several layers. In a positivist school of historical analysis, the work of documentation by a researcher is treated as science: find evidence and present it. That is, documenting is treated as a science outside of politics or political positionality. Halaby — in her process and resulting work — completely refuses the hegemonic politics of history's feigned objectivity.

After conducting a series of interviews with survivors from Kafr Qasem and spending time in the village, Halaby archived the voices of people and their stories. She then used this archive as the basis for her exhibition. She produced a series of paintings and drawings depicting scenes of the village on the day of the massacre. Accompanying the art with narration revealed the phases of both the evolution of her work and the many phases of the massacre. She based the series on Emile Habibi's narration of the massacre that he divided into nine waves of killing.[46] The waves of her drawings and their change reflected Habibi's narration and also her own experiences over a decade into her research and work on Kafr Qasem. This kind of parallel evolution provides insight into the changing nature of storytelling. "The Martyrdom of Talal"(2012), an acrylic on polyester painting, draws from years of work on various iterations of the scene in black and white drawings. Halaby tells a story in the painting, but also tells the story of the painting. Based on interviews with the Easa family (Eight year old Talal Easa and his ninety year old grandfather were killed and Rasmiyya Shaker Easa, Nour Shaker Easa, and Shaker Abdallah Easa, mother, sister, and father to Talal, whose stories she relied on to help produce the images, were wounded) led her to depict Talal's death as a crucifixion. Halaby went through various renditions of the image between 1999 and 2012 and relied on the commentary and reactions of people in Kafr Qasem (and elsewhere) over time that led her to this depiction of Talal as the centre of the composition. This insight into the production of art is also an insight into the nature of story-telling. Herein, we can see how Halaby used oral history in an inter-subjective iterative process that gives us a sense of a methodology that works as a kind of translation process: from words into visual stories. That is, the artist telling the story behind her work serves as a kind of documentation of how fluid and interactive storytelling can be. It also reveals, as is seen in the painting (2012), that the story centred on Talal in the moment of his death, as Halaby worked to frame the story through Talal and his family rather than through the lens of the weapons that killed them. Even in the midst of unspeakable violence, or perhaps especially in the midst of this violence, Halaby works to the tell the story of the Talal.

In "Killing in the Northern Fields", Halaby reveals more about the process of her art production, where she came to "the decision to minimize the Israeli soldiers because this is not their story".[47] In her narration to this piece Halaby explains more about the process and her reliance on feedback from people in Kafr Qasem, particularly her exchanges with Abu Naser, on whom she relied throughout her work both in research and production.[48] Her presentation of the series of sketches that represent her own journey towards working to "comprehend the knowledge and memories of those who were in the village at the time"actually

---

[44] Halaby, *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre*, p. 39.

[45] Ibid., p. 36.

[46] Habiby; Mahmoud Darwish, "Dhāhib Ilā al-Jumla al-ʿArabiyya fī al-Khāmis ʿAshar min Ayyār,"*Shuʿun Falastiniya*, no. 22 (June 1973), pp. 11-17.

[47] Halaby, *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre*, p. 83.

[48] Halaby explained early in the book that Abu Naser (Ahmad Hamdan Amer) is "the"historian of Kafr Qasem whose unpublished work and research as well as her continued conversations with him were the main material that she relied on throughout her journey. This idea of local history is not uncommon in Palestine and further reveal the tension between official History and local historical material as another manifestation of the settler/ Native binary as local is in this sense OF Kafr Qasem and OF Palestine.

presents the journey of a story-teller historian.[49] That is, the process of learning towards creating a kind of representation, or, in Halaby's words, "translating the words of witnesses into pictures".[50] In a piece titled "First Wave of Killing on the Western Road", Halaby further reveals her ambition towards depicting the ordinary in an extraordinary context:

> *without knowledge of details […] this would merely look like four Palestinian men of the 1950s leading their bicycles […] it is crucial that the viewer knows them as individuals, notes the quirks of their body language, and further knows that they are about to be shot in cold blood by soldiers […] This drawing of four men represents a fleeting moment of life just before violence, when in their full dignity victims confront viewers for as long as the drawing survives.*[51]

In all of her drawings throughout the nine waves of killing, Halaby places emphasis on the people of Kafr Qasem. Similar to Ashour, Halaby centres the subjectivities and ordinary lives of the individuals of Kafr Qasem and represents their fully human un-extraordinary lives and ontological world that are about to be extinguished. Reminiscent of how Ashour's begins with Ruqayya's everyday material and sensorial world. For example, according to Halaby, she

> *drew the victims of the Second Wave of killing walking home, facing the viewer. The soldiers and imminent danger are unseen. This places the viewer in the position of the soldiers waiting for their victims to arrive, knowing they will kill many, if not all of them. It asks the viewer: Would you be able to kill these people in cold blood as they approach you?*

Halaby worked to represent the dignity of an oppressed people, not in the murder, but rather in how she worked to depict the lives of the people. Moreover, she never drew or painted any military actors (soldiers, border guards, or police), only the guns and shadows of soldiers, never in the centre of the frame.[52] Instead of centring soldiers killing in the act of violence, Halaby portrays the full (and unquestionable and unquestioned) humanity of those who were killed. While this might be read as a kind of statement on the universality of humanity, I would argue, rather, that it is the visual representation of Indigenous defiance. It is not people's death or even victimhood that captures her focus, but, so clearly stated in words and in vision, her insistence on her people's existence and survival. As such, this is about Palestinian peoplehood.

By providing a running commentary to the evolution of her work, from the initial drawing phase to the final productions, she asks the hard question of how an Indigenous artist depicts a massacre — without falling into the reductive frame of the position of victim and centring the narrative as a story of the perpetrators. This is a difficult and ongoing dilemna, but I suggest that the drawings are a part of Indigenous history because of the questions she asks and the way she addresses them. Echoing the voice of Ruqayya that Ashour chose to tell the story of Tantura, Halaby explicitly explains her anxiety about where to put the Zionist military in the literal frame of her work. As Raja Shehadeh describes in his foreword to the book, "throughout all this work and these efforts, she [Halaby] was able to achieve a high degree of empathy with the victims of this massacre, that made it possible for her to produce a visual whole of the scattered parts of human emotions and suffering, of loss, anger and pain, and present in words and drawings a re-creation of that dark time".[53] Empathy, rather than pity, frames Halaby's work. How can we present the history of horror and do so in way that historicises the past within a politically motivated methodology in the present? How

---

49 Halaby, *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre*, p. 84.

50 Ibid., p. 91.

51 Ibid.

52 For example, see: bottom left "Death of a Shepard Boy Fathi, 2012; top right "The Shepard Uthman Easa, 2012; bottom and left right of "The Martyrdom of Saleh Amer, 2012; bottom center of "The Martyrdom of Rayyan,"2012.

53 Halaby, *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre*, p. 11.

can one describe a past and a people's relationship with the land, and not confine this past to the work of history? These are my questions regarding the historiography of the Palestinian Nakba, and these are the questions that Halaby confronts in this remarkable work.

In her preface to the book, Halaby describes herself and her work:

> *for my painting, I seek to know art history internationally and be at the leading edge of painterly discovery. For my politics, I would make politically explicit posters, banners, leaflets, as well as documentary drawing reflecting my own political persuasion and not that of others. The project describing the Kafr Qasem massacre falls within the second category. It is a documentary project that I seek to complete in the most scientific manner possible. I created this series of drawings not to be avant-garde but rather because I am a Palestinian and am able to visually document a small piece of my national history.*[54]

Halaby's own description exposes the tensions and inherent contradictions involved in being an artist in/on Palestine. It is full of the paradoxical relationship with the past in a present — both imprisoned within settler colonial violence and how that violence forces a relationship with what she described here as "scientific manner". Though Halaby uses "scientific"when speaking of her epistemology, when investigating the many layers involved in this work, her epistemological intervention through visual representation seems to achieve something well beyond science. She also explains that the figure drawings of the projects are, in her words, "not based on live models but are constructed from memory". Memory here is of dispossession, destruction, murder, and genocide. The massacre in Kafr Qasem in October 1956 is part of the longer history of this oppression. People were murdered with deliberate force — settlers murder and destroy. It is what settler colonial violence is and has been in Palestine. The task at hand for Halaby was to try to narrate this story and, I argue, she did so within the tools — conceptual and practical — of story-telling within an Indigenous methodology, which involves documenting the past with a clear political trajectory about understanding the past that is also the present.

Conclusion

To return to story of Sabra and Shatila, though recent findings taken from Israeli archives about the invasion in 1982 of Beirut reveal the direct and calculated motives of Ariel Sharon's military plan in carrying out the massacres, what is actually "revealed"in this archival "discovery"? The documentation is not actually revelational, all it actually tells us is how the perpetrators of violence performed their violence. Likewise, new so-called revelations regarding the killings in Kafr Qasem from a book recently published in Hebrew including confessions from Yiska Kadami (the general put on trial for the murders) are only new to the discipline of history.[55] While these archives are interesting, and while, as Rona Sela has meticulously documented, Israeli archives contain a massive amount of material that details the massacres, including the massacres of the Nakba War like those in Tantura and Deir Yassin, among others, what is it these archives actually document and what kind of histories do they produce?[56]

While this is a question about settler violence, it is also only a history of settlers, where Palestinians are at best nameless victims. The more pertinent question in Indigenous history is what Ashour and Halaby struggled with: how can an Indigenous story about the past memorialise the violence of that past and present

[54] Ibid., p. 16.

[55] Zen Read, "General's Final Confession Links 1956 Massacre to Israel's Secret Plan to Expel Arabs,"*Haaretz*, 13/10/2018, accessed on 9/1/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3zoiv7J

[56] Archives in this context is another and related as well as central issue, in the context of this article is both in gratitude for the groundbreaking work on archives (SEE) and an invitation to take that critique into a different direction.

and not be held hostage to it? Through their work we can see how Indigenous histories tell the stories of settler violence but centre the stories around Indigenous defiance and existence rather than victimhood and erasure. While this article may seem to simply be a rejection of history, it is also an exploration, building on the work of Ashour and Halaby, of how an alternative method can demonstrate that defiance is generative and opens up a space to tell the stories of the past in relation to the present and the future in Palestine.

References

"'Nakba Law' – Amendment No. 40 to the Budgets Foundations Law." *Adalah* (2011). Accessed on 9/1/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3mUuSTX

al-Ḥut, Bayan Nuwayhiḍ. *Ṣabrā wa-Shātīlā: Aylūl 1982*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2004.

al-Shaikh, Zakaria. "Ṣabrā wa-Shātīlā ʿām 1982: Muqāwamat Majzara." *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya*. vol. 14. no. 1 (Fall 1984).

Ashour, Radwa. "Eyewitness, Scribe and Storyteller: My Experience as a Novelist." *The Massachusetts Review*. vol. 41. no. 1 (Spring 2000).

Ashour, Radwa. *Fī al-Naqd al-Adabī: Ṣayyādū al-Thākira*. Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-Arabi, 2001.

Ashour, Radwa. *The Woman from Tantoura: A Novel of Palestine.* Kay Heikkinen (trans.). Cairo: American of University Press, 2014.

Barakat, Rana. *Lifta and Resisting the Museumification of Palestine: Indigenous History of the Nakba*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, [forthcoming].

Darwish, Mahmoud. "Dhāhib Ilā al-Jumla al-ʿArabiyya fī al-Khāmis ʿAshar min Ayyār." *Shuʿun Falastiniya*. no. 22 (June 1973).Alexander, Meena. "Question Time,"from "What Use Is Poetry," *World Literature Today.* September 2013.

Dworkin, Ira. "Radwa Ashour, African American Criticism, and the Production of Modern Arabic Literature." *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Inquiry*. vol. 5. no. 1 (January 2018).

Esmeir, Samera. "1948: Law, History, Memory." *Social Text*. vol. 75. no. 21 (Summer 2003).

Genet, Jean. "Four hours in Shatila." *Journal of Palestine Studies*. vol. 12. no. 3 (1983).

Habibi, Emile. *Kafr Qāsim: al-Majzara-al Siyāsa*. Haifa: Arabesque, 1976.

Halaby, Samia. *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre*. New York: Schilt Publishing, 2016.

Jiryis, Sabri. *The Arabs in Israel*. Inea Bushnaq (trans.). New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976.

Khalidi, Walid (ed.). *All the Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1992.

Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya. vol. 11. no. 43 (Summer 2000).

Masalah, Nur. *The Expulsion of Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948*. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1992.

Morris, Benny. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Pappe, Ilan. "Historical Truth, Modern Historiography, and Ethical Obligations: The Challenge of the Tantura Case." *Holy Land Studies*. vol. 3. no. 2 (2004).

Pappe, Ilan. "The Tantura Case in Israel: The Katz Research and Trial." *Journal of Palestine Studies*. vol. 30. no. 3 (Spring 2001).

Robinson, Shira. "Local Struggle, National Struggle: Palestinian Responses to the Kafr Qasim Massacre and Its Aftermath, 1956–1966." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. vol. 35. no. 3. Special Issue: Commemorating the 1973 War (August 2003).

Robinson, Shira. *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Rouhana, Nadim N. & Areej Sabbagh-Khoury (eds.). *al-Filasṭīniyūn fī Isrāʾīl: Qirāʾāt fī al-Tārīkh wa-l-Siyāsa wa-l-Mujtamaʿ*. Haifa: Mada al-Carmel; Arab Center for Applied Research, 2011.

Sacco, Joe. *Footnotes in Gaza: A Graphic Novel*. New York: Macmillan, 2009.

Shavit, Ari. *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*. New York: Speigel & Grau, 2013.

Shlaim, Avi. *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

Sorek, Tamir. *Palestinian Commemoration in Israel: Calendars, Monuments and Martyrs*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.

Ammar Shamaileh | Alan Aloskan | Mohammed Zahr*

Regime Elite Turnover in the Waning Syrian Civil War (2016-2021)

A Socio-Economic Approach**

تحولات نخبة النظام الحاكم في الحرب الأهلية السورية (2016-2021)

مقاربة سوسيو-اقتصادية

Abstract: This article presents an analysis of changes that occurred in the landscape of the political and economic elites during the Syrian Civil War and focuses in particular on transformations that ensued once the regime's focus turned away from winning the war and toward consolidating power. It argues that weak leaders operating in networks where regime elites are fractured can find themselves in a state of "precarious stability", where there is no need to immediately engage in power–sharing with elites but the potential for elite networks to evolve into a threat is high. In such cases, leaders are motivated by strategic incentives to make frequent changes to the elite landscape to prevent powerful networks from arising within the regime. This empirical analysis provides evidence that the Syrian regime's efforts to maintain Assad's rule have been characterised by drastic repeated changes to both who is favoured and the extent of their reach within Syria.

Keywords: Elite Networks, Power Sharing, Syrian Civil War, Syrian Government.

الملخص: تقدّم هذه الدراسة تحليلًا للتغيرات التي طرأت على مشهد النخبة السياسية والاقتصادية، إبّان الحرب الأهلية السورية، وتركز خصوصًا على تلك التبدلات التي عاشتها هذه النخبة مع تحوّل تركيز النظام الحاكم من الانشغال بكسب الحرب إلى العمل على تعزيز سلطته. تجادل الدراسة بأن الزعماء الذين يمرون بفترة ضعف ويعملون ضمن شبكات من النخب الممزقة قد يجدون أنفسهم في حالة من «الاستقرار المتزعزع». في هذه الحالة، لا تكون هناك حاجة مباشرة إلى مشاركة السلطة مع النخب، ولكن يرتفع احتمال تطور شبكات النخب هذه لتشكل تهديدًا. في حالات كهذه، تدفع الحوافزُ الاستراتيجية الزعماءَ لإجراء تغييرات دورية في مشهد النخبة، وذلك للحيلولة دون صعود شبكات نافذة داخل النظام الحاكم، تحدّ من مجال مناوراته السياسية. تُقدِّم هذه الدراسة، اعتمادًا على تحليل إمبريقي، دليلًا على أنّ جهود النظام السوري للإبقاء على حكم الأسد كانت قائمة على إجراء تغييرات جذرية متكررة، مسّت على حدّ سواء أصحاب الامتياز في النخبة، وحدود امتداد نفوذهم داخل سورية.

كلمات مفتاحية: شبكات النخب، مشاركة السلطة، الحرب الأهلية السورية، الحكومة السورية.

---

* Ammar Shamaileh: Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (Corresponding Author). Email: ammar.shamaileh@dohainstitute.edu.qa

Alan Aloskan: Researcher. He received his Master's degree in the Political Science and International Relations from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies Email: aal095@dohainstitute.edu.qa

Mohammed Zahr: Researcher. He received his Master's degree in the Political Science and International Relations from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies Email: maz001@dohainstitute.edu.qa

** The initial version of this paper was presented in the POMPES "Frozen Conflicts" Workshop. The authors thank the participants of this workshop for their advice and guidance in the early stages of this manuscript's development. It was further published in Arabic in: Ammar Shamaileh, Alan Aloskan & Mohammed Zahr, "Regime Elite Turnover in the Waning Syrian Civil War (2016-2021): A Socio-Economic Approach," *Omran*, no. 40 (April 2022), pp. 11-34. *Omran* is a quarterly peer-reviewed journal dedicated to social sciences and humanities.

Introduction

The boundaries of coercive authority are stabilising among the competing forces in Syria's civil war, which has turned in the regime's favour, yet the Assad regime's elites find themselves in a tumultuous situation. Since the beginning of the civil war in 2011, a seemingly constant stream of names has risen to prominence only to be replaced by others. This has been paired with equally significant and related shifts in the allocation of political power within the regime. While the intensity of the war in Syria has decreased, the intensity of conflict between regime-aligned elites appears to be gaining momentum. Much like earlier periods of political turmoil in Syria, the political, social and economic elite landscape is undergoing transformations that may have long-lasting effects for the political fabric of society. While popular discourse on Syria's economic sphere has focused on who has become dominant, one of the core implications of the argument set forth below is that the rise of a new economic hegemon is unlikely so long as the governing regime persists in its current form.

As the regime's coercive comparative advantage has grown over its domestic rivals, its focus has turned from defeating threats to the regime to preventing threats from arising within the regime.[1] These efforts initially focused on the consolidation of the decentralised tentacles of the armed elements ostensibly fighting on behalf of the regime, but they have increasingly involved actions meant to alter the political and economic landscape. These attempts to neutralise potential threats to the regime have been extensive, yet they have largely been characterised by targeted actions and overhauls of elite political and economic networks rather than the recentralisation of authority.[2]

This article provides an examination of the evolution of the elite landscape in Syria and the current battles being waged internally within the regime. It tests the limitations of the concept of leaders consolidating power in authoritarian regimes and, building on the concept of consolidating power, the study applies a two-dimensional framework to explore the centrality of the leader's position within the ruling network and the strength of elite networks.

After providing a conceptual distinction between the Consolidation of a Leader's Power, Power Sharing Arrangements, and a State of Precarious Stability, the paper theorises how a leader in a precariously stable position might strategically behave and explores this theory through the Syrian case. As with other periods of political instability in Syria's history, the country's economic and political elite landscape is rapidly evolving. While Bashar al-Assad's ability to maintain power in the long-term is far from a foregone conclusion, the regime in recent years appears to have been intentionally inducing instability into the elite networks in order prevent the rise of viable competitors. As such, Assad's short-term strategy to maintain power appears to be aimed at destabilising elite networks within his regime rather than stabilising the current order.

The Consolidation of Power and Elite Stability

All leaders require the cooperation of a subset of individuals from within society to remain in power. This is the case whether we conceptualise such a group using the language of Bruce Bueno de Mesquita's "Selectorate Theory"[3] by referring to them as the winning coalition or if we define them in terms of the institutional arrangements that characterise a regime, such as those offered by Barbara Geddes or Milan

---

[1] Haid Haid, "Reintegrating Syrian Militias: Mechanisms, Actors, and Shortfalls,"*Carnegie Middle East Center*, 12/12/2018, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/34AfXbI

[2] This has included reconstructing who is allowed to win seats in parliament. See: "dimāʾ jadīda fī majlis al-shaʿb al-sūrī taʿkis muḥāṣaṣa rūsiyya īrāniyya,"*Enabbaladi*, 26/7/2022, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/34GpNZl

[3] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge/ London: MIT Press, 2005).

Svolik.[4] Within all regimes there is an elite group that is entrusted to carry out the functions associated with maintaining the leader's authority. Going back to the prevailing institutional conceptions of regimes, this study defines the regime as the structure of power distribution within the state. However, instead of a rigid focus on institutional characteristics in order to understand the process of power distribution, regimes are characterised by the structures of governing networks that control the state and its characteristics. Thus, this concept can be considered an extension of the institutional concept of political regimes.[5]

Elites within a society are defined by their "disproportionate control over or access to a resource"or institution.[6] The definition of elites used in this article is broad, encompassing those whose comparative advantage lies in their access to coercive apparatuses, economic opportunities and wealth, government institutions and social capital. For the discussion that follows, the subset of individuals whose cooperation with the regime plays a fundamental role in the regime's persistence shall be considered regime elites. Regime elites can operate within the public or private realm, yet they all wilfully and consistently play some role in helping the regime and its leader persist. It is through the dependence of the regime on them and the advantages that they are afforded that they are also the greatest threat to a leader.[7]

An autocratic leader's longevity in office does not imply the consolidation of that leader's power within the regime. While recognising that the specific arrangements that characterise regimes are varied, the relative strength of leaders and the relationship between leaders and elites have generally been conceptualised using unidimensional scales or binaries by scholars.[8] Most recently, in a methodologically innovative article, Jennifer Gandhi and Jane Sumner attempted to measure regime consolidation as a latent trait utilising Item Response Theory.[9] In their view, autocratic leaders who remain in power can do so in two types of arrangements.[10] The first type of arrangement is one where leaders forge power sharing agreements with regime elites whereby they institutionally constrain themselves and are forced to share in both decision-making and the spoils of the state.[11] The second type of arrangement is one where the leader consolidates power by weakening the elites through purges and targeted actions.[12] While a leader who has consolidated power is relatively strong within the system, and those who share power are relatively weak, both arrangements can produce leaders who remain in power for long durations.

Although the conceptualisation offered by Gandhi and Sumner, as well as others, is both reasonable and theoretical useful, there is room for adding nuance in describing power relations between elites and leaders. In particular, a leader who enjoys a significant advantage over elites may still find himself to be in a precarious situation due to his own weakness in absolute terms. Such situations may provide the impetus for elites to attempt to form networks that could potentially challenge the regime in the near future. While a ruler who is consolidating power may find himself facing a similar situation, once power has been consolidated, the potential for challengers from within the regime should diminish significantly.

The state of precarious stability that weak leaders relying on a fractured and decentralised network of elites find themselves in may be one characterised by persistent burgeoning threats. They are stabilised by

---

4 Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright & Erica Frantz, "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set,"*Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2014), pp. 313-331; Milan Svolik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

5 We acknowledge the validity of other concepts, such as those put forward by Adham Saouli and Raymond Hinnebusch in: Adham Saouli & Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Arab State: A Historical Sociology Approach,"*Almuntaqa*, vol. 5, no. 1 (April/May 2022), pp. 8-28.

6 Shamus Rahman Khan, "The Sociology of Elites,"*Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 38 (August 2012), pp. 361-377.

7 Svolik.

8 Ibid.

9 Jennifer Gandhi & Jane Lawrence Sumner, "Measuring the Consolidation of Power in Nondemocracies,"*The Journal of Politics*, vol. 82, no. 4 (October 2020), pp. 1545-1558.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

the absence of viable rival networks in the status quo, and yet destabilised by the possibility of networks being formed that could confront the leader. In doing so, its leaders may have to deal with persistent and growing threats. As such, an arrangement where leaders do not feel compelled to share power with regime elites yet are persistently faced with manageable threats is plausible. This paper contends that this precarious stability has characterised Bashar al-Assad's position within his regime since the tide of the war turned in his favour, or perhaps even since the outbreak of war itself.

How do leaders manage threats when finding themselves in a state of precarious stability? One potential strategy is to continuously manipulate the elite landscape so that networks that may threaten the leader do not arise. When unable to engage in a large-scale purge of elites, yet also capable of maintaining power due to the inability of elites to coordinate around an alternative, leaders can attempt to produce constant change in both the composition and fortunes of regime elites. Moreover, by allowing for the possibility that regime elites who have fallen out of favour will see their fortunes improve later, leaders can dampen the drive to fight back against any actions taken against them. Thus, leaders can find themselves in a position where there are incentives to frequently manipulate elite networks in order to maintain their rule without entering into implicit or explicit power sharing agreements.

Research Design

The empirical analysis that follows examines the historical and contemporary patterns of elite-leader relations in Syria. The analysis employed is generally qualitative in nature, examining the theoretical predictions and conceptualisation presented above in relation to the Syrian case by analysing the patterns exhibited in the data and relying on counterfactual reasoning to establish the plausibility of the theory relative to alternative theories. The case of Syria represents what has been called an "extreme on the independent variable"case, and the independent variable is the intersect of having a weak leader and a fractured regime elite network.[13] The evidence presented is merely an examination of the plausibility of the theory and an exploration of the path from the state's precarious stability to regime elite turnover, and the empirical examination carries this caveat.

Time is an essential component here; had Bashar al-Assad's leadership become precarious during the civil war, economic and political elites aligned with the regime would be expected to shift immediately after the outbreak of the war. Specifically, we anticipate the disruption of the pre-war political elite as a result of Bashar al-Assad's efforts to weaken political networks in conjunction with strengthening the networks of the economic elite. In the post-war period, we predict the weakening of pro-regime economic elite networks without being accompanied by the strengthening of political elite networks. In other words, this paper argues that the economic and political networks did not simultaneously experience high levels of change after the war. Exploring the temporal variation in Assad's consolidation of power and the regime's elite networks would open the door to further theoretical exploration of these dynamics.

The historical overview primarily relies on secondary sources to lay the foundation for the examination that follows. After the historical discussion, the article will examine patterns of elite turnover among Syria's political and economic elite. The analysis of political elites will focus on turnover in Syria's cabinet and the parliament, particularly the period from 2016-2021. Both datasets employed are parts of original data collection projects that aim to organise and make data on Syrian political institutions readily available to

[13] Jason Seawright, "The Case for Selecting Cases that are Deviant or extreme on the Independent Variable,"*Sociological Methods & Research*, vol. 45, no. 3 (April 2016), pp. 493-525.

scholars. The data on Syrian cabinets used the data provided by the WhoGov dataset as a base,[14] filling in missing governments and correcting errors in the dataset based on primary sources. The data on Syria's members of parliaments was drawn from election results posted on the *Syrian Arab News Agency – SANA* and the Syrian parliament's official website. The examination of the regime's economic elites focuses on the upper echelons of the regime's economic actors and the regime's interactions with them.

Historical Overview: Syria's Economic and Social Elites in Politics

While the historical political significance of local notables in Syrian politics began well before the French mandatory period, the mandatory period played an important role in shaping intra-regional elite cooperation.[15] The resistance to French occupation provided the impetus for unified political cooperation organised under the umbrella of the "National Bloc". Although internal divisions manifested themselves in various ways during this period of time, the resistance to colonial rule played an important role in providing some semblance of unity. With independence came the increased salience of the political cleavages that divided the landed aristocracy of Aleppo, Hama, and Homs from the Damascus bourgeoisie. Although the pervasive political instability of post-independence Syria left little room for consistently dominant political movements, and plenty of room for periodic military intervention, national political leadership was largely led by individuals from a small set of elite families from the regions noted above.[16] The nascent institutions of the central government that these elites presided over were far removed from the daily lives of average citizens, but the local notables exercised informal authority over their constituencies as arbiters and social leaders.[17]

It was Syria's union with Egypt that ruptured the relationship between political power and social standing in Syria, and this would lead to the economic decline of Syria's elite families. Land reforms in 1958 and extensive nationalisation campaigns in 1961 drastically reduced the economic position of the traditional elite.[18] The effects of these reforms extended beyond the economic sphere, dealing a crippling blow to those best suited to shield Syria from excessive predation. While Syria's elites would experience a brief respite after exiting the United Arab Republic, the Baʿath Party's 1963 coup would reinstitute many of Gamal Abdel Nasser's policies.[19]

The Baʿath Party's takeover of Syria solidified the decline of the old Sunni urban elites and landed aristocracy who had been central actors in Syrian politics.[20] Beyond reducing their economic power, restrictions on land ownership and private enterprise reshaped the already fractured hierarchical relationship they shared with their ancestral constituencies. Salah Jadid's 1966 coup widened the scope of these economic restrictions, leaving little room for private enterprise.[21] The uncompromising economic policies associated with Salah Jadid's regime provided suitable conditions for a pragmatic leader to coopt members of the

[14] Jacob Nyrup & Stuart Bramwell, "Who Governs? a New Global Dataset on Members of Cabinets,"*American Political Science Review*, vol. 114, no. 4 (2020), pp. 1366-1374.

[15] Philip Shukry Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[16] Alasdair Drysdale, "The Syrian Political Elite, 1966–1976: A Spatial and Social Analysis,"*Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1 (January 1981), pp. 3-30.

[17] Philip Shukry Khoury, "Continuity and Change in Syrian Political Life: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,"*The American Historical Review* (December 1991), pp. 1374-1395.

[18] Syed Aziz–al Ahsan, "Economic Policy and Class Structure in Syria: 1958–1980,"*International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3 (August 1984), pp. 301-323.

[19] Steven Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria: Institutions and Social Conflict, 1946–1970* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[20] Drysdale.

[21] Ahsan.

merchant class. Hafez Al-Assad's 1970 "Corrective Movement"would bring about such an arrangement, allowing room for modest private economic enterprises.

While Hafez Al-Assad's support base has often been described in regional terms, whereby it was the rural coastal territories, Damascus and Daraa that operated as bastions of support for his rule, the traditional elites of Damascus were not necessarily among those coopted. Nevertheless, the institutionalisation of a politically and economically pragmatic compromise that came in the form of the 1973 Constitution and looser restrictions on smaller economic enterprises appears to have contributed to the regime's persistence. The fall of the haute bourgeoisie opened up opportunities for the petit bourgeoisie. Rather than the Baʿath regime stifling the growth of small businesses, it expanded their growth in the 1980s.[22] While Hafez's reign was characteris ed by uncompromising political repression, it fostered an environment with relatively predictable rules for operating small scale economic enterprises that would not threaten the regime. Corruption was pervasive, but it was of a nature that allowed room for the petit bourgeoisie to manoeuvre. It was in the interest of the regime insiders and military officers who took bribes that these businesses persist. As such, this period was characterised to a large extent by a broad state/military bourgeoisie that benefited from constrained private markets.[23] Syria's relatively closed socialist economy did open up gradually in the 1990s due to the need to stimulate economic growth;[24] nevertheless, its economy remained heavily restricted and controlled. Moreover, Hafez Al-Assad's strengthening of the coercive capabilities of the regime without building an expansive coalition may have led to a decrease in the legitimacy of the state.[25]

Bashar Al-Assad's succession in 2000 brought about the rise of a new haute bourgeoisie that was tied to the regime and the decline of the petit bourgeoisie that had carved out a space for itself in Syria's restricted economy. In an ongoing research project related to dynastic succession, Ammar Shamaileh argues that it was in Bashar's strategic political interest to produce the rise of a new set of economic elites to balance against potential rivals from within the regime.[26] Hafez Al-Assad was a military leader who was at the centre of the Syrian political scene since 1963 and had gradually come to balance competing regime players in a manner that preserved his rule. In contrast, Bashar Al-Assad was a successor with strong ties to cosmopolitan kin and children of influential Syrians and only weak ties with the political and military apparatus. The liberalisation process allowed him to strengthen the portion of the regime most supportive of his rise to power. Such rapid pseudo-liberalisation, which resulted primarily from Assad's political weakness was not characterised by the enhanced protection of property rights, but by the opening up of industries to specific individuals.[27] This liberalisation process allowed the president to strengthen the position of close allies who could balance against the power of entrenched political and military elites. Syria's liberalisation process, which began with the lagging telecommunications sector, produced an economic order that was hierarchically structured with Rami Makhlouf, the president's cousin, and, eventually, Cham Holding at the top.

---

[22] Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "State and Civil Society in Syria,"*Middle East Journal*, vol. 47, no. 2 (Spring 1993), pp. 243-257; Ahsan; Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "The Political Economy of Economic Liberalization in Syria,"*International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3 (1995), pp. 305-320.

[23] Bassam Haddad, *Business Networks in Syria: The Political Economy of Authoritarian Resilience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Steven Heydemann (ed.), *Networks of Privilege in the Middle East: The Politics of Economic Reform Revisited* (New York: Springer, 2004); Samer Abboud, "Economic Transformation and Diffusion of Authoritarian Power in Syria,"in: Larbi Sadiki, Heiko Wimmen & Layla Al–Zubaidi (eds.), *Democratic Transition in the Middle East: Unmaking Power* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 159-177.

[24] Fred H. Lawson, "Private Capital and the State in Contemporary Syria,"*Middle East Report*, no. 203 (1997), pp. 8-30.

[25] Saouli & Hinnebusch.

[26] Ammar Shamaileh, "Political Succession, Crony Capitalism and Economic Development in Syria,"The 116th American Political Science Association's Virtual Annual Meeting and Exhibition, "Democracy, Difference, and Destabilization", 9-13/9/2020.

[27] To be clear, there was not simply one policy adopted by the regime throughout the first decade of Bashar's rule. Abdullah Daradari's social market economy was not perceived favorably by many of the officials helping to craft Syria's economic policy, even after it was presented as the regime's stance in 2005, and at times certain individuals could guide decisions in other directions. Nevertheless, the period as a whole was characterized by pseudo-liberalization.

Makhlouf, the son of a successful businessman close to the authorities in his own right, was approved to open the first mobile telephone company. Later, a competitor, Areeba would arise and be bought out by the South African MTN group, but this company would also be partially owned by Makhlouf. In 2001, the government approved the formation of private banks, and in 2003 these banks began to operate in Syria.[28] As Syria's banks liberalised, Makhlouf would go on to own shares in many of these foreign banks that were allowed to open their doors in the country. Other economic elites also actively took on a disproportionate share of the interests in these new banks and other companies.

A stock exchange, The Damascus Securities Exchange was established in 2006 and opened in 2009. While it was relegated to a handful of companies primarily operating in the banking and insurance sector, it allowed for the efficient entry of foreign capital into Syrian markets. Although other companies existed and thrived in this environment, the implicit approval of Makhlouf and Cham Holdings was required in order for larger enterprises to be formed. What emerged was a liberalisation process that organised the private sphere hierarchically under the stewardship of Makhlouf, and this effectively reshaped the nature of the relationship between private sector actors and the regime. This economic order that disproportionately negatively affects many rural communities and smaller enterprises and benefited the economic elites drawn from his circle.[29] Ultimately, this produced a counterbalance to the entrenched political elites operating within the party and the government.

Accompanying Syria's liberalisation was the weakening of the political institutions and networks that operated within the state. Figure (1) presents the change in cabinets in Syria from 1964-2021. The width of each bar on the x axis represents the duration of the government's term while its height represents the proportion of surviving members of the previous cabinet and the black bars represent the change of prime minister for the newly formed government. The government formed in the year of Bashar Al-Assad's succession was associated with a lower survival rate of cabinet ministers than Hafez Al-Assad's 1970 coup. Although the latter presided over the government formation process, and many of those initially removed were charged with corruption, the government was formed within months of what was presumably his expected impending death.[30] While the cabinets that have run Syria's bureaucracies are not generally emphasis ed in discussions of power in Syria after 1963, the drastic changes to the cabinet highlight the extent to which the succession was associated with an attempt to weaken the network that had formed.[31]

Generally speaking, the tumultuous first five years of the regime are often considered to be a period where Bashar Al-Assad was attempting to consolidate power, and it was in 2005 that he was able to reign in or eliminate potential threats. Yet, even after 2005, the regime appears to be constantly in flux, never settling into an elite network that could persist. Under Hafez Al-Assad, the last three cabinets lasted 937, 1702, and 2814 days respectively. Under his son, no cabinet has lasted longer than 665 days. In the pre-war arrangement, economic elites were strengthened, the security apparatus was reshaped in order to revolve around individuals with familial ties, and the political institutions of the state were weakened. As such, the network of political elites had been weakened prior to the outset of the civil war.

---

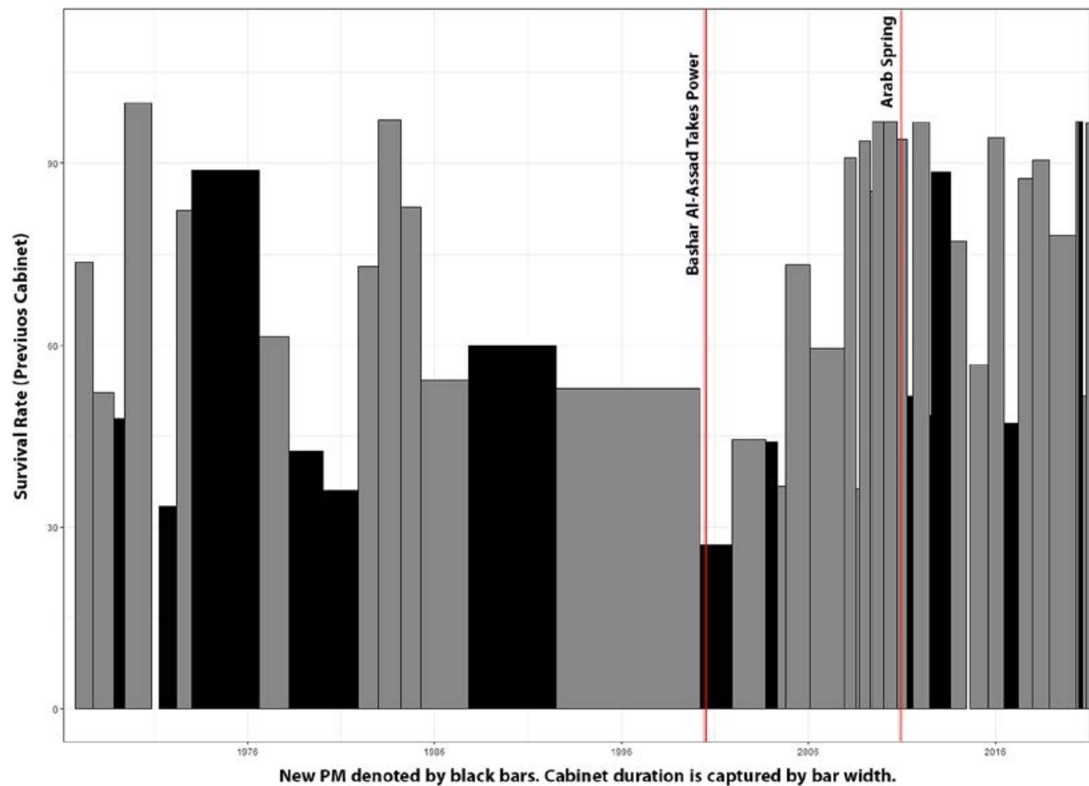
[28] Rashad Al-Kattan, "Mapping the Ailing (but Resilient) Syrian Banking Sector,"*Syria Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2015), pp. 1-36.

[29] Mohammed Jamal Barout, *al-ʿAqd al-Akhīr fī Tārīkh Sūryā: Jadaliyyat al-Jumūd wa-l-Iṣlāḥ* (Beirut/ Doha: ACRPS, 2020).

[30] While it is very likely that Mahmoud Al-Zoubi, the prime minister who was charged with corruption had engaged in corrupt practices in his dealings with Airbus, the charges against him and the other ministers appeared to be intended clear the way for Bashar Al-Assad's succession.

[31] It is, in our opinion, an area that has generally been neglected by scholars attempting to explore political change under Assad rule. As Figure (1) clearly demonstrates, significant changes in the patterns associated with survival rates indicate both that these cabinets are perceived as important by the leaders themselves and that leaders attempt to manipulate the composition of their cabinets to prevent threats.

Figure (1): The Survival Rate of Cabinet Ministers



Source: Prepared by the authors.

The Civil War and the Elite Landscape

While the uprising in Syria in 2011 and the subsequent civil war certainly challenged the regime, in hindsight, it also indirectly helped Assad by encouraging tepid supporters to defect or step away from public life. The whisper campaigns of former Syrian Vice President Abdelhalim Khaddam and his supporters that followed the succession made it easy to identify threats from the entrenched power players whom Bashar inherited and whose begrudging support helped him take power.[32] However, preference falsification by less prominent regime insiders meant that it was hard to observe others who could potentially turn on the regime.[33] Assad's inability to identify whom from among the regime's political elites could turn on him is exemplified by his appointment of Riyad Hijab as prime minister in 2012. When faced with the choice of drawing a hard line or broadening the regime, Assad chose the former, appointing a loyalist who was not widely known in Syria to head his new government. After less than two months in office, Hijab defected. While such incidents highlight the weakness of the regime at that point in time, they also point to the unintended benefits of the uprising. The pressure the regime faced provided the impetus for regime elites who were not committed to Assad to defect, withdraw from public life or quietly leave the country.

After a series of cabinet changes during 2011 and 2012, the regime's cabinets stabilised to some extent throughout the war. Nevertheless, changes to the composition of the cabinets continued to be made on a yearly basis under the governments of Imad Khamis and Wael Al-Halqi's. Parliamentary turnover (Figure (2)) was high in 2012 and 2016, but Syrian parliaments have been characteris ed by frequent turnover throughout

32 Barout, pp. 44-47.

33 Timur Kuran, "Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,"W*orld Politics*, vol. 44, no. 1 (October 1991), pp. 7-48; Ammar Shamaileh, "Never Out of Now: Preference Falsification, Social Capital and the Arab Spring,"*International Interactions*, vol. 45, no. 6 (2019), pp. 949-975.

Bashar Al-Assad's reign. Despite the vast limitations placed on Parliament that render it relatively impotent, it is an important tool that is used by the regime to legitimise certain actors and raise their social profile.

When the regime was threatened by popular protests during the Arab Spring, protesters did not merely target the repressive political regime, but also the corrupt economic order.[34] In 2011 and 2012, as some members of Syria's "old guard"began to defect or simply withhold support for the regime and the military's ranks were shrinking, Syria's new haute bourgeoisie, along with a cadre of newly prominent economic actors, would be relied upon for both economic and coercive support. Rami Makhlouf and Mohammed Hamsho would utilise their diverse economic portfolios to create diversified coercive portfolios comprised of various pro-regime militias. While Mohammed Hamsho's actions were largely linked to Assad's brother Maher Al-Assad, Rami Makhlouf operated with greater autonomy in shaping his contribution to the pro-regime forces. Through his relationship with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and vast economic empire, Rami Makhlouf was able to construct a potential threat to Assad by unifying his economic empire with a political apparatus, a social service apparatus in Al-Bustan Association and a relatively large fighting force. This may have provided Makhlouf with leverage in the short-term, but it is this leverage that may have ultimately led to his demise.

In addition to the economic actors who came to dominate Syria prior to the Arab Spring, new economic forces emerged, using the war as an opportunity to utilise their wealth to enter the ranks of the regime's elite.[35] Many of these individuals were drawn from the import-export industry, although would-be elites were drawn from various backgrounds. The opening up of such opportunities to a diverse set of individuals diluted the power of the haute bourgeoisie that had developed in the decade that preceded the war.[36] Moreover, for many individuals, the war itself opened up opportunities to gain economic power by assisting with the regime's coercive efforts, among them some prosperous tribal leaders whom the regime had managed to co-opt.[37] Syria's military, which was estimated to total 403,000 soldiers in 2010 collapsed rapidly in the face of the uprising, with the total infantry estimated at 178,000 in 2011.[38] According to other estimates, Syria's army nominally had approximately 220,000 troops in 2011, yet only approximately 65,000 could be deployed.[39] While defections reduced the number of fighting men, the regime's greater concern was over the loyalty of those who remained, therefore it remained reluctant to send many of them to combat.

The weakness of the regime's forces and inability to enlist new soldiers led to a reliance on militias led by local elites.[40] Many were organised under the umbrella of the National Defence Forces (NDF), and trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Hezbollah, or the Russian army, it remained decentralised throughout much of the war and local businessmen played an important role in funding them.[41] It was these militias, some of which operated more like mafias and were not particularly loyal to the regime, that effectively turned the tide of the war in the regime's favour, and this effort was led and funded by old and new economic elites.[42] Whether their rise began in the coercive sphere during the war or export-import

[34] Unsurprisingly, this brought back to the political stage the names of the old aristocratic families as mobilizers of political protest.

[35] Siham Alatassi, "The Role of the Syrian Business Elite in the Syrian Conflict: A Class Narrative,"*British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (May 2021), pp. 1-13.

[36] Although reports of the decline of Rami Makhlouf during the war appear to have been exaggerated, in relative terms, his power diminished throughout the war. Nevertheless, up until the regime's actions against his interests, he remained powerful throughout the war.

[37] Mouldi Lahmar, *al-Qabīla fī al-Thawra al-Sūriyya: al-Mafhūm wa-Qīmatuh* (Tunis: Manshurat Tabr al-Zaman, 2018), p. 36.

[38] The World Bank, "Armed Forces Personnel, Total – Syrian Arab Republic,"accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3oOCesZ

[39] Institute for the Study of War, Joseph Holliday, *The Assad Regime: From Counterinsurgency to Civil War* (Washington, DC: 2013), p. 27, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3LuYn9v

[40] There is significant heterogeneity in how individuals were recruited into such militias. Some volunteered, some transitioned from working leaders and financiers of militias to fighting in the militias, others were arrested by the government and given the option to be released if they agreed to fight in a militia. The exploration of such divergent paths into the militias is important to note, but a deeper exploration of this is beyond the scope of this article.

[41] Reinoud Leenders & Antonio Giustozzi, "Outsourcing State Violence: The National Defence Force, 'Stateness' and Regime Resilience in the Syrian War,"*Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 24, no. 2 (October 2019), pp. 157-180.

[42] Ibid., pp. 166.

businesses or other industries prior to the war, many of Syria's local regime-aligned economic elites participated directly or indirectly in the war effort through specific militias.[43]

It did not take long for Assad and his advisors to recognise the long-term threat posed by the local militias forming to fight and maintain control of neighbourhoods ostensibly in defence of the regime. Indeed, this was the primary motivation for forming the NDF and organising these militias under their banner. Some of these linkages were formalised, but these ties often developed and grew informally through repeated interactions.[44] Over time, the army curtailed the autonomy of these militias by involving themselves more heavily in their operations and overseeing their activities.[45] Nevertheless, the decentralisation of the regime's control over the coercive apparatus and the involvement of economic elites in funding the militias produced an arrangement whereby some authority at the local level was delegated to the local elites. This served to weaken Assad's position within the regime, yet it did so in a manner that allowed him to maintain a fractured network of economic elites that was manageable.

It is during the war that Assad found himself in what is described above as the state of precarious stability with regards to his position within the regime. Within the political apparatus, there remained no viable challengers to Assad, most of whom were eliminated prior to the war. Both the Baʿath Party and networks that could pose a threat to his rule had been weakened. Elites within the security apparatus of the regime had been chosen on the basis of anticipated loyalty and were further neutralised by the diversification of coercive power among regime forces. Moreover, while economic elites had gained in strength during this time, they lacked the cohesion and autonomous networks to support a potential challenger to the regime. Nevertheless, while the regime's economic elites were fractured, Assad's weakness in absolute terms meant that there was the potential that networks that could challenge Assad from within the regime could be formed. Thus, the precarity of the situation: While regime elite networks were too weak to potentially challenge Assad, the evolution of these networks could produce a potential challenger due, in turn, to Assad's weakness.

In such an environment, neither power-sharing arrangements nor stable networks of loyal elites should form. In their stead, the regime should be incentivised to produce constant changes in both whom is counted among the elites and their relative strength. As such, the position of the leader should be stable, while the positions of those within the regime should be constantly in flux. It was at the height of the war that this dynamic began to unfold in a restrained yet deliberate manner. A seemingly constant stream of names would be claimed to have taken Rami Makhlouf's place at the head of Syria's economic landscape, yet no individual would remain in such a position for long. This phenomenon intensified as the regime made gains and was able to increase its control over the militias with the assistance of Iran and Russia. Eventually, when the regime turned its sights to solidifying Assad's position in 2019 and 2020, stronger measures were taken to weaken the position of certain powerful elites.

The Consolidation of Power and the Political Elite Landscape

As the regime's position has improved in relation to the opposition, it has focused on protecting Assad's position within the regime. In such a context, strengthening the political apparatus is potentially a double-edged sword. By creating a stable network of political actors to balance against those not associated with the regime

[43] Ibid., pp. 171-172.

[44] Most notably, Maher Al-Assad's fourth division developed strong ties with a diverse set of economic elites, many of whom were antagonistic toward one another. Ayman Aldassouky, "The Economic Networks of the Fourth Division During the Syrian Conflict,"Middle East Directions– Wartime and Post–Conflict in Syria, European University Institute (January 2020), accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3sEzQGn

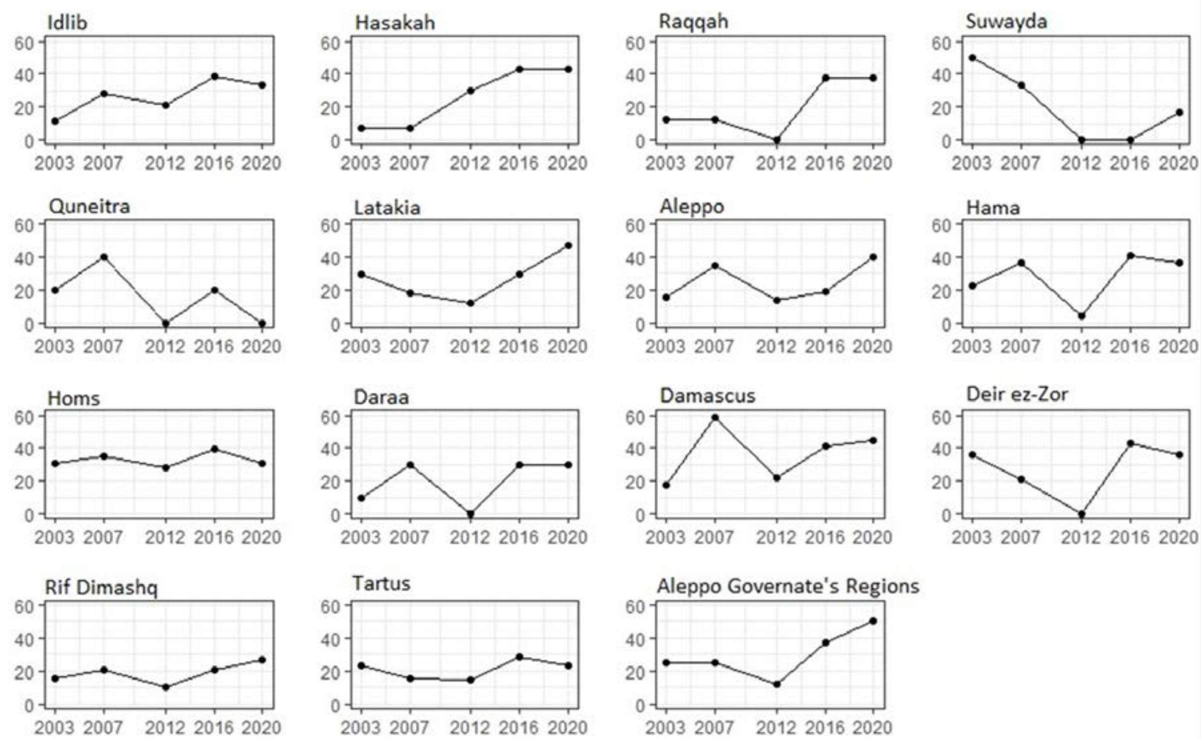
[45] It is important to note that not all pro-regime militias operated under the banner of the NDF, but that an extensive discussion of these militias is beyond the scope of this article.

in the private sphere, Assad may put himself in a position where foreign and domestic actors perceive him as replaceable. Thus far, the evidence of Assad strengthening the state's institutions and the party are mixed.

As Figure (1) demonstrates, rule under Bashar Al-Assad has persistently been characterised by changes in the cabinet. Nevertheless, in 2020, five different cabinets and two prime ministers served, exceeding other years. While each individual change in the composition of the government was usually minor, of the 32 positions in the final government formed in 2020, only 13 were held by the same individual at the beginning of the year.[46] Nevertheless, as has been noted, frequent minor changes in the government have been a hallmark of Bashar Al-Assad's reign. Moreover, there are explanations other than that offered in this article that are also consistent with the numerous changes to the government in 2020. The economic strain experienced by the Assad regime during this period likely contributed to the high rate of government turnover. However, the pattern exhibited throughout Bashar Al-Assad's reign is consistent with the argument that the regime had weakened the political apparatus in order to avoid threats from within the regime arising and was unable to subsequently settle into a stable elite network.

While Syria's parliament currently lacks clout and institutionalised authority, it has served as a tool by the regime to legitimise potential social and economic elites. Moreover, in an atmosphere where international pressure could push Assad to engage in reforms, the parliament could play a role in shaping the next Syrian constitution. Turnover in Syria's parliament in 2020 was not substantially different than in other years during Bashar Al-Assad's tenure. Only approximately 37% of the 2020 parliament was made up of incumbents, which is similar to and slightly exceeds incumbency rates prior to the civil war and is significantly higher than the incumbency rates in 2012 and 2016. What is notable, however, is that the incumbency rate has been persistently low under Bashar Al-Assad.

Figure (2): Percentage of Parliamentarians who were Incumbents by District (2003-2020)



Source: Prepared by the authors.

[46] Although it should be noted that the Minister of Foreign Affairs passed away during the year, and that the second prime minister was drawn from the government.

Perhaps more important than the degree of turnover in Parliament is who precisely was excluded. Rather than a large-scale overhaul of parliament, the 2020 elections appeared to be characterised by the targeted removal of certain powerful individuals from office. Primary elections, which were held for the first time, may be interpreted as strengthening the position of the party, yet it was fraught with accusations of corruption from within the party. As has been noted by others, it appeared to play a greater role as an information gathering mechanism for Assad, and some of the decisions taken by the regime may be interpreted as having intentionally disqualified individuals who were particularly popular and/or powerful.[47] Whether through a rigged non-binding primary election or through pressure by the regime, there were significant changes to the people's council. Mohammed Hamsho and Fares Shehabi, longstanding and rising powers, were denied seats in parliament in 2020. Mohammed Hamsho's decision to refrain from running for both parliament and the Damascus Chamber of Commerce shocked many, but it was just one of numerous instances of powerful elites being pressured to scale back their involvement in politics and business.

Lest these actions be viewed as a rebuke of the business community as a whole, it should be noted that the number of businessmen in parliament rose from 13 to 44 according to the coding scheme utilised by Ziad Awad and Agnes Fever.[48] Many of these first-term businessmen were heavily involved in the financing of pro-regime militias but lacked the connections in the business community possessed by Hamsho and Shehabi. Moreover, while the removal of Hamsho may be interpreted as an action against taken against Maher Al-Assad aligned elites in an effort to tilt the balance away from his network of business associates and toward those favoured by Asma Al-Assad, many who remained in parliament or were elected for the first time had forged close ties with Maher Al-Assad's Fourth Armored Division, including the notorious Hussam Qaterji.

Other actions taken by the regime do point to efforts at centralising authority in the state. For example, in 2017, Assad dissolved the General Women's Union, transferring its duties to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.[49] While the General Women's Union was not an autonomous organisation, it provided for a modicum of room for women to engage in social initiatives and debate issues relevant to women's issues in Syria. Yet, although the legal landscape extended the power of the state during this period of time, little action was taken to strengthen state institutions.

The Consolidation of Power and the Economic Elite Landscape

In late April of 2020, stunned Syrians watched, shared and commented on a video of a melancholy Rami Makhlouf airing grievances and beseeching the regime to halt its encroachment into his economic empire.[50] This was the first in a series of increasingly aggressive videos uploaded by the president's cousin and former Syrian economic hegemon.[51] But for the callous disregard for Syrian lives and livelihoods demonstrated by

---

47 Ammar Yassir Hammou, "bi-dharīʿat 'al-istiʾnās al-ḥizbī': al-niẓām yakshif awzān al-tayyārāt dākhil 'al-baʿth' al-ḥākim wa-yanqalib ʿalayhā,"*Syria Direct*, 22/7/2020, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3sEAvHR

However, it should also be noted that, setting aside accusations of corruption, the party did generally nominate the individuals who were selected in the primary elections. Ziad Awad & Agnès Favier, "Syrian People's Council Elections 2020: The Regime's Social Base Contracts,"Syria Transition Challenges Project, Geneva Centre for Security Policy and European University Institute – Middle East Directions Programme, Research Project Report No. 2 (October 2020), accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3uKyc8Z

48 Ziad Awad & Agnès Favier, "Elections in Wartime: The Syrian People's Council (2016–2020),"European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (April 2020), accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/33jStqB; Awad & Favier, "Syrian People's Council Elections 2020."

49 Syrian Arab Republic, People's Assembly of Syria, "Legislative Decree No. 16 of 2017 and the dissolve of General Women's Union,"23/4/2017, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3oP7RCG

50 "Rami Makhlouf yatawajjah bi vīdyū lil-Assad: yaḥiq lanā muqāḍāt al-dawla wa-sảạḍaʿ kul al-wathāʾiq,"*RT-Facebook* (Arabic), 1/5/2020, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3DMyTRm

51 "Sūryā.. Rami Makhlouf fī vīdyū jadīd,"*Youtube*, 17/5/2020, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3GOpYPl

Makhlouf, these videos may have evoked sympathy from many rather than schadenfreude from most. The economic strain of the war, a global pandemic, economic turmoil, and efforts by the regime to consolidate power by eliminating internal threats to stability left a large swath of the state aggrieved. Yet, rather than rally around Makhlouf, Syrians largely ridiculed what was perceived as a pathetic attempt to maintain a corrupt economic empire. Whether the monologues were intended to mobilise the masses or speak directly to members of the regime, the videos and the aftermath of the videos demonstrate the drastic overestimation and rapid decline of Rami Makhlouf's political capital in Syria.[52]

Similar to other periods of flux in Syria, political considerations have led to a reorganisation of economic power. While much attention has been paid to the fall of Rami Makhlouf, more tempered actions have been taken against other economic elites in Syria. The scaling back of Hamsho and Shehabi's ambitions was accompanied by extensive changes in the Damascus and Aleppo Chambers of Commerce. Of the 18 businesspeople elected or appointed to the board of directors of their governorate's chamber, 15 in Damascus and 12 in Aleppo were not on the previous board. Such high rates of turnover were also found in most governorates with large cities.[53] While the 2014 elections also saw high turnover, much of that turnover was due to board members fleeing the war, and elections prior to the war did not lead to drastic changes. The more recent changes are directly attributable to the regime.

If Bashar Al-Assad's reign persists, the decisions being made in an effort to consolidate power may eventually fundamentally shape the structure of Syria's economic and political order. Assad is not likely to subordinate his own interest in the preservation of his rule to the reconstruction of Syria.[54] As the civil war has receded, the regime's efforts to consolidate power have placed it at odds with many of the elites who funded and aided the war effort. The most damaging blows have been dealt to those who possessed the greatest capacity to threaten Assad's rule.

Elite resistance to regime predation has thus far been limited and ineffective. Rami Makhlouf did attempt to resist actions taken against his economic interests, but his attempts failed as his network of affiliates did not come to his aid. Mohammed Hamsho's efforts to maintain both his political clout and buy up property throughout Damascus and elsewhere have been partially rebuffed, yet despite some reported grumbling, he has not overtly and transparently attacked the regime. Hamsho and Fares Shehabi, leaders in their respective business communities, have also voiced concerns related to the rise of others, particularly warlords such as the Qaterjis, but none that have directly challenged or publicly appealed to the top of the regime.[55] Despite their tepid resistance, they have also been marginalised.[56] Wealthy war profiteers drawn from the import-export business, such as Samer Foz, have attempted to diversify their holdings outside of Syria after being made to tone down their activities, yet sanctions and notoriety have made investment abroad increasingly difficult.[57] Nevertheless, individuals like Foz who have temporarily complied with the

---

52 See: Joseph Daher, "The Syrian Presidential Palace Strengthens its Concentration of Power: The Rift Makhlouf–Assad,"Middle East Directions– Wartime and Post–Conflict in Syria, European University Institute (May 2020), accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3sDbsVC

53 Joseph Daher, "The Syrian Chambers of commerce in 2020: The Rise of a New Business Elite,"Middle East Directions– Wartime and Post–Conflict in Syria, European University Institute (November 2020), accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3gHJyCv

54 Steven Heydemann, "Reconstructing Authoritarianism: The Politics and Political Economy of Post–Conflict Reconstruction in Syria,"*POMEPS Studies*, POMEPS, 10/9/2018, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3JoTlJR; Daher, "The Syrian Presidential Palace."

55 Liz Sly & Asser Khattab, "Syria's Elections Have Always Been Fixed. This Time, Even Candidates Are Complaining,"*Washington Post*, 22/7/2022, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://wapo.st/3gKFaT8. Both Hamsho and Shehabi were surprisingly excluded from a second term in parliament during the 2020 elections.

56 Mansour Hussein, "umarāʾ al-ḥarb yaksibūn maʿrakat ghuraf al-tijāra.. al-Assad yaqsī al-ḥaras al-qadīm,"*Almudun*, 8/10/2020, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3gHG1Uy

57 Ali al-Khaldi, "muʾāmarat 'ghasl al-amwāl' badȧat min al-ṣīn,"*Alqabas*, 29/7/2020, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/33kwyzr; Al-Monitor Staff, "US Sanctions Syria's Central Bank Chief, Intel Head,"*Al-Monitor*, 30/9/2020, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3sE0O10. It should also be noted that the sanctions have likely contributed to the turnover in economic elites, as was noted by Samer Abboud during the "Frozen Conflicts"workshop.

downsizing of their economic ambitions have seen opportunities arise again in the future. For example, Foz recently built Syria's largest sugar refinery;[58] this is just the most recent of his many projects in Syria. Moreover, it should be noted that fierce competition between these economic actors has thus far most often succeeded in preventing collective action to stop the targeted actions of the regime. Without the incentives to collectively act, and many of their coercive capacities already diminished, these elites will be forced to accept further predation by the regime.[59]

Syria's future economic landscape is unlikely to return to its pre-war order and we will most likely not see the rise of a hegemonic economic actor in Syria in the near future. The regime has diversified its cadre of political and economic beneficiaries, creating a more competitive elite landscape that has incorporated many of those who organised and funded pro-regime militias throughout Syria. The list of these elites includes a mixture of new and old names. To the consternation of many, the children of ex-generals will likely remain important player; as will the those whose prominence came during pre-war order, such as Hamsho, Shehabi, and Ihab Makhlouf.[60] They will be joined by new elites like Foz, the Qatarji brothers, Yasar Ibrahim, and Wassim Qattan, many of whom are drawn from outside of the pre-war order's social spheres of influence. New names will emerge, and they will likely be tied directly to some degree to the upper echelons of the regime.

While a new group of quasi-monopolists may emerge to exercise huge influence over a reconstituted haute bourgeoisie,[61] the weakness of the state's institutions and central coercive apparatus make that a sub-optimal solution for Assad. At the moment, the stability of his leadership appears to rely on the instability of the elite landscape. Moreover, the passage of time and defections during the civil war have produced a political apparatus that is more closely linked to Bashar Al-Assad than the regime he inherited. He may find that it is in his interest to strengthen the same institutions that he weakened when they were occupied by tepid supporters, but the development of such a network will take time. New rising economic powers such as Asma Al-Assad's cousin, Muhannad Al-Dabbagh, and some members of the Ibrahim family have begun to take on a larger role in the economic sphere, but they will likely never approach the economic strength of the oligarchs of the 2000s.[62] The unpopularity of the "smart cards"being distributed in regime-controlled areas to ration fuel and bread have led to a significant popular backlash against elites aligned with Asma Al-Assad, who continue to play an important role in the Syrian economy. Other rising powers, such as the Qatarji brothers, are unlikely to further strengthen their position due to the significant antipathy many within the regime have for them. Furthermore, the current set of competing elites are closely linked to various members of the regime and Assad's foreign benefactors, producing an environment whereby any increase in economic power afforded to a particular individual or group strengthens one element of the regime at the expense of another.

While there has been no transition at the top of the regime, the emerging economic landscape has shifted away from domination by quasi-monopolists to a diversified set of elites linked to regime members,

---

58 "maṣnaʿ al-sukkar al-jadīd li-Samer Foz wa-shurakāʾ yaqlaʿ al-shahr al-qādim min ḥasyāʾ biṭāqat milyūn ṭin sanawiyyan,"*Industry News*, 8/3/2021, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3uPdC7w;

Although Foz has built the largest sugar refinery in Syria, it should be noted that on 27 July 2021, the government appears to have awarded a contract to refine sugar to other companies, and there is speculation one of the company awarded the contract is a front for the Qaterji brothers: "State Plants go to Influential Investors,"*The Syria Report*, 11/8/2021, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3HQyXkw

59 Qaterji may be a notable exception, as he has largely maintained both a significant coercive capacity and gained a seat in parliament, yet the Qaterji brothers and other warlords have also served as a threat to some urban elites.

60 The list of individuals and families who may be considered among the elites is fairly long. The names highlighted above have been particularly notable, but others could also be incorporated.

61 Joseph Daher, "The Paradox of Syria's Reconstruction,"Carnegie Middle East Center, 4/9/2019, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/34Ylrwo

62 He has been playing a progressively larger role in Syria's economic arena, and, perhaps aside from possibly Ihab Makhlouf, has benefited most from the fall of Rami Makhlouf. Amin al-Assi, "al-Assad fī al-Qirdāḥa: taqsīm Al Makhlouf,"*al-Arabi all-Jadid*, 25/8/2020, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3sIoUHK

as well as foreign sponsors, Iran and Russia. Thus, rather than balancing economic hegemons against the political and coercive apparatuses of the state, Assad appears to be balancing the power of competing regime members and foreign forces against one another through the manipulation of the economic elite landscape. Such manipulation of the elite landscape has also occurred in political spheres, where political office has been redistributed to legitimise some and weaken others.

It is also possible that there will be greater direct state involvement in previously privatised industries. This may occur through the nationalisation of entities or industries but may also occur through public-private partnerships or the ad hoc exercise of authority rooted in judicial action. Although the numerous recent decrees and laws related to economic activity and property rights have signalled that crony capitalism will remain pervasive, it places the state at the centre of such economic activity.[63] While this would likely reduce the performance of such entities,[64] it would prevent the rise of potentially destabilising economic forces. Thus, the structure of state-elite relations in a post-war Assad-ruled Syria will likely be characteris ed to a greater extent by networks of partnerships between political and business elites similar to those seen under Hafez Al-Assad's Syria rather than Bashar's pre-war order. Yet, in the short term, this landscape will not provide for the regularity and consistency that allowed small enterprises to persist throughout Hafez's reign in the 1980s and 1990s. As such, this strategy may help Assad prevent the rise of powerful internal rivals, but it will do little to allay the concerns of Syrians or reverse Syria's economic decline.

Conclusion

As this article is written, conflict in Aleppo between the government and leaders in Aleppo's business community has heated up. Government predation in the most literal sense of the term, and restrictions on the business community that have been perceived as overly burdensome, have led to unprecedent strikes, provoking a fierce reaction from the regime.[65] In many ways, this is a business community that was designed by the regime and its associates in the aftermath of its victory over the opposition. Nevertheless, when the business community collectively acted in its interests, the response of the regime was swift and severe. The paper contends that unless there is a dramatic change in the organisation of the regime, or the Assad is removed from power, such flare-ups will continue to occur.

This article argued that the conceptualisation of the consolidation of power used by scholars could be refined to extend beyond the notion of shared power and consolidated power. Leaders who are weak due to outside threats or network structures that leave them vulnerable may find themselves in a situation where they are significantly stronger than elites, but opportunities for threats to arise are prevalent. In such situations, there are strong incentives for leaders to destabilise the regime's elite landscape to prevent such networks from forming.

In Syria, Hafez Al-Assad had been able to consolidate his power in the late 1980s through the formation of a stable network of elites that were clearly subordinate to him and operating in a system with sophisticated coup-proofing mechanisms posing no threat to his rule. The transition to Bashar Al-Assad led to the restructuring of the elite landscape, shifting the locus of power away from political and bureaucratic

---

63 Such as the infamous Law no. 10 of 2018. See: Syrian Arab Republic, Syrian Prime Ministry, "Law no. 10 of 2018 which permits the creation of one or more organizational areas within the general organizational scheme of the administrative units by a decree based on the proposal of the Minister of Local Administration and Environment and the amendment of some articles of Legislative Decree No. 66 of 2012,"2/4/2018, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3sFeitf

64 Mohammed Omran, "Privatization, State Ownership, and Bank Performance in Egypt,"*World Development*, vol. 35, no. 4 (2007), pp. 714-733.

65 "Government Pressures Aleppo's Business Community as Rare Tensions Trigger Strikes, Media Reports,"*The Syria Report*, 15/9/2021, accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3gIaf9Y

institutions toward a small set of private actors who helped shape and organise private sector activity. During this time, political actors and institutions were weakened through the disruption of their networks, yet rather than purge these networks, they remained weak due to constant turnover. During the civil war, the pressing needs of the regime led to the decentralisation of coercive and economic power in Syria. Given Assad's weakness, it has been in, and will continue to be in, his interest to weaken both the political networks that could support a transition to a new leader and the economic networks that could support a potential successor.

References

Al Ahsan, Syed Aziz. "Economic Policy and Class Structure in Syria: 1958-1980."*International Journal of Middle East Studies*. vol. 16. no. 3 (August 1984).

Alatassi, Siham. "The Role of the Syrian Business Elite in the Syrian Conflict: A Class Narrative."*British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (May 2021).

Aldassouky, Ayman. "The Economic Networks of the Fourth Division During the Syrian Conflict."Middle East Directions– Wartime and Post–Conflict in Syria. European University Institute (January 2020). Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3sEzQGn

Al-Kattan, Rashad. "Mapping the Ailing (but resilient) Syrian Banking Sector."*Syria Studies*. vol. 7. no. 3 (2015).

Awad, Ziad & Agnès Favier. "Elections in Wartime: The Syrian People's Council (2016–2020)."European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (April 2020). Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/33jStqB

Awad, Ziad & Agnès Favier. "Syrian People's Council Elections 2020: The Regime's Social Base Contracts."Syria Transition Challenges Project, Geneva Centre for Security Policy and European University Institute – Middle East Directions Programme. Research Project Report No. 2 (October 2020). Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3uKyc8Z

Barout, Mohammed Jamal. *al-ʿAqd al-Akhīr fī Tārīkh Sūryā: Jadaliyyat al-Jumūd wa-l-Iṣlāḥ*. Beirut/ Doha: ACRPS, 2020.

Daher, Joseph. "The Syrian Chambers of commerce in 2020: The Rise of a New Business Elite."Middle East Directions– Wartime and Post–Conflict in Syria. European University Institute (November 2020). Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3gHJyCv

_______. "The Syrian Presidential Palace Strengthens its Concentration of Power: The Rift Makhlouf–Assad."Middle East Directions– Wartime and Post–Conflict in Syria. European University Institute (May 2020). Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3sDbsVC

_______. "The Paradox of Syria's Reconstruction."Carnegie Middle East Center. 4/9/2019. Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/34Ylrwo

De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno et al. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge/ London: MIT Press, 2005.

Drysdale, Alasdair. "The Syrian Political Elite, 1966–1976: A Spatial and Social Analysis."*Middle Eastern Studies*. vol. 17. no. 1 (January 1981).

Gandhi, Jennifer & Jane Lawrence Sumner. "Measuring the Consolidation of Power in Nondemocracies."*The Journal of Politics*. vol. 82. no. 4 (October 2020).

Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright & Erica Frantz. "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set."*Perspectives on Politics*. vol. 12. no. 2 (2014).

Haddad, Bassam. *Business Networks in Syria: The Political Economy of Authoritarian Resilience*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Heydemann, Steven. "Reconstructing Authoritarianism: The Politics and Political Economy of Post–Conflict Reconstruction in Syria."*POMEPS Studies*, POMEPS. 10/9/2018. Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3JoTlJR

_______ (ed.). *Networks of Privilege in the Middle East: The Politics of Economic Reform Revisited.* New York: Springer, 2004.

_______. *Authoritarianism in Syria*: *Institutions and Social Conflict, 1946–1970*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Hinnebusch, Raymond A. “State and Civil Society in Syria.”*Middle East Journal.* vol. 47. no. 2 (Spring 1993).

_______. “The Political Economy of Economic Liberalization in Syria.”*International Journal of Middle East Studies.* vol. 27. no. 3 (1995).

Institute for the Study of War, Joseph Holliday. *The Assad Regime: From Counterinsurgency to Civil War*. Washington, DC: 2013. Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3LuYn9v

Khoury, Philip Shukry. “Continuity and Change in Syrian Political Life: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.”*The American Historical Review* (December 1991).

_______. *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Kuran, Timur. “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989.”*World Politics.* vol. 44. no. 1 (October 1991).

Lahmar, Mouldi. *al-Qabīla fī al-Thawra al-Sūriyya: al-Mafhūm wa-Qīmatuh*. Tunis: Manshurat Tabr al-Zaman, 2018.

Lawson, Fred H. “Private Capital and the State in Contemporary Syria.”*Middle East Report*. no. 203 (1997).

Leenders, Reinoud & Antonio Giustozzi. “Outsourcing State Violence: The National Defence Force, ‘Stateness’ and Regime Resilience in the Syrian War.”*Mediterranean Politics*. vol. 24. no. 2 (October 2019).

Nyrup, Jacob & Stuart Bramwell. “Who governs? A New Global Dataset on Members of Cabinets.”*American Political Science Review.* Vol. 114. no. 4 (2020).

Omran, Mohammed. “Privatization, State Ownership, and Bank Performance in Egypt.”*World Development.* vol. 35. no. 4 (2007).

Rahman Khan, Shamus. “The Sociology of Elites.”*Annual Review of Sociology*. vol. 38 (August 2012).

Sadiki, Larbi, Heiko Wimmen & Layla Al-Zubaidi (eds.). *Democratic Transition in the Middle East: Unmaking Power.* London/ New York: Routledge, 2013.

Seawright, Jason. “The Case for Selecting Cases that are Deviant or Extreme on the Independent Variable.”*Sociological Methods & Research.* vol. 45. no. 3 (April 2016).

Shamaileh, Ammar. “Political Succession, Crony Capitalism and Economic Development in Syria.”The 116th American Political Science Association’s Virtual Annual Meeting and Exhibition, “Democracy, Difference, and Destabilization”. 9-13/9/2020.

_______. “Never Out of Now: Preference Falsification, Social Capital and the Arab Spring.”*International Interactions.* vol. 45. no. 6 (2019).

Svolik, Milan. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Syrian Arab Republic, People’s Assembly of Syria. “Legislative Decree No. 16 of 2017 and the dissolve of General Women’s Union.”23/4/2017. Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3oP7RCG

Syrian Arab Republic, Syrian Prime Ministry. “Law no. 10 of 2018 which permits the creation of one or more organizational areas within the general organizational scheme of the administrative units by a decree based on the proposal of the Minister of Local Administration and Environment and the amendment of some articles of Legislative Decree No. 66 of 2012.”2/4/2018. Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3sFeitf

Saouli, Adham & Raymond Hinnebusch. “The Arab State: A Historical Sociology Approach.”*Almuntaqa*. vol. 5. no. 1 (April/May 2022).

The World Bank. “Armed Forces Personnel, Total – Syrian Arab Republic.”Accessed on 14/2/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3oOCesZ

Abdennour Benantar*

Algeria's Security Policy

Transformations and Dilemmas in the Context of Regional Unrest and Internal *Ḥirāk***

سياسة الجزائر الأمنية

تحوّلات ومعضلات في سياق القلاقل إقليميًا والحراك داخليًا

Abstract: This study examines Algeria's security policy generally and its security doctrine specifically, analysing its transformations and dilemmas in a turbulent regional environment and in the *ḥirāk* context internally. It argues that both policy and doctrine have undergone minor adjustments as an adaptation to regional security imperatives, ruling out any essential transformation at present. Further, it argues that tensions between ethical-normative and security imperatives on one hand, and the principles of non-interference and non-intervention on the other, represent two essential quandaries facing Algeria's security policy. It is on the basis of these two elements that this study examines Algeria's security policy, doctrine, and the transformations therein. Next, it takes pause at the decision to constitutionalise the participation of Algerian armed forces in international peacekeeping operations, examining its contexts (locally and abroad), motivations, justifications, and challenges. Regionally, it analyses Algeria's security strategy as an alternative to intervention, reaching three essential conclusions: first, a limited adaptation to the issue of foreign intervention has occurred; second, Algeria's absolute refusal to deploy troops beyond its borders has come to an end; and third, heightened tension between ethical-normative and security considerations in the event of continued unrest in its neighbourhood is likely.

Keywords: Security Policy, Algeria, Regional Security, Army Participation in Peacekeeping, Border Security.

الملخص: تتناول هذه الدراسة سياسة الجزائر الأمنية عمومًا وعقيدتها الأمنية خصوصًا، محلّلةً تحولاتها ومعضلاتها في بيئة إقليمية مضطربة وفي سياق حراك شعبي داخليًا. وتحاجّ بأن ثمة تعديلات طفيفة طرأت عليهما تكيفًا مع مقتضيات أمنية إقليمية، مستبعدة أي تغير جوهري في الراهن. كما تحاجّ بأن التوتر بين المقتضيات الأخلاقية/ المعيارية والأمنية من جهة، ومبدأ عدم التدخل المزدوج (السياسي والعسكري) من جهة أخرى يمثلان معضلتَين أساسيتَين تواجههما سياسة الجزائر الأمنية وعقيدتها. وعلى أساس هذين العنصرين تبحث الدراسة في سياسة الجزائر وعقيدتها وتحولاتها. ثم تتوقف عند قرار دسترة مشاركة القوات الجزائرية في عمليات حفظ السلام الدولية محللة سياقَيه (المحلي والخارجي) ودوافعه ومسوّغاته، والمحاذير المترتبة عليه. وتحلل استراتيجية الجزائر الأمنية إقليميًا، والتي تطرحها بديلًا للتدخل. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى ثلاث استنتاجات أساسية. أولاً، ثمة تكيف محدود مع مسألة التدخل الخارجي وفقًا لمقتضيات المصلحة الأمنية. ثانيًا، نهاية الرفض المطلق لنشر القوات خارج الحدود. ثالثًا، ترجيح احتدام التوتر بين الاعتبارات الأخلاقية/ المعيارية والأمنية في حال استمرار الاضطرابات في تخومها.

كلمات مفتاحية: السياسة الأمنية، الجزائر، الأمن الإقليمي، مشاركة الجيش في عمليات السلام، أمن الحدود.

* Associate Professor, Université Paris 8, Paris, France.
Email: abenantar@univ-paris8.fr

** This study was originally published in Arabic in: Abdennour Benantar, "Algeria's Security Policy: Transformations and Dilemmas in the Context of Regional Unrest and Internal *Ḥirāk*m,"*Siyasat Arabiya*, no. 55 (March 2022), pp. 19-43, and was translated by Nick Lobo. *Siyasat Arabiya* is a bimonthly peer-reviewed political science and international relations journal.

Introduction

The Maghrebi-Saheli region faces instability due to the delinquency of the state, the proliferation of non-state threats (e.g., terrorism, organised crime, weapons proliferation, etc.), conflicts, civil wars, and foreign interventions.[1] Those jeopardise Algeria's security and put its security doctrine to the test, particularly in relation to intervention and sovereignty.[2] Its doctrine is fraught with tension as never before between ethical-normative imperatives and security needs. From these structural and incidental developments and the tensions that have confounded Algerian security policy in general emerges the question as to whether the last stronghold against intervention in the region will collapse due to regional unrest and international pressures, especially after the constitution was amended to permit the army to take part in peacekeeping operations.

This study examines the transformations of Algerian security policy and doctrine in a turbulent regional context and amid internal popular *ḥirāk*, focusing on the security doctrine by investigating its foundations, principles, transformations, and dilemmas. To that end, the study seeks to answer several questions. What are the foundations of Algerian security policy/doctrine and their dilemmas? Could the outgrowth of instability and intervention/interference by foreign actors, in addition to the internal context, drive Algeria to review its security doctrine? How might such a review manifest itself, and to what extent? To answer these questions, I begin with two premises, the first of which states that there is an "old"significance (i.e., attitude toward the Mali crisis) and a modern significance (i.e., the constitutionalising of the army's participation in peacekeeping operations) which confirm that a transformation is taking place in the country's security doctrine, and that it is one of adjustment, not of substantial change. The second premise is that structural revision of its doctrine, or at least of some of its basic principles, is unlikely given the absence of a state-level threat, an extensive conflict placing Algeria's national security (i.e., the violation of its territorial sovereignty) in serious jeopardy, a transformation in its ruling regime, or at the minimum radical change in its political orientations.

I will analyse each of these issues through four topics of discussion. The first of these is dedicated to investigating Algeria's security policy, and especially its doctrine, by returning to its historical context and examining its foundations and principles after taking a conceptual approach to security policy. Meanwhile, the second topic is set aside for the analysis and discussion of some of the dilemmas by noting the discrepancy between ethical-normative and security imperatives on one hand, and non-interference in the internal affairs of states and non-military intervention on the other, before concluding with an analysis of the adjustment in Algeria's security doctrine. The third topic examines the significance and consequences of constitutionalising the Algerian Army's participation in peacekeeping operations, whereas the fourth and final topic is devoted to the analysis of Algeria's regional security strategy as an alternative to intervention, with a vision of regionalising its national security.

On Algeria's Security Policy and Doctrine

Conceptual Framework

National security is defined as

> *an official description of how a state aims to provide for its own security and that of its population: it establishes a national understanding of the threats and risks of the security environment and the values and principles that will guide the state in providing state and human security.*

[1] Clionadh Raleigh, Héni Nsaibia & Caitriona Dowd, "The Sahel Crisis Since 2012,"*African Affairs*, vol. 120, no. 478 (January 2021), pp. 123-143; Luis Martinez, *L'Afrique du Nord après les révoltes arabes* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2019); Abdennour Benantar, *Les initiatives de sécurité au Maghreb et au Sahel: le G5 Sahel mis à l'épreuve* (Paris: Fondation pour la recherche stratégique L'Harmattan, 2019).

[2] On intervention and sovereignty, see: Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); R. J. Vincent, *Nonintervention and International Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

National security is also "intended to provide an overarching national vision as the basis for the development of other documents such as a national security strategy".[3] Security policy, which is of a comprehensive nature in that it encompasses both internal and external elements and the various sectors of security, consists of identifying various dangers and threats, their nature and development, and what may result from their concurrence or interaction, as well as determining the strategies to be employed and the means to implement them. The ultimate goal of security policy is twofold: the survival of the state and its inhabitants, and their welfare in a broad sense.[4]

Although they are sometimes used interchangeably, national security policy differs from national security strategy. While the former "is a general description that sets priorities and goals for security provision", the latter describes "how the goals set in a national security policy can be achieved"and consists of a document or set of documents that characterise "the necessary instruments to implement a national security policy, how these instruments should be employed over a long period of time and how they should be used together in order to avoid duplication and makes the best use of resources. In sum, a national security strategy describes how to implement a national security policy".[5] Implementing a security policy generally necessitates determining a set of threats, adversaries, and even enemies, as well as setting goals and allocating resources to achieve those goals. On this subject, Samuel Huntington argues that national security strategy "is conducted against an opponent… [it] implies an opponent, a conflict, a competition, a situation where an individual or a group is trying to achieve a goal against somebody else".[6]

Military doctrine, on the other hand, is defined by NATO as the "fundamental principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of objectives"and as "authoritative but requires judgement in application".[7] Meanwhile, according to Emily Goldman, national security doctrine refers

to the instrumental goals through which national security interests are protected [...] and to the means (military, diplomatic, economic, domestic mobilization themes, etc.) employed to serve those instrumental goals.[8]

Thus, the concept of security doctrine is better suited to our topic than military doctrine for three reasons. Whereas military doctrine focuses on the combat side, forming units and directives for the army, security policy comprises more than defence, and thus the expression "security strategy", most famously the US National Security Strategy, is more common than "defence strategy". France, which issued a document called "White Paper on Defence", later retitled its strategy the "White Paper on Defence and National Security". Security policy is based on the concept of security[9] in its broadest sense, so it includes both internal and external dimensions, coercive and non-coercive, due to the presence of a cooperative dimension (i.e., security through cooperation). Security doctrine is more comprehensive, hence, than military doctrine.

The Formation of Algeria's Security Policy and Doctrine

Algeria's security policy overall, and especially its national security doctrine, took shape during the War of Liberation and throughout the early years of independence, under the influence of pro-liberation orientations

3 "National Security Policies - Formulating National Security Policies for Good Security Sector Governance,"*DCAF*, p. 1, accessed on 30/7/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/lCAnzJe

4 Abdennour Benantar, "The State and the Dilemma of Security Policy,"in: Luis Martinez & Rasmus Alenius Boserup (eds.), *Algeria Modern: From Opacity to Complexity* (London: Hurst, 2016), p. 93.

5 "National Security Policies,"p. 6.

6 Quoted in: Emily O. Goldman, "New Threats, New Identities and New Ways of War: The Sources of Change in National Security Doctrine,"*Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2001), p. 45.

7 "AAP-06 Edition 2021 – NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions,"*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 2021, p. 44, accessed on 18/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/KD9tpoK

8 Goldman, p. 43

9 On the concept of security, see: Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Thierry Balzacq, *Théories de la sécurité: Les approches critiques* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2016).

(i.e., support for liberation movements) and the border dispute with Morocco, whose territorial claims against Algeria precipitated an invasion of the Algerian territory in October 1963 (i.e., the "Sand War"). The "Sand War"represented a turning point in the formation of Algeria's security doctrine. [10] Further, Algerian-Moroccan relations[11] became a determining factor of the Maghrebi regional system especially after the Western Sahara conflict broke out, in the wake of the conclusion of the November 1975 tripartite agreement between Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania whereby the countries would share the territory as soon as Spain withdrew.

This agreement—brokered without any consultation with Algeria, which led it to back the Polisario Front (established by Sahrawis in the early 1970s)—represented a strategic development for Algeria, as it occurred within a vital security zone[12] designated by Houari Boumédiène, who asserted that "the Arab Maghreb and the region between Cairo and Dakar represent a security zone for Algeria, and no changes may occur in this region without an agreement with Algeria".[13] The events of 2021 (i.e., Morocco's surveillance of Algerian public figures' cell phones, then Algeria's severing of diplomatic ties and closure of its airspace to Morocco) indicate that strained relations with Morocco remain a foundational element of Algerian security doctrine. Yet these tensions do not change the nature of the Maghrebi strategic landscape in that it does not face any existential threats.

Thus, Algeria's security doctrine is the product of the revolutionary imaginary toward the anticolonial struggle, the war for liberation, and the first two decades of post-independence state-building; premature tension with Morocco, then competition and adopting a position in support of liberation movements as well as state sovereignty;[14] furthermore the crisis of the 1990s. The war of liberation and the domestic crisis of the 1990s, what Jutta Weldes has called a **security imaginary**, defined as "a structure of well-established meanings and social relations out of which representations of the world of international relations are created".[15] Weldes argues that

> *the security imaginary makes possible representations that clarify both for state officials themselves and for the others who and what "we"are, who and what "our enemies"are, in what ways we are threatened by them, and how we might best deal with those threats.*[16]

Foundations of Algeria's Security Policy and Doctrine

Algeria's political and security doctrine is based on several guidelines that have transformed into fixed principles: international legitimacy; non-interference in the internal affairs of states and non-intervention on part of foreign military powers, including its own army (except the wars of 1967 and 1973); rejection of the military option; the peaceful settlement of conflicts; not threatening to use or resort to force; supporting liberation movements; joining various international arms control and disarmament mechanisms; the right of each state to its own undiminished security; and security independence, separate and apart from any external umbrella or foreign presence in its territory.[17] In addition to counterterrorism, which has all but become an established security doctrine in and of itself, albeit falling under the security doctrine of the state.

---

10 Abdennour Benantar, *al-Buʿd al-Mutawassiṭī lil-Amn al-Jazāʾirī: al-Jazāʾir, ʾUrūbba, wa-l-Ḥilf al-Aṭlasī* (Algiers: Contemporary Library, 2005), pp. 41-42.

11 On Algerian-Moroccan relations, see: Walid Abdulhay, "al-ʿIlāqāt al-Maghribiyya – al-Jazāʾiriyya: al-ʿUqda al-Jiyūstrātījiyya,"*Siyasat Arabiya*, no. 6 (January 2014), pp. 31-40.

12 Benantar, *Al-Buʿd al-Mutawassiṭī lil-Amn al-Jazāʾirī*, pp. 42-43.

13 Statement from Boumédiène, quoted in: Abdelbaki Hermassi, *al-Mujtamaʿ wa-l-Dawla fī al-Maghrib al-ʿArabī* (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1987), pp. 183-136.

14 Benantar, *Al-Buʿd al-Mutawassiṭī lil-Amn al-Jazāʾirī*, pp. 41-42.

15 Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 10.

16 Ibid., p. 15.

17 Benantar, "The State and the Dilemma of Security Policy,"pp. 98-102.

According to these principles, Algeria adopted a military doctrine[18] by which it has chosen a defensive posture for its army.[19] In this respect, it closely resembles Egypt [20] and especially South Africa with its strategy of "non-offensive defence".[21] With the army's participation in peacekeeping operations having been constitutionalised, Algeria upholds the other tenet on which South African security policy is based: Africa-focused peacekeeping.[22] Because intervention outside of Algerian territory is entirely ruled out, the army's role abroad is limited to observation assignments as part of UN peacekeeping operations.[23] Hence, Algerian security policy is essentially defensive and delineated by principles which do not allow it to undermine the interests of other states.

Since its independence, Algeria has embraced a model of security independence from any external umbrella (e.g., strategic alliances, defence treaties, military bases) while developing a self-sufficient national defence system, preferring a realist approach that relies on its own capabilities to build a defence system to stave off aggression, not to attack others or intervene in their affairs.[24] As such, Algeria's conception is based in particular on the need to make its own decisions on measures to guarantee its security, excluding any dependence on the outside regardless of its nature and degree, to which we may apply Barry Buzan's analysis according to which the concept of national security requires a self-help approach. Buzan argues that "the measures which provide security are largely, if not wholly, under the control of the state concerned".[25]

Given the nature of its war for liberation, Algeria took up a security doctrine independent of any alliance or foreign presence in its territory, and it remained committed to this principle which has become a constant strategic option.[26] Hence, the war of liberation shaped the political and normative dimensions of Algeria's behaviour, marked by a refusal to use force in international relations and an aversion to military alliances and the global system based on power balances.[27]

According to this anti-alliance perception, in April 1972 Algeria proposed the arrangement of a conference on security in the Mediterranean outside of NATO and the Warsaw Pact under the theme of "the Mediterranean belongs to Mediterraneans". Contrary to the other Arab states, Algeria concluded no defence treaties or agreements with foreign powers. Further, it has refused and continues to refuse granting external powers military facilities or allowing the presence of those powers' military bases on its territory. Between 1967 and 1968, it pushed France to withdraw its forces from its land prior to the agreed-upon date.[28] In October 1971, Algerian President Houari Boumédiène declared that "now, our country is fully independent. We have rid ourselves of foreign bases without fanfare, assemblies, or popular demonstrations".[29]

It would later come to light that this statement was not merely a celebration of the "manner"by which foreign forces were expelled from Algerian soil, but the establishment of a security doctrine in this field

---

[18] On Algerian military doctrine, see: Mansour Lakhdari, *al-Siyāsa al-Amniyya al-Jazāʾiriyya: al-Muḥaddidāt, al-Mayādīn, al-Taḥaddiyāt* (Doha: ACRPS, 2015), pp. 121-128.

[19] Benantar, "The State and the Dilemma of Security Policy,"pp. 100-102.

[20] Esraa Ahmed Ismail, *al-ʿIlāqāt al-Madaniyya al-ʿAskariyya wa-ʿAmaliyyat al-Taḥawwul al-Dīmuqrāṭī: Dirāsa Muqārina bayn Miṣr wa-l-Jazāʾir* (Cairo: al-Maktab al-Arabi Lil-Maarif, 2017), pp. 109-111.

[21] Evert Jordaan & Abdel Esterhuyse, "South African Defence since 1994: The Influence of Non-offensive Defence,"*African Security Review*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2004), pp. 59-69.

[22] Moda Dieng, "Maintien de la paix: apports et limites de l'action diplomatique sud-africaine,"*Revue Etudes internationales*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Juin 2004), p. 209.

[23] Algerian military observers participated in several UN Missions (Angola, Haiti, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan). See: "Troop and Police Contributors,"*United Nations Peacekeeping*, accessed on 20/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3tluYal

[24] Benantar, *Al-Buʿd al-Mutawassiṭī lil-Amn al-Jazāʾirī*, pp. 41, 89.

[25] Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), p. 218.

[26] Benantar, *Al-Buʿd al-Mutawassiṭī lil-Amn al-Jazāʾirī*, pp. 41, 89.

[27] Louisa Dris-Aït Hamadouche, "Politique extérieure et politique intérieure algérienne: la résistance révolutionnaire au service de la résilience autoritaire?"*Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 221 (2014), pp. 12-13.

[28] Benantar, *Al-Buʿd al-Mutawassiṭī lil-Amn al-Jazāʾirī*, pp. 41, 51, 66.

[29] Houari Boumédiène, *Discours: du sang à la sueur* (Alger: Ministère de l'information et de la Culture, 1975), p. 147.

which would remain constant even throughout the Cold War. Between 1967 and 1969, the Soviet Union exerted pressure on Algeria to offer its facilities to the Fifth Eskadra, but Algeria refused, despite its reliance on the Soviets to build its nascent naval forces.[30]

In 2013, Algeria reaffirmed its wholly rejectionist stance toward the establishment of external bases on its territory, refusing Russia's request for naval facilities. Russia had already offered Algeria an agreement comprising military privileges in exchange for naval facilities prior to reiterating its request for access to facilities after cutting ties with Muammar al-Gadhafi due to the wars in Libya and Syria. Algeria justified its decision under the pretexts of national sovereignty and good neighbourliness, stressing that it would not get involved in any threats to its neighbours in the West Mediterranean and the United States (whose forces were being deployed to Spain and Italy).[31] What becomes clear from all this is that Algeria's rejection of foreign alliances and external presence is a strategic option underpinning its security doctrine: it relies on its own capabilities and abilities to guarantee its security while entirely ruling out any military options abroad, preferring to carry out a set of alternatives as we shall see.

The Principle of Non-Interference/Non-Intervention

Non-interference and non-intervention are considered established principles in Algeria's foreign and security policies, and thus in its security doctrine. Non-interference is the most constitutionalised principle, having been included in the 1976 constitution. Beginning with the 1989 constitution, the same article has been repeated verbatim in every subsequent constitution:

> *algeria shall work for the reinforcement of international cooperation and for the development of amicable relations between the states on the basis of equality, mutual interest, and non-interference in internal affairs. It adopts the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations.*

Military intervention, too, is discouraged; the constitution (art. 31) stipulates Algeria's forbearance from "resorting to war, and [also its] exertion of efforts to settle disputes peacefully". It further stipulates that the duty of the army is limited to protecting the country and its borders, but it does not expressly prohibit it from intervening abroad. While Algeria's security doctrine differs from that of most Arab states, it greatly resembles to that of Indian (including regional security doctrine)[32] and Chinese, despite the massive disparity in power.

The principle of foreign non-interference and military non-intervention is considered the essence of Algeria's security doctrine and a benchmark for its behaviour: it is in the name of this principle that Algeria rejected intervention in Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Mali, despite a degree of adaptation to the latter case, as we shall see. Further, Algeria refused to join the Islamic Military Counterterrorism Coalition (a Saudi-led bloc of 34 states) and to get involved in sectarian conflicts around the Sunni-Shiʿi "divide"politically instrumentalised in the Arab Middle East. Regionally, Algeria's relations with intervention-inclined Arab actors, whether directly or via third parties, have seen some tension, and under this principle it is highly unlikely that Algeria will join the G5 Sahel.[33] Algeria's conception of the non-interference/non-intervention principle relies on three approaches, in that it is guided by the considerations of liberalism (international rules and institutions), constructivism (e.g., norms and identity), and realism (e.g., sovereignty, state-centrism, self-interest).

---

30 Walter Laqueur, "The Soviet Union and the Maghreb,"in: Alvin J. Cottrell & James D. Theberge (eds.), *The Western Mediterranean: Its Political, Economic and Strategic Importance* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 221.

31 *El-Khabar*, 16/4/2013.

32 Devin T. Hagerty, "India's Regional Security Doctrine,"*Asian Survey*, vol. 31, no. 4 (April 1991), pp. 351-252.

33 Benantar, "ʿAqīdat al-Jazāʾir al-Amniyya: Ḍughūṭāt al-Bīʾa wa-Muqtaḍayāt al-Maṣāliḥ,"*Aljazeera Centre for Studies*, 2/5/2018, p. 3, accessed on 16/3/2020, at: https://cutt.ly/4D7kTtK

Algeria's conception of interference is pragmatic and based on reciprocity, such that its restraint serves also to protect the Algerian regime from intervention. In July 2017, then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdelkader Messahel declared that "when we decline to interfere in the affairs of others, we reject the interference of others in our own affairs. It has been a principle from independence to the present day".[34] This is the same logic to which an official spokesman for the government alluded in November 2019, at the height of the *ḥirāk*: "Algeria is committed to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, just as it does not accept interference in its internal affairs".[35] It must be recalled that interference in Algeria's internal affairs was a real preoccupation of the authorities during the internal crisis of the 1990s.[36] Hence, the rejection of interference in the internal affairs of the Sahel states also serves Algeria's interests: namely, in refusing interference in its own internal affairs amid critical circumstances, such as the sectarian confrontations in Ghardaia, or security disturbances where the safety of foreign nationals is at issue, such as the 2013 terrorist attack against the natural gas plant in Tigantourine,[37] or, later, the *ḥirāk* and the emergent controversy about foreign interference between the authorities and activists.[38] Yet it was security developments in the Maghreb-Sahel region that put the principle of non-interference/non-intervention within Algerian security doctrine to the test.

Dilemmas and Transformations in Algeria's Security Policy and Doctrine

Tension Between the Ethical-Normative and Security Imperative and Adapting to Security Doctrine

Due to the regional unrest triggered by the Libyan and Malian crises, since 2011 Algerian security doctrine has, for the first time in its history, confronted a true dilemma in terms of tension between the ethical-normative considerations and the security imperative. To free itself from (or at least mitigate) this conundrum, Algeria has adopted a flexible approach to conciliate the two imperatives, in line with the requirements of urgent situations; this becomes clear from its position on the Mali crisis, when its traditional rhetoric remained insistent on the rejection of foreign interference and military intervention and on the peaceful resolution of conflicts and crises. Its actions, however, took a somewhat different course: Algeria yielded to, then offered to support, French military intervention. This behaviour contradicts its security doctrine and its traditional non-interventionist discourse, and the reason was that the French interference serves its interests (i.e., driving terrorist movements away from its southern borders). The Mali crisis, thus, may be considered an example of the emergent tension between Algerian policy's ethical-normative and security imperatives.

It would later become clear that the contradiction between imperatives involves international issues as well, given the Algerian position on the war against Ukraine; Algeria abstained from voting on the UN General Assembly resolution to condemn the Russian invasion, in spite of its reverence for the principle of state sovereignty. Meanwhile, it used the territorial unity of states as well as this principle as a pretext

---

[34] Statement (in French) to the Third Channel, a francophone (public) radio: *Algeria 3*, 5/7/2018.

[35] "Consensus autour d'un rejet catégorique de l'ingérence dans les affaires internes de l'Algérie," *APS*, 26/11/2019, accessed on 15/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/yFz3sBg

[36] Helle Malmvig, *State Sovereignty and Intervention: A Discourse Analysis of Interventionary and Non-Interventionary Practices in Kosovo and Algeria* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[37] Louisa Dris Aït-Hamadouche, "L'Algérie et la sécurité au Sahel: lecture critique d'une approche paradoxale," *Confluences Méditerranée*, no. 90 (2014), p. 108.

[38] On this controversy, see: Farida Souiah, "Rhétorique de l'ingérence et lutte pour la légitimité," *Mouvement*, no. 102 (2020), pp. 35-42.

to take Serbia's side during the Western campaign in Kosovo. Because Russia is Algeria's primary and traditional arms supplier,[39] the latter had no choice but to let security prevail over principles. The Algerian authorities understand Western powers will not supply the country with advanced weaponry unless they break ties with Russia over the Ukraine crisis, as their attempts to diversify arms suppliers relying on Western states have been unsuccessful. Thus, they still rely on Russia, especially for advanced weaponry.

Non-Political Interference and/or Non-Military Intervention: Collapse of State, Collapse of Sovereignty

The principle of non-intervention[40] has become a mainstay of Algeria's behaviour. Yet, with cascading crises in the vicinity, it has become a subject of debate. The Algerian authorities have nevertheless remained committed, resisting external pressures to drive them toward intervention in the region without precluding a pragmatic adjustment of their security doctrine. Yet maintaining an absolute commitment across time and space to the principles of political non-interference and military non-intervention is no longer logical. It was meaningless to insist on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states when the state had collapsed in Libya and nearly collapsed in Mali before France intervened.

Here lies the fault in Algeria's perspective: it insists on ruling out any interference or intervention in its neighbours' affairs, even when they face significant security disturbances that have blocked out the state and transformed their territories into a stronghold for local and transnational terrorist groups, who target Algerian land as well (e.g., the attack on the Tigantourine gas facility, which was planned in Mali and carried out by a group coming from Libya). In an absolute sense, therefore, the concepts of non-interference and non-intervention within a regional context of state delinquency—and, indeed, collapse, and of widespread non-state threats—now pose a danger to Algeria's national security.[41] Because the function of the non-intervention principle in international relations lies in defending the principle of state sovereignty,[42] one may argue in these conditions that sovereignty cannot be used as a pretext in the event of state collapse.

Algeria's strategic vision is flawed in its disregard of the fact that its national security may also be maintained from afar, and that, given the nature of these threats, it is no longer possible to restrict security to a conventional defensive doctrine. Algeria has not reviewed its security doctrine to take this transformation into account, but there seems to be some progress given what appeared in the magazine *El Djeich*:

> *as well, our country's national security, which extends beyond our geographical borders, necessitates, in view of the prevailing situation in the region [...], that we strengthen and protect the security and stability of our country, and that we take part in peacekeeping operations.*[43]

Irrespective of the Algerian authorities' justifications and the objectives of foreign powers (i.e., seeking to involve states of the region in security subcontracting), Algeria cannot hold fast to its position that stipulates political non-interference and military non-intervention, given the intensifying conflicts in its immediate vicinity.

The nature of these threats and crises at times necessitates an adaptation to reality to avoid the worst. From a realistic perspective, intervention in Mali, due to its unpredictable consequences, was preferrable

---

[39] Mohamed Hemchi & Samia Rebiai, "Russian-Algerian Relations in Multipolarizing World,"in: Tatiana Deych et al., *Africa's Growing Role in World Politics* (Moscow: Institute of African Studies-Russian Academy of Sciences, 2014), pp. 257-273.

[40] The principle does not necessarily rule out very limited operations, by special forces for example, or intelligence activities. But given the secretive nature of such operations, it is difficult to formulate a testable analysis of them.

[41] Abdennour Benantar, "Sécurité aux frontières: Portée et limites de la stratégie algérienne,"*L'Année du Maghreb*, no. 14 (2016), p. 148; Benantar, "The State and the Dilemma of Security Policy,"pp. 103-104.

[42] Vincent, p. 14.

[43] *El Djeich,* n°683 (June 2020), p. 1 [Arabic].

than risking the establishment of a terrorist emirate; this, as we shall see, explains the development in Algeria's position. However, there are dilemmas posed by the conflict between Algeria and regional and international actors about intervention that have nothing to do with a security doctrine. First, these actors demand Algeria intervene although to do so would increase instability, to such an extent that actors at times call for another intervention operation to correct the failures of a past operation, albeit with an admission that the intervention in Libya was a mistake.[44] Second, how is Algeria to intervene at a time when the progression of events affirms the cogency of its approach? Nevertheless, its position is difficult to maintain amid a state of security breakdown in which the state disappears to the advantage of non-state actors, particularly because the alternatives Algeria proposes have not achieved the desired goals.

The Mali Crisis: An Adaptation/Evolution in the Security Doctrine

It may at first sight appear that the way in which Algeria has dealt with crises in its regional neighbourhood has been entirely consistent with the founding principles of its foreign and security policy, or what are now known as "constants", especially the principle of non-interference and non-intervention. This is, naturally, what the official narrative claims, although a careful look at Algeria's behaviour reveals that the security doctrine has undergone small, circumstantial adjustments, as was the case during the Mali crisis. We may observe three decisions that all run contrary to Algeria's official rhetoric and the founding principles of its doctrine: Algeria participated in regional meetings of West African states in preparation for the intervention in Mali; opened its airspace to the French Air Force, which may be regarded as a strategic discontinuity in its security doctrine; and supplied French forces with fuel during military operations in Mali.[45]

The attack on Tigantourine contributed significantly to the evolution of Algeria's conduct and the advancement of relations with France, upsetting its border security defences and confounding its proclaimed non-intervention policy. This is what led to a "historic shift"in Algeria's position, strengthening the security of its borders with Mali and providing facilitations (e.g., open airspace, fuel, intelligence) to the French intervention therein.[46]

This position on the intervention in Mali is an indication of an adaptation, albeit situational, for Algeria's doctrine according to the requirements of security interests. This would imply that its abstention from foreign intervention is not necessarily absolute and, hence, that it accepts the possibility of limited intervention if it aligns with Algerian security interests, or at least handles such intervention practically with a degree of positivity while maintaining the same narrative. All these transformations indicate that Algerian security doctrine has seen minor adjustments without any substantial review. It may be concluded that the principle of intervention is limited, or at least that the principle of logistical support for foreign intervention has not been ruled out.[47] In this way, Algeria's security interests obliged it to yield to and logistically support the French intervention, settling the matter in favour of the security imperative at the expense of the ethical-normative imperative. Our analysis of this case corresponds with Goldman's theoretical analysis, which holds that "incremental adaptations in national security doctrines should be expected as part of the normal course of events". She highlights that

44 See: Libya: Examination of Intervention and Collapse and the UK's Future Policy Options, House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2016-17, September 2016, accessed on 21/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/TDBKIFp; "Macron qualifie l'intervention militaire contre Kadhafi de 'grave erreur'," *Courrier international*, 2/2/2018, accessed on 21/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/NDBHH5D

45 Benantar, "Sécurité aux frontières,"p. 160.

46 Jean-François Daguzan, "La France, le Mali et la question diplomatique," *Annuaire français de relations internationales*, vol. 15 (2014), p. 305.

47 Benantar, *Les initiatives de sécurité au Maghreb et au Sahel,* pp. 139-140; Benantar, "Sécurité aux frontières,"p. 160.

> *change usually occurs slowly as the result of repeated interactions. Rarer are instances when states dramatically alter their national security doctrines, adopt a new national security identity, or reorder the salience of existing identities.*

Therefore,

> *dramatic shifts in national security doctrine are often the product of major discontinuities such as regime change, defeat in war, disappearance of a major threat, or revolutionary technological breakthroughs that alter the foundations of national power.*[48]

Because these strategic discontinuities are unlikely, at least in the near future, it is unlikely in the Algerian case and in its strategic environment that a substantial transformation will occur in its overall security doctrine and policy, which is not to suggest the absence of tactical adaptation according to context and interests.

Constitutionalising the Army's Participation in Peacekeeping

Participation in Peacekeeping Operations: A Limited Shift in Security Doctrine

The Algerian constitution, amended in November 2020, permits the participation of the army in peacekeeping operations (art. 31, §3): "Within the framework of the United Nations, the African Union, and the Arab League, and in full compliance with their principles and goals, Algeria may participate in peacekeeping". It also includes an article specifying the duties of the army:

> *the consolidation […] of the Nation's defensive potential shall be regulated by the People's National Army. The People's National Army shall assume [its] permanent task of preserving national independence and defending national sovereignty. It shall also assume the task of protecting the unity of the country and the integrity of its land, as well as defending its land, airspace, and the various zones of its maritime domain. The Army shall take charge […] of defending the country's vital and strategic interests, pursuant to the provisions of the constitution.*

Even if the constitutional amendment constitutes a discontinuity in Algeria's perception of its security doctrine, it is a limited discontinuity in that it does not amount to a true strategic transformation. The amendment permits participation in peacekeeping operations, not military intervention, which remains highly improbable. Hence, it has not produced a strategic discontinuity in security doctrine and policy in general, nor does it indicate the collapse of the last bastion of non-intervention in the region. It is true that it permits the deployment of troops abroad, but it defines such a deployment in strict terms.

The objectives of this amendment are, thus, essentially political. The constitution stipulates parliamentary authorisation for this, which grants the authorities room to manoeuvre. The goal of the decision passing through parliament is not civil control of the armed forces, but a political tactic: if the authorities do not wish to deploy troops abroad, the parliament will vote at the behest of the authorities against intervention and thereby allow them to use this as an excuse with their international partners. But even if the parliament votes in favour of troop deployment abroad, it is non-binding for the president, whom the constitution (art. 91) grants the authority to decide "[whether] to send units of People's National Army abroad after Parliament's ratification by a two-third majority (2/3) of each chamber of Parliament". This legal phrasing leaves no room for interpretation that the final decision lies in the hands of the President of the Republic.

[48] Goldman, p. 43.

Constitutionalising the Army's Participation in Peacekeeping Operations: Army Leadership's Justification

The constitution's authorisation of army participation in peacekeeping operations caused wide controversy in the country. As usual, the military leadership's response arrived via the magazine *El Djeich* in several instances. The response from the army's high command is highly important because it is directly involved in the matter, and because the justifications it has offered to substantiate this amendment are also significant given the army's political sway—furthermore these justifications express the army's perception of threats and diagnosis of the security situation abroad. We will mention two paragraphs from *El Djeich* that clearly demonstrate the army's perspective. In its June 2020 leading article, it printed that

> *the proposal for army participation [...] in peacekeeping operations [...] is entirely congruent with our country's foreign policy, which is based on constant and well-established principles that obviate recourse to war, call for peace, oppose interfering in the internal affairs of states, and aspire to resolve international conflicts by peaceful means, and it is consistent with the resolutions of international legalism [...]. Moreover, the national security of our country, which extends beyond our national geographical borders in view of the present situation in the region, demands that we strengthen and protect the security and stability of our nation country and take part in peacekeeping operations, [which] would generally contribute to the implementation of peace and security, especially on our Dark Continent that faces the greatest number of conflicts in the world and the deployment of the greatest number of United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions.*[49]

In its October 2020 issue, *El Djeich* published that

> *contrary to what some parties have promoted, the goal of this participation is not to intervene militarily [...] and enter into alliances or armed conflicts, because Algeria [...] has plead since its independence called for respect for the sovereignty of states and non-intervention in their internal affairs...*[50]

There are five conclusions to be drawn from these passages: (1) the army sees no contradiction between the participation of the armed forces in international peace missions and the firm principles of the country's security doctrine; (2) it recognizes the need for Algeria's participation in peace efforts including peacekeeping operations, especially in Africa, to carry out its assigned role; (3) the army further acknowledges the need to adapt the country's security doctrine to keep pace with the development of threats; (4) the army remains a participant in political debate despite saying that it does not play politics; and (5) it is clear from how *El Djeich* defends the decision that it came from the army's high command.

Motivations and Dangers

Why was this paragraph added to the constitution at that specific time? There were overlapping political objectives, foreign and domestic, at work behind this. Internally, two factors are of note. The first is the promotion of an upcoming democratic transition in the country, as requiring parliament's approval to send troops beyond the borders would seem to insinuate that there is a path toward gradually placing the armed forces under civilian, and especially legislative, oversight. The second factor is the attempt to gain legitimacy locally by affirming that the threats facing the country's security necessitate a constitutional

---

49 *El Djeich,* n°683 (June 2020), p. 1 [Arabic].

50 *El Djeich,* n°687 (October 2020), p. 29 [Arabic].

amendment.[51] Hence, constitutionalising is also a mode of employing external affairs to serve internal aims: namely, attempting to limit the crisis of legitimacy in the *ḥirāk* context.

Externally, there are several factors to be observed. First, the authorities would consistently use the constitution to justify non-intervention; they are now using the amendment to allow the army to participate in peacekeeping. Second, it served as a response to the conventional desire from Algeria's African and international partners calling for it to intervene and thus contribute to peace operations. Third, this amendment also offered Algeria a way to gain recognition for its considerable efforts toward safeguarding regional peace—which still go unnoticed due to its absence from peacekeeping operations that many African states have been employing for political, military, and financial gain—as well as a platform to promote itself as a security provider.[52]

Fourth, the amendment brought Algeria out of a structural dilemma: arguing for the continent's states to become answerable for their own security while simultaneously refusing to contribute to peacekeeping operations or any sort of intervention beyond its borders on the basis of constitutional rule. When African states agreed to establish the African Standby Force, Algeria announced it would not participate militarily and would provide only logistical support. On account of this structural tension between the principles of security ownership and non-intervention, Algeria left the task of maintaining regional security in the hands of foreign powers.[53] Fifth, perhaps the army's high command has met its need for this international opportunity through which the army became present in the international peacekeeping missions, providing African states with influence and yielding various returns.[54] Sixth, there was competition with Morocco, resurgent on the continental stage which is a contributor to these operations adopting peacekeeping diplomacy as a tool for political influence.

Regardless of what will happen in practise, as constitutionalising does not necessarily imply implementation in all places and at all times, the army's authorisation to participate in peacekeeping operations has been a tool to alleviate international pressure on Algeria to take part in military operations in the neighbourhood, as well as a means by which to obviate any potential reversal on the principle of military non-intervention. With this decision, Algeria has relieved itself of foreign pressures on one hand and consecrated the principle of military non-intervention and international legalism on the other. In any case, whatever the motivations, justifications, and objectives, Algeria could no longer continue to call for African states to take responsibility for their security and simultaneously refuse to contribute to peacekeeping on the continent, much less with its influence at stake.

There are dangers that might follow its participation in peacekeeping operations, especially the possibility of being implicated in unnecessary conflicts, such as being entangled in wars on behalf of foreign powers, that would drain its military and financial capacities. This could put Algeria before a new dilemma: the resultant tension between the security imperative (i.e., not embroiling itself in unnecessary conflicts) and the political imperative (i.e., participating in peacekeeping), especially because it calls for local answerability to the region's conflicts independently of intervention by foreign actors.

The constitutional amendment responds to one aspect of the dilemma while overlooking the other. It redresses the flaw in its foreign and security policy of, on one hand, urging African states to take responsibility for their regional and continental security while rejecting foreign intervention and, on the

---

51 "al-Mawqif al-Jazāʾirī min al-Azma al-Lībiyya: Bayn al-Taghayyur wa-l-Istimrāriyya,"*Situation Assessment*, ACRPS, 7/7/2020, p. 6, accessed on 10/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/UFs55i6

52 Nicolas Desgrais & Sonia Le Gouriellec, "Stratégies d'extraversion: défis de la construction de l'Architecture africaine de paix et de sécurité,"*Note de recherche stratégique* (IRSEM)*,* no. 28 (Juillet 2016).

53 Benantar, "The State and the Dilemma of Security Policy,"p. 104.

54 On the political use of peacekeeping operations by African countries, see: Desgrais & Le Gouriellec, pp. 2, 5-6.

other, refraining from taking part in peacekeeping efforts. Conversely, the amendment preserved the issue of using non-interference in the internal affairs of states as a pretext in the event of state collapse in the region. Algeria's response, thus, remains incomplete and raises a new contradiction: it underscores the official narrative that the amendment is in accordance with security developments in the region. But how might participation in peacekeeping operations mitigate, for instance, the surge of security threats along the country's borders? There are no peacekeeping operations in Libya, and the UN mission in Mali carries no practical weight. If some of the authorities' justifications for amending the constitution correspond with reality, the rest do not.

Foreign Involvement to Reinforce Domestic Authoritarianism?

There are those who argue that international commitment to Algeria is guided by political considerations around preserving the ruling regime and, thus, has become "a resource for strengthening the regime's internal resilience".[55] This applies to the war on terror employed by states as they take advantage of terrorism's constructed and instrumental nature. Borrowing from Alexander Wendt's famous statement on anarchy,[56] we argue that counterterrorism is what states make of it. The great powers use it to legitimise their influence and to update their domination; given the performative nature of discourse on terrorism, its mere mention suffices to elicit panic for any state, lest it face the accusation of supporting terrorism. Internally, states have utilised the war on terror to legitimise security strategies, violations of fundamental rights, and restraining political opposition.

In line with other states, including the great powers, Algeria employs counterterrorism for internal[57] and external political objectives. Hence, it uses it as a political resource, but with a notable difference that sets it apart from other states. Were Algeria to employ it as do other states, it would have intervened militarily as has been asked of it numerous times, and this would have been a strong means by which to strengthen authoritarianism domestically. Yet given its rejection of interference and intervention in the affairs and territories of others and its refusal to condone the intervention of other states, Algeria neither utilises interference/intervention as a lever of influence abroad, nor to bolster the resilience of the ruling regime at home.

The approach that the Algerian regime has embraced is quite apart from that of other African regimes, who adopt what Jean-François Bayart call extraversion strategy that generates multifaceted (e.g., political, military, and economic) returns in exchange for their involvement internationally that allow them to strengthen their authoritarianism with support, implicit or explicit, from major actors.[58] But why has the Algerian regime not appropriated this strategy to profit in service of its resilience? This may be clarified with four factors. First, the conception of the outside as generally constituting a threat within the political imaginary passed down from the colonial period and the revolution for liberation,[59] and a determinant factor for the perceptions and representations that concern relations with others (i.e., abroad). Second, the independence- and sovereignty-based approach has consecrated the country's independent strategic decision and non-interference/intervention. Third, the Algerian regime enjoys political resources sufficient to allow it to define (or strengthen) its authoritarianism: revolutionary legitimacy (despite its erosion), security legitimacy (inherited from the 1990s), a network of intermediaries (e.g., regime parties, loyalist

---

[55] Dris-Aït Hamadouche, "Politique extérieure et politique intérieure algérienne,"p. 18.

[56] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,"*International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 391-425.

[57] The country's February 2022 adoption of the National List of Terrorist Individuals and Entities may be included within this strategy. See the decision involving inclusion in the list at: *JORADP*, 27/2/2022.

[58] Jean-François Bayart, "L'Afrique dans le monde: une histoire d'extraversion,"*Critique internationale*, no. 5 (1999), pp. 98-99.

[59] Dris-Aït Hamadouche, "Politique extérieure et politique intérieure algérienne,"pp. 12-14.

parties, and related institutions), a strong client-based system, and oil rents that allow social remittances to buy social peace.[60] Fourth, the regime is strong enough to neutralise foreign pressures. For all these reasons combined, it does not want for foreign legitimacy to cover a deficit in its legitimacy, despite of its erosion especially in the context of the *ḥirāk*.

Yet developments within this *ḥirāk* context indicate that some of these explanatory elements are no longer valid and that a transition of some sort has occurred or is currently occurring, without implying that the above analysis is entirely unsuitable for approaching Algeria's position on international commitment. The first development is the regime's seeking refuge abroad at the height of the *ḥirāk*. Despite its conventional narrative on rejecting interference in a country's internal affairs, the regime twice resorted (March and October 2019) to seeking international support for its roadmap, rejected by the *ḥirāk*; this may be considered a discontinuity in the behaviour of the Algerian regime, which built its legitimacy on a domestic foundation. The second indication comes through the constitution's authorising the army to participate in peacekeeping operations.

Will Algeria follow the lead of the African states and others that reap strategic returns from these operations? I argue that this is unlikely. First, the constitutional amendment decision suggests a strategy which is defensive more than offensive, as it was taken to put an end to the contradictions in Algeria's stance (i.e., that Africans must be answerable for their security on one hand while itself abstaining from peacekeeping operations on the other), in addition to responding to Morocco's growing influence following its return to the African Union. Second, the Algerian regime has not been in so fragile a state as to gamble on foreign legitimacy as a replacement for (or at least to support) local legitimacy. Third, it has not been in the interest of active global powers to upset Algeria's stability (for fear of mounting crises in an already-turbulent region). Hence, the Algerian regime necessarily has no interest in serving foreign wishes or bowing to dictates.

Algeria's Security Strategy in the Region

A Cooperative Approach with Integrated Dimensions as an Alternative to Intervention

Buzan argues that the distinction between threats and vulnerabilities allows one to illustrate both sides of national security policy by determining state options and behaviours that

> *can seek to reduce their insecurity either by reducing their vulnerability or by preventing or lessening threats […] In other words, national security policy can either focus inward, seeking to reduce the vulnerabilities of the state itself, or outward, seeking to reduce external threat but addressing its sources.*[61]

Hence, any good security policy must deal with threats in two ways: resisting them by minimising vulnerabilities and preparing defences (e.g., to confront an invasion), and addressing their causes (e.g., by seeking the peaceful resolution of conflicts).[62] Were we to apply this analysis to Algeria's security policy, we would find that it works toward both choices at once; instead of an intervention-based approach, Algeria has preferred to strengthen the defensive dimension of its army and to mediate between conflicting parties, also relying on cooperative tracks with neighbouring states.

---

[60] On the scale of government subsidies, see: Marouane Benkidda & Djillali Bouzekri, "Iṣlāḥ al-Daʿm al-Ḥukūmī fī-l-Jazāʾir bayn Muqtaḍayāt al-Faʿāliyya al-ʾIqtiṣādiyya wa-Mutaṭallabāt al-Waḍʿ al-Ijtimāʿī,"*Economies of North Africa*, vol. 17, no. 26 (2021), pp. 17-34.

[61] Buzan, *People, States and Fear* (1991), p. 112.

[62] Buzan, *People, States and Fear* (1983), p. 90.

Algeria's security strategy to confront crises in its environment and broadly to maintain regional security relies on approaching security by way of cooperation instead of foreign intervention. It is an integrated strategy based on five tenets.

- The first tenet is operational and consists of the security and military measures Algeria has taken to monitor and protect its borders. It is national but has regional implications: by defending its borders, Algeria protects those of its neighbours.
- The second tenet is bilateral and manifests in cooperative political, security, and military tracks with neighbouring states, in particular Tunisia, Libya, and Niger; Algeria supports them in realms ranging from the political and financial (e.g., grants and loans), to the realms of security (e.g., guarding the borders, joint patrols, sharing intelligence, training security forces) and military (e.g., aid, armaments, training).
- The third tenet, the oldest within this strategy, is mediation to resolve conflicts.
- The fourth tenet is a form of multilateral mediation through cooperative regional pathways: the tripartite route of Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt; the route of states bordering Libya; and the "pays du champ"initiative (of Algeria, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania).
- The fifth tenet relates to the manner with which to deal with local components in Libya and Mali through adopting a twofold strategy of inclusive dialogue and the distinction between the political component, which must be involved in the negotiation process, and the terrorist component, which must be fought.[63]

These tenets correspond with the options on which the founding principles of Algerian foreign and security policy and doctrine are based. They all contribute to a common strategic goal that states in the area take responsibility for regional security as an alternative to foreign intervention, yet their accomplishments remain limited. If the first two tenets have found success and prevented further deterioration in the security situation, the three others have yet to bear fruit. The third and fourth tenet (mediation) have not achieved their goals: after three decades of mediation in Mali's crises, Algeria has so far been unsuccessful in establishing peace in the country. Yet it is impossible to hold Algeria responsible for every failure, and the same may be said of its mediation in the Libyan crisis.

However, in the case of the Algerian-Tunisian-Egyptian tripartite approach to the Libyan crisis, the process was foiled from within due to Egyptian support for Khalifa Haftar's forces against the internationally-recognised government. Meanwhile, the fifth tenet, based on inclusion and the political-terrorism distinction, succeeded in its first part, and failed in its second: it was unable to isolate the Azawadi political component from the terrorist component, with its endogenous (Azawadi) and exogenous (terrorist) elements, due to terrorist groups having infiltrated the Azawad region.[64]

Algeria has offered aid to the region's states in attending to regional security by themselves as an alternative to foreign intervention. Yet this objective has been ill-fated due to state failure—as failed states locally cannot succeed regionally—and the conflict of interests and strategic preferences among the states involved.[65] Moreover, to focus on the foreign element and hold the Other (i.e., strangers to the region) responsible for the consequences of everything is to exaggerate the role of foreign powers while trivialising the endogenous causes of state ineffectuality in the region. In such a situation, we cannot but return to Mohammed Ayoob's analysis on the subject of security for states of the Global South, who argues that

---

63 Benantar, *Initiatives de sécurité au Maghreb et au Sahel*, pp. 59-78, 111-121.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., pp. 50, 144.

external threats, despite their importance, are insufficient to explain the security landscape, focusing on the significance of these states' internal sources of security: these are problems largely of a non-military nature.[66]

Security of Neighbouring States as a Strategic Bet: Regionalising Algerian National Security

William Zartman argues that

> *the foreign policy of a state aims, in principle, to ensure both the security of that state, and the stability of other states important for its maintenance. This dual concern of security and stability, both economic and political, implies an interest in reducing conflicts with and within other states […] Security can therefore no longer be reduced to national defence. On the contrary, it implies the resolution of external conflicts before they become destabilizing factors or military risk.*[67]

State security, hence, takes on a regional character through regionalisation, although not all states have adopted this conception in their behaviour. One may distinguish between three choices by which states maintain their security against external threats before the latter can impact their interests or harm their territories. The first concerns the use of force, the second favouring conflict prevention and peaceful resolution, and the third the use of soft and hard power instruments, though few states are capable of combining both at once. Algeria has embraced the second choice. It is true that it currently possesses considerable military capabilities permitting it to intervene beyond its borders, yet it committed to the founding principles of its doctrine. Nevertheless, in recent years the country has begun to grasp the fact that its national security may also be maintained miles away from its geographical borders, and that there is no way to separate it from regional security. Hence, after remaining captive to a state-centric logic, its doctrine has come to account for threats resulting from the growing activity of infra- and supra-state actors. From this perspective, it may be said to have begun to transcend conventional defence policy.

Algeria has presented itself as a security and stability provider, a role which regional and international actors have recognised. Yet there is an impression that it has not sufficiently undertaken its regional responsibilities, which is unfair: Algeria is the greatest defender of regional security out of the region's states, for which it expends military efforts despite not being involved in any wars, and to which it dedicates significant military assets based on its endogenous capabilities.[68] According to Algerian sources, the Mali crisis has cost Algeria more than $2 billion in border protection from 2013 to 2020, apart from indirect costs (e.g., counterterrorism operations, economic consequences of closed borders, etc.).[69]

Regardless of the kind of relationships Algeria has with countries and their ruling regimes, the security of the region's states may be considered a top priority for Algeria's security interests. For instance, Algeria has not adopted policies to upset Morocco's stability despite their conflicts. Its policy toward Tunisia and Egypt in the context of the events of the so-called Arab Spring emphasises its positioning, as dictated by its interests: security first, regardless of the nature of regimes—the priority is to avoid state collapse. Based on this Algerian perception, stability may be minimally understood as the absence of significant upheavals that could involve undermining the foundations of the state, depriving it of control over its lands and borders, and perhaps its total collapse, along with the resultant security consequences in the

---

[66] Mohammed Ayoob, "The Security Problematic of the Third World,"*World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2 (January 1991), pp. 257-263.

[67] William I. Zartman, "La politique étrangère et le règlement des conflits,"in: Frédéric Charillon (dir.), *Politique étrangère: nouveaux regards* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2002), p. 275.

[68] Benantar, *Initiatives de sécurité au Maghreb et au Sahel*, p. 145.

[69] *El Khabar,* 15/12/2022 [Arabic].

neighbourhood. |It is from this perspective that Algeria, in line with European states and the United States, relies on authoritarian stability.

Because the state crisis is a concern for Algeria,[70] it has focused on restoring state authority to the region's countries. It has supported Tunisia at all levels, as the Algerian regime's authoritarianism has not precluded it from backing Tunisia's transition. Of course, it did so not out of love for democracy but of an aversion to instability: what matters is that Tunisia, be it authoritarian or transitional, remain stable. The Algerian regime's stance on the matter indicates a confidence and lack of apprehension toward a "democratic contamination"when the transition process in Tunisia is finished. This confidence is perhaps explained by the regime's having overcome the "Arab Spring"of 2011[71] and having adopted the presidency-for-life model, until the *ḥirāk* emerged to undermine it in 2019.[72] It adopted nearly the same method regarding the Egyptian crisis: Algeria did not condemn the military coup against elected president Mohamed Morsi, yet ideological considerations cannot explain its position because it refused, for instance, to designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist movement despite pressure from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE. It is clear that apprehension around the stability of the Egyptian state being impaired is what explains this position. From the perspective of the Algerian authorities, the already-tumultuous region is hardly in need of a new focus of tension that could impact the largest state in the Arab world. Hence, the imperative of Egypt's stability, regardless of the nature of the ruling regime, has been decisive.

To Algeria, the Egyptian case presented a quandary: whether to maintain the normative tenet it helped bring about in Africa (i.e., the principle of rejecting the unconstitutional change adopted by the 1999 African Union summit in Algeria) or to act according to the requirements of realism. Not only did the Algerian authorities not condemn the military coup in Egypt, but they in fact also supported the resulting authoritarian regime, playing an essential role in ending the sanctions the African Union imposed on Egypt because of the coup. Here, it is notable that a kind of acclimation I observed in the Mali crisis began to characterise Algerian policy, leading to the erosion of the normative imperative to the advantage of the security imperative. As such, the same security interests govern the Algerian position on Libya, Mali, and Tunisia: the presence of a stable, "strong"state capable of monitoring its lands and borders.

Algeria has displayed "an interest in strong, centralised states along its borders"to avoid the emergence of forces for partition and a plurality of actors, with whom it would later have to deal. This security preoccupation essentially derives from the presence of territory along its borders which are beyond the authority of governments, or not sufficiently under their control. Algeria, like many other states, prefers a regulated, local interlocutor with authority and shows discomfort toward non-state actors.[73] Herein lies the new dimension imposed upon its security doctrine: in its Maghrebi-Saheli environment,[74] Algeria faces non-state threats that are of a complex nature—asymmetrical, multi-ethnic, itinerant, and volatile. They pose a challenge for armies designed to engage in inter-state conflicts, all within the context of the state crisis in the region, given that the escalating threats are the product of state failure.[75]

---

70 "Algeria and its Neighbours,"International Crisis Group, *Middle East and North Africa Report*, no. 164, 12 October 2015, pp. 13-14, accessed on 15/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/FFoiikS

71 On Algeria and the "Arab Spring,"see: Frédéric Volpi, "Algeria Versus the Arab Spring,"*Journal of Democracy*, vol. 24, no. 3 (July 2013), pp. 104-115.

72 On the *ḥirāk*, see: Mouslem Babaarabi, "The Constitutional Management of Political Transition in Algeria: Do the Existing Constitutional Paths Meet the Demands of the Hirak?"*Siyasat Arabiya*, no. 52 (September 2021), pp. 63-81.

73 "Algeria and its Neighbours,"p. 13.

74 For details on Algerian policy regarding crises and threats in the Sahel, see: Benantar, *Les initiatives de sécurité au Maghreb et au Sahel*, Salim Chena, "Le Sahara et le Sahel dans la politique algérienne: territoires menacés, espaces menaçants,"*Recherches internationales*, no. 97 (Octobre-Décembre 2013), pp. 129-146; Dris Aït-Hamadouche, "L'Algérie et la sécurité au Sahel,"pp. 105-121.

75 Abdennour Benantar, "al-Jazāʾir fī Muwājahat al-Tahdīdāt al-Lādawlatiyya,"*al-Siyassa al-Dawliya*, vol. 53, no. 210 (October 2017), p. 98.

Another decisive factor at the heart of Algeria's security policy is the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states. For Algeria, the territorial integrity of Libya and Mali is a red line. Thus, this triad (i.e., stability, a "strong"state, and territorial integrity), indispensable for neighbouring countries to be able to establish their authority throughout their lands, is the essential model for its regional policy in an environment which, owing to the spread of infra- and supra-state actors, is experiencing a rift in states' monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, to quote Max Weber. According to Weber,

> *the relation between the State and violence is an especially intimate one [...in that] a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory[.] The state is considered the sole source of the "right"to use violence [,]*[76]

and even the production of identity is dependent on it. Wendt argues that "to reproduce the identity of the state, a group needs to sustain a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in their territory".[77] The issue of returning this quality to the state alone has become an Algerian security concern in a regional context where the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence has been taken away from the state, whether entirely (e.g., Libya) or partially (e.g., Mali). Algeria therefore works toward the restitution and preservation of this privilege to address instability, strengthen security cooperation, and especially to reduce the border defence burden it carries.

Conclusion

For Algeria's security policy and doctrine, non-interference remains constant and foundational, and it has in fact grown more intense with the *ḥirāk* over the past two years. Yet the most important conclusion is that Algeria no longer takes such a strict position on military intervention, as the Mali crisis has proven. If its forbearance from doing so has eroded to an extent, the categorical opposition to deploying troops beyond its borders became a thing of the past after renouncing legal pretext by constitutionalising the army's participation in peacekeeping operations. Yet this does not mean that the government will necessarily risk doing so. If the Mali crisis has demonstrated the shortcomings of Algeria's strategic vision, the Libyan crisis and its developments have proven its perceptions and concerns right. In such conditions, therefore, the Algerian government cannot become a godfather of intervention, regardless of principles, on the one hand. On the other, in line with the transformation (i.e., the adaptation, not total overhaul) of its security doctrine, Algeria continues to operate based on its non-coercive regional security strategy, on which it depends to avoid foreign intervention. The tension between ethical-normative and security considerations is likely to intensify should the unrest in its neighbourhood continue, especially because constitutionalising its army's participation in peace operations, thereby imbuing its role as a security and stability provider with an official, institutional character, solves only part of the problem. Thus, Algeria remains to some extent trapped between anvil of the regional and international environment and the hammer of its security interests and doctrine.

---

[76] Max Weber, *Politics as Vocation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 3-4.

[77] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 130.

References

"AAP-06 Edition 2021 – NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions."*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*. 2021. Accessed on 18/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/KD9tpoK

"Algeria and its Neighbours."International Crisis Group. *Middle East and North Africa Report*. no. 164. 12 October 2015. Accessed on 15/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/FFoiikS

"al-Mawqif al-Jazāʾirī min al-Azma al-Lībiyya: Bayn al-Taghayyur wa-l-Istimrāriyya."*Situation Assessment*. ACRPS. 7/7/2020. Accessed on 10/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/UFs55i6

"Consensus autour d'un rejet catégorique de l'ingérence dans les affaires internes de l'Algérie."*APS*. 26/11/2019. Accessed on 15/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/yFz3sBg

"National Security Policies - Formulating National Security Policies for Good Security Sector Governance."*DCAF*. Aaccessed on 30/7/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/lCAnzJe

Abdulhay, Walid. "al-ʿIlāqāt al-Maghribiyya – al-Jazāʾiriyya: al-ʿUqda al-Jiyūstrātījiyya."*Siyasat Arabiya*. no. 6 (January 2014).

Ayoob, Mohammed. "The Security Problematic of the Third World."*World Politics*. vol. 43. no. 2 (January 1991).

Babaarabi, Mouslem. "The Constitutional Management of Political Transition in Algeria: Do the Existing Constitutional Paths Meet the Demands of the Hirak?"*Siyasat Arabiya*. no. 52 (September 2021).

Balzacq, Thierry. *Théories de la sécurité: Les approches critiques*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2016.

Bayart, Jean-François. "L'Afrique dans le monde: une histoire d'extraversion."*Critique internationale*. no. 5 (1999).

Benantar, Abdennour. "ʿAqīdat al-Jazāʾir al-Amniyya: Ḍughūṭāt al-Bīʾa wa-Muqtaḍayāt al-Maṣāliḥ."*Aljazeera Centre for Studies*. 2/5/2018. Accessed on 16/3/2020, at: https://cutt.ly/4D7kTtK

______. "Sécurité aux frontières: Portée et limites de la stratégie algérienne."*L'Année du Maghreb*. no. 14 (2016).

______. *al-Buʿd al-Mutawassiṭī lil-Amn al-Jazāʾirī: al-Jazāʾir, ʾUrūbba, wa-l-Ḥilf al-Aṭlasī*. Algiers: Contemporary Library, 2005.

______. *Les initiatives de sécurité au Maghreb et au Sahel: le G5 Sahel mis à l'épreuve*. Paris: Fondation pour la recherche stratégique L'Harmattan, 2019.

______. "al-Jazāʾir fī Muwājahat al-Tahdīdāt al-Lādawlatiyya."*al-Siyassa al-Dawliya*. vol. 53. no. 210 (October 2017).

Benkidda, Marouane & Djillali Bouzekri. "Iṣlāḥ al-Daʿm al-Ḥukūmī fī-l-Jazāʾir bayn Muqtaḍayāt al-Faʿāliyya al-ʾIqtiṣādiyya wa-Mutaṭallabāt al-Waḍʿ al-Ijtimāʿī."*Economies of North Africa*. vol. 17. no. 26 (2021).

Boumédiène, Houari. *Discours: du sang à la sueur*. Alger: Ministère de l'information et de la Culture, 1975.

Buzan, Barry. *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

______. *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983.

Charillon, Frédéric (dir.). *Politique étrangère: nouveaux regards*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2002.

Chena, Salim. "Le Sahara et le Sahel dans la politique algérienne: territoires menacés, espaces menaçants."*Recherches internationals*. no. 97 (Octobre-Décembre 2013).

Cottrell, Alvin J. & James D. Theberge (eds.). *The Western Mediterranean: Its Political, Economic and Strategic Importance.* New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974.

Daguzan, Jean-François. "La France, le Mali et la question diplomatique."*Annuaire français de relations internationals*. vol. 15 (2014).

Desgrais, Nicolas & Sonia Le Gouriellec. "Stratégies d'extraversion: défis de la construction de l'Architecture africaine de paix et de sécurité."*Note de recherche stratégique* (IRSEM). no. 28 (Juillet 2016).

Deych, Tatiana et al. *Africa's Growing Role in World Politics*. Moscow: Institute of African Studies-Russian Academy of Sciences, 2014.

Dieng, Moda. "Maintien de la paix: apports et limites de l'action diplomatique sud-africaine."*Revue Etudes internationals*. vol. 45. no. 2 (Juin 2004).

Goldman, Emily O. "New Threats, New Identities and New Ways of War: The Sources of Change in National Security Doctrine."*Journal of Strategic Studies*. vol. 24. no. 2 (2001).

Hagerty, Devin T. "India's Regional Security Doctrine."*Asian Survey*. vol. 31. no. 4 (April 1991).

Hamadouche, Louisa Dris Aït. "L'Algérie et la sécurité au Sahel: lecture critique d'une approche paradoxale."*Confluences Méditerranée*. no. 90 (2014).

______. "Politique extérieure et politique intérieure algérienne: la résistance révolutionnaire au service de la résilience autoritaire?"*Maghreb-Machrek*. no. 221 (2014).

Hermassi, Abdelbaki. *al-Mujtamaʿ wa-l-Dawla fī al-Maghrib al-ʿArabī*. Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1987.

Ismail, Esraa Ahmed. *al-ʿIlāqāt al-Madaniyya al-ʿAskariyya wa-ʿAmaliyyat al-Taḥawwul al-Dīmuqrāṭī: Dirāsa Muqārina bayn Miṣr wa-l-Jazāʾir*. Cairo: al-Maktab al-Arabi Lil-Maarif, 2017.

Jordaan, Evert & Abdel Esterhuyse. "South African Defence since 1994: The Influence of Non-offensive Defence."*African Security Review*. vol. 13. no. 1 (2004).

Lakhdari, Mansour. *al-Siyāsa al-Amniyya al-Jazāʾiriyya: al-Muḥaddidāt, al-Mayādīn, al-Taḥaddiyāt*. Doha: ACRPS, 2015.

Libya: Examination of Intervention and Collapse and the UK's Future Policy Options, House of Commons. Foreign Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2016-17. September 2016. Accessed on 21/3/2022, at: https://cutt.ly/TDBKIFp

Malmvig, Helle. *State Sovereignty and Intervention: A Discourse Analysis of Interventionary and Non-Interventionary Practices in Kosovo and Algeria.* London: Routledge, 2006.

Martinez, Luis & Rasmus Alenius Boserup (eds.). *Algeria Modern: From Opacity to Complexity.* London: Hurst, 2016.

Martinez, Luis. *L'Afrique du Nord après les révoltes arabes*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2019.

Raleigh, Clionadh, Héni Nsaibia & Caitriona Dowd. "The Sahel Crisis Since 2012."*African Affairs*. vol. 120. no. 478 (January 2021).

Souiah, Farida. “Rhétorique de l’ingérence et lutte pour la légitimité.”*Mouvement*. no. 102 (2020).

Vincent, R. J. *Nonintervention and International Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Volpi, Frédéric. “Algeria Versus the Arab Spring.”*Journal of Democracy*. vol. 24. no. 3 (July 2013).

Weber, Cynthia. *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Weber, Max. *Politics as Vocation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Weldes, Jutta. *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Wendt, Alexander. “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics.”*International Organization*. vol. 46. no. 2 (Spring 1992).

______. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Eltigani Abdelgadir Hamid*

The Sudanese Revolution and the Horizons of Democratisation**

الثورة السودانية وآفاق الانتقال الديمقراطي

Abstract: This study poses several questions: Did the fall of the Salvation regime in Sudan result from an initiative from within the regime, an opposition coalition, or both? How influential was the external factor in the overthrow of the regime and the period of transition to democracy? Will the post-Salvation regime order stay the course of democratisation, or will it revert to an authoritarian system? The study concludes that the likely agreed-upon aim of world powers and their authoritarian partners in the region is to steer Sudan toward a hybrid system that keeps members of the old regime in control of the key positions of power while preserving a minimum degree of democracy. In this framework, the ruling civilian-military alliance will receive support from the US, the EU, and their regional allies, which will enable it to dismantle the institutions of the former regime, assimilate a number of militant movements in the political process, and gradually integrate into the international security and economic orders. Meanwhile, on the domestic front, the transitional government will encounter formidable challenges of a nature that might not only cause the transitional process to fall apart but also precipitate the collapse of the Sudanese state.

Keywords: Sudanese Revolution, Democratic Transition, Sudan, Protest.

الملخص: تطرح هذه الدراسة تساؤلات من بينها ما يلي: أكان سقوط نظام الإنقاذ في السودان نتيجة لـ «مبادرة من الداخل» أم لتحالف المعارضة أم لهذين الأمرَين معًا؟ وما مدى تأثير العامل الخارجي في مرحلة إسقاط النظام والانتقال إلى الديمقراطية؟ أيُتوقّع أن يتّبع نظام ما بعد الإنقاذ مسارًا ديمقراطيًا، أم أنه سيتحوّل إلى نظام تسلّطي جديد؟ تنتهي الدراسة إلى القول بأرجحية أن يكون الهدف المتّفق عليه بين القوى الدولية وشركائها السلطويين في الإقليم هو الانتقال بالسودان إلى النظام «الهجين»، حيث تبقى عناصر النظام السلطوي القديم مُمسكة بمفاصل السلطة، مع المحافظة على الحدّ الأدنى من الديمقراطية. يُضاف إلى ذلك أن التحالف العسكري – المدني الحاكم سيجد دعمًا من الولايات المتحدة الأميركية والاتحاد الأوروبي (ومن حلفائهما الإقليميّين)، وهو ما يُمكّنه من تفكيك مؤسسات النظام السابق، واستيعاب عدد من الحركات المسلّحة في العملية السياسية، والانخراط المتدرّج في المنظومة الدولية (الأمنية والاقتصادية). أما من ناحية الداخلَ السوداني، فستواجِه الحكومة الانتقالية تحدّيات صعبة، قد لا تؤدي إلى انهيار الوضع الانتقالي فحسب، بل إلى انهيار الدولة السودانية ذاتها أيضًا.

كلمات مفتاحية: الثورة السودانية، الانتقال الديمقراطي، السودان، الاحتجاج.

* Professor and Head of the Department of Social Sciences, Ibn Khaldoun Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Qatar University. Email: erahma@qu.edu.qa

** This study was originally published in Arabic in: Eltigani Abdelgadir Hamid, "The Sudanese Revolution and the Horizons of Democratisation," *Siyasat Arabiya*, no. 54 (January 2022), pp. 45-63, and was translated by Peter Daniel. *Siyasat Arabiya* is a bimonthly peer-reviewed political science and international relations journal.

The study was written in mid-2021 and many changes have occurred since then on the Sudanese political scene. The author, however, does not believe that these updates have changed the main idea of this study, if they have not confirmed it already.

Introduction

Transitioning to democracy presents a problem not only because of practical difficulties but also because of the need to agree on a clear conceptual framework to explain it. After all, why should a political group in power relinquish control or share it with others who oppose it? What would make a ruling political elite that holds a monopoly on arms enter into negotiations with groups of unarmed civilians? This study attempts to examine the nature of the negotiations and alliances that occurred in the wake of the Sudanese Revolution (December 2018) and to shed light on the complexities of the transition from the 'Salvation'[1] regime, which had been overthrown by a grassroots uprising, to an alternative political system based on the Constitutional Charter agreed upon by the Alliance of the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC).[2] The study focuses on a model that was developed to predict the contours of a transition from an authoritarian to an alternative democratic system and aims to apply it to the Sudanese case, highlighting consistencies and inconsistencies that surface by contrasting theory and reality. The importance of this study lies in its approach based on using a 'case study' to critique the theoretical paradigm.

It has only been a year and a half since the Sudanese revolution broke out; the process of revolutionary transformation is ongoing. Academic writings on it are therefore scant. But there do exist many documents and data that can be used to analyse the political positions of the different groups involved. There are also published interviews with some of the players that furnish important background information on the events. With respect to the theoretical dimension, numerous studies have been written on the transition from autocracy to democracy. This study tests one of the models that have been developed to explain this transition.

A Theoretical Introduction: The Alfred Stepan Model

Many contemporary political theorists have focused on the phenomenon of transition from authoritarian to democratic systems. Some have formulated scenarios and models for the process based on extensive research on the experiences of Latin America and Southern and Eastern Europe. Yet, in general, theorists favour two models. One is the Spanish model, derived from the period following the death of Francisco Franco (1892-1975), in which the transition to democracy is initiated from within the authoritarian system. The second is the opposition coalition model. Here, an array of political and social forces opposed to the regime manage to forge a broad-based alliance, then succeed in toppling the authoritarian regime and agreeing to a power-sharing formula (fleshed out in principles and charters that govern the interim period) that sets in motion the transition to a democratic system.[3] This study tests the explanatory power of the first model by applying it to the Sudanese case. In the process, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Was the fall of the Salvation regime in Sudan the product of an initiative from within, of an opposition coalition, or both?
2. How influential was the foreign dimension in the overthrow of the regime and the democratic transition period?
3. Can we expect the post-Salvation regime to follow a democratic path, or will it revert to a new authoritarian system — and, in either case, why?

---

[1] A label that refers to the political regime led by the former president Omar al-Bashir through the National Congress Party, which ruled Sudan for thirty years.

[2] In January 2019, a group of Sudanese forces launched a declaration titled 'Forces of Freedom and Change Declaration' that included four main forces: the 'Sudanese Professionals Association', the 'National Consensus', the 'Sudan Development Call Association [Nidaa]', and the 'Unionist Opposition Alliance'. The declaration demanded the overthrow of former Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir (1989-2019), the achievement of a comprehensive and just peace, and the formation of a transitional government for a four-year period.

[3] Alfred Stepan, 'Paths toward Redemocratization,' in: Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter & Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore/ London: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 65.

The democratic waves that ushered in the fall of dictatorships in Latin America and Southern and Eastern Europe in the 1970s sparked a growing interest in the transition from authoritarian regimes toward democracy among political theorists and scholars of comparative politics. Samuel P. Huntington documented the dates, locations, and features of these democratisation 'waves' in a famous paper that has had a major influence on democratic transformation studies.[4] But Huntington was not alone in this field; other scholars had led the way with pioneering theories and models to help explain this phenomenon by drawing comparisons between similar cases, conducting in-depth studies of the overall structure of society as shaped by various economic, political, and international dimensions, or analysing the main players and their particular values, skills, and decisions.

This paper attempts to test one model for democratic transition, formulated in 1986 by Alfred Stepan, who served as director of the Center for the Study of Democracy, Toleration, and Religion and professor of political science at Columbia University.[5] The model was devised based on lengthy discussions and investigations by a group of political scientists who, due to their interest in studying democratic transition processes, became known as 'transitologists'.[6]

Stepan opens his analysis with the assertion that there is not necessarily a single path to democratisation. Multiple, overlapping routes are possible, but the simultaneous pursuit of several strategies at once, he holds, is one of the conditions of successful democratisation. He proceeds to identify eight paths leading to the end of authoritarian regimes and the process of 're-democratisation'. However, he immediately discards three that rely on warfare and military conquest (as occurred in some European cases before World War II) and asserts that since the 1960s — and for the conceivable future — "the majority of cases of redemocratization have been and will be ones in which sociopolitical forces rather than external military forces play the key role, though international and economic forces, as well as political blocs, play an important role".[7]

Stepan divides the paths to re-democratisation into two general processes. In the first, (a) change emanates from within the authoritarian regime, i.e., it is initiated by the power-holders themselves. In the second, (b) change is mainly driven by a broad coalition of political forces opposed to the regime. A brief summary of both follows:

Process (a)

In cases where change originates within the authoritarian regime, the regime leaders (or groups initiating change) seek to reduce pressures on themselves and, simultaneously, to preserve their interests to the greatest possible extent. Stepan hastens to point out that re-democratisation initiated from within the authoritarian regime is quite a broad category, and that it is therefore useful to focus on three subtypes, each defined by the institutional base on which the initiating group relies.

Power-holders will cling to power unless conditions compel them to modify the power equations. For example, they might feel it necessary to allay pressures arising from socio-political demands within the regime or politically influential groups who had once been loyal to the regime. Another example is that some circles in the ruling order — particularly those in charge of law enforcement and exacting

[4] Samuel Huntington (1927-2008) published a book on the third wave of democracy in 1991, expanding on his lecture at the University of Oklahoma in 1989. The university published the text two years later; see: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twenties Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

[5] The research was published as part of the project titled 'Transition from Authoritarian to Democratic Regimes', concerned with what came to be known as the 'Third Wave of Democracy'. Many professors participated in this project in 1979, led by Guillermo A. O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead. The works of the project was published in four volumes in 1986.

[6] Howard J. Wiarda, 'Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Comparative Politics: Transitology and the Need for New Theory,' *World Affairs*, vol. 164, no. 4 (Spring 2002), pp. 149-156.

[7] Stepan, p. 65.

obedience — may harbour growing doubts over the regime's legitimacy, or rifts might arise within these circles. Alternatively, some stakeholders may see an opportunity to retain some of their authority through a forthcoming electoral contest, or at least to remain active in political life in the post-regime period. Should such circumstances arise, there is a high probability that a reform initiative from within the regime will emerge and that the democratic transition will succeed. This said, preparations for the transition cannot take place until opposition forces and moderate leaders in government find a way to work together to formulate a peaceful framework for the process.

Even if the transition to democracy succeeds, the repressive apparatus that served the old regime may retain their power for some time. This could present a serious impediment to new policies that could bring those agencies under control through democratic procedures. It could also jeopardise the stability of the new order and render it vulnerable to domestic coups engineered by these old regime agencies, especially if they perceive that democratic measures might pose a threat to them.[8]

The clearest example of democratisation launched from within an authoritarian regime is the Spanish experience following the death of General Franco in 1975. His disappearance from the political scene presented an opportunity to discuss basic questions about the legitimacy of the laws promulgated by his regime. Furthermore, there were mounting grassroots pressures pushing for change and, to complete the picture, political opposition circles were alternately asserting pressure and bargaining with circles in the regime. These elements combined made it possible for the democratisation process to evolve from a limited reform initiative from within the regime, to a larger reform process that included political opposition forces, to revolution, and then to a complete break with the past as the result of negotiations with the opposition forces. Moreover, the cooperation between the government and the opposition decreased the chances of a military reaction and led to success in the transition to democracy.[9] Finally, the electoral law reached through a consensus between opposition forces offered old regime figures, such as Adolfo Suárez (1932-2014), the prospect of coming to office through elections or to continue to participate in the political process if they did not succeed in the polls. Despite all the foregoing, the democratic transition in Spain remained fragile for reasons pertaining to the conflict over the Basque region, which jeopardised national unity and presented a possible opening for security forces to obstruct the democratic system.

Process (b)

The second process of transition to democracy proceeds from an initiative undertaken by a broad political alliance or 'Grand Oppositional Pact',[10] by which anti-regime forces unite in the framework of a type of federation that ultimately succeeds, through revolution, in defeating the authoritarian regime. Then they draw up the rules for a democratic system which establishes the path to power for most opposition forces. This process has attracted considerable interest among researchers on democratisation because it addresses two problems at once. The first is how to erode the bases on which the old regime relied, and the second is how to lay the foundation for a forthcoming democratic order that includes a formula for power-sharing among an array of political forces and factions.

Stepan observes that while it may be easy for opposition forces to create this kind of broad alliance, this is no guarantee that it will last. Pacts can just as easily fall apart or exclude important political groups, which, in turn, could signify the emergence of an authoritarian tendency that could obstruct re-democratisation. He further notes that partisan coalitions cannot be created in all political systems, as "by their very nature

8 Ibid., p. 71.
9 Ibid., p. 74.
10 Ibid., p. 79.

[they] have two indispensable requirements: first, leaders with the organizational and ideological capacity to negotiate a grand coalition among themselves; second, the allegiance of their political followers to the terms of the pact".[11]

This transitional model presumes first that there are 'reformers' in the regime and 'moderates' among the opposition, just as there are 'hardliners' in the regime and 'radicals' in the opposition. Second, it presumes that the reformists on one side and the moderates on the other will enter into negotiations over the nature and extent of the desired change, whereby reformists will try to retain the greatest amount of power possible while moderates will push as hard as they can for the transition to democracy. Third, it presumes that the regime hardliners and the opposition radicals have the ability to thwart any settlement that does not meet their approval. This means that if a peaceful democratic transition is to succeed, the negotiating parties must arrive at a formula that satisfies both the hardliners and radicals; otherwise, they could descend into violence, and put paid the transition to democracy.[12]

The Sudanese Revolution: What Happened?

The Military-Security Leadership

The end of the Salvation regime can be dated to 11 September 2019, when the First Vice President and Defence Minister of Sudan (2015-2019), Lieutenant-General Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf, appeared on television to announce that "the regime has been uprooted and its head is being kept in a safe place". Ibn Auf also stated that he had formed a military council to manage affairs for two years, dissolved the presidency, and declared a state of emergency.[13] Within a single day, he announced that he had stepped down as chairman of the military council and handed the helm to Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (April 2019-August 2019).[14]

This formal pronunciation of the regime's end came in the wake of popular protests and demonstrations that swept many Sudanese towns and cities. Initially sparked by a severe bread and fuel shortage and an unusual scarcity of local currency, the protest movement lasted for nearly four months, from 19 December 2018 to 11 April 2019 when the crisis reached its height. At that point, the regime's Supreme Security Council (SSC) stepped in and told President Omar al-Bashir, having been in power for thirty years (1989-2019) at the time, to announce a new policy intended to end the crisis. It consisted of four main points: his resignation as head of the National Congress Party and his decision not to run for president in the next elections; the dissolution of the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly; the establishment of a fully-empowered transitional government to replace them; and the creation of a military council he would chair that would be responsible for the country's security during the transitional period of no more than two years.[15]

Apart from resigning as head of the ruling party, Bashir had no intention of acting on these points. Moreover, he reportedly instructed the SSC leadership to use military means to end the crisis.[16] This was

---

[11] Ibid., p. 80.

[12] Jakub Zielinski, 'Transitions from Authoritarian Rule and the Problem of Violence', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 43, no. 2 (April 1999), p. 214.

[13] 'al-Jaysh yuʿlin iqtilāʿ' Niẓām al-Bashīr wa iḥtijāzihi fī makān āmin,' *France24*, 11/4/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3e5eVJf.

[14] 'Ibn ʿAwf yatanāzal wa-l-Burhān khalafan lah', *SUNA*, 12/4/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3y8ixB8

[15] The head of the security apparatus, General Salah Gosh, announced these points in an interview with editors-in-chief of daily newspapers on 22 February 2019. President al-Bashir's speech included some of these points, excluding the one related to his decision not run for presidency in the next elections. See: 'Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Bilāl: Qarārāt al-Rȧīs!' *Bajnews*, 24/2/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/36fq3Pn

[16] 'Nāʾib rȧīs jihāz al-amn al-sābiq yakshif li-awwal marra fī ḥiwār maʿuh al-tafāṣīl al-Kāmila li-suqūṭ al-Bashīr wa dawr gūsh wa bin ʿawf wa ḥamedtī wa khuṭat qatl al-mutaẓāhirīn', *Tag Press*, 5/10/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3y87UhL

what prompted the Council to act decisively and take full control of power. It was in a position to do so easily since it held the reins to the military and security agencies. It was also aware of how to get through to the revolutionaries who had amassed in front of Army Command Headquarters in Khartoum, as it had been in contact with some of them since the protest movement began.[17] Talks, negotiations, and compromises took place between members of the SSC, renamed the Transitional Military Council (TMC), and opposition groups which culminated in the partnership between the military and the FFC. It appears from numerous testimonies that the TMC had established channels of communication with some opposition circles, and that it had gradually distanced itself from the regime and grown inclined toward change; the above-mentioned televised address by Lieutenant-General Ibn Auf suggests as much. In the course of explaining what had led him to turn against Bashir, he said that:

1. The SSC, which consists of the armed forces, the police, the security and intelligence agencies, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), implemented the change.
2. The Council had been keeping track of the mismanagement and corruption within governmental institutions and how horizons were being closed off before the people, especially the youth.
3. The regime insisted on a military solution, but the Council opposed this and presented alternatives and suggestions to end the crisis by political means.
4. The Council decided to carry out what the head of the regime had refused to do and thus assumed full responsibility of regime change for a two-year transitional period, during which the armed forces would be mainly responsible for managing the government and maintaining security, with limited representation of the other components of the Council.[18]

Ibn Auf's speech did not address foreign parties, above all Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt: the three regional powers that were instrumental to laying the groundwork for the regime change and that supported it directly.[19] These countries' interest in Sudan stemmed from two main concerns: the Saudi-UAE war in Yemen and the Ethiopian-Egyptian dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). On 12 February 2015, as part of its conflict with Iran, Saudi Arabia launched Operation Decisive Storm to counter the forces of the Ansarullah (Houthi) Movement in Yemen and restore the legitimate government of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, who had been elected in 2012. Saudi Arabia expected military support from Egypt and Pakistan, but as this was not forthcoming for various reasons, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi turned to Sudan. They wanted Khartoum to take three actions: sever diplomatic relations with Iran, eliminate Islamist elements from the commands of its military and security agencies, and commit Sudanese troops to the war in Yemen.[20]

Because of the Sudanese government's economic straits, President Bashir agreed to do so in exchange for financial support. He cut off relations with Iran, took steps to remove a number of Islamists from the military and security hierarchies, and dispatched troops to Yemen under the command of Lieutenant-

[17] Many sources indicate that former National Security Advisor Salah Gosh was in contact with some opposition leaders to attempt to win their support in the weeks that preceded the isolation of President al-Bashir, particularly with Sadiq al-Mahdi, head of the National Umma Party; Omar al-Dugair, head of the Sudanese Congress Party; and other members of the Baath party. See: 'Reuters takshif kawālīs Tawarruṭ al-imārāt fī al-iṭāḥa bi-ʾUmar al-Bashīr', *Al Jazeera*, 3/7/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3JbYPYA

[18] The speech was televised on *Sudan TV* and *Al Jazeera Mubasher* and streamed on various social media platforms. To access the full text of the speech, see: 'Naṣṣ al-bayān al-awwal… hāthā mā aʿlanahu al-jaysh al-sūdānī', *Al Jazeera*, 11/4/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3q1i0wF

[19] Among the characteristics of this role is the former's cooperation with General al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo in the Yemen war, as well as the continued support presented by these states to the Military Council to strengthen its position among other political forces. For more on this topic, see the report prepared and published by 'The Project on Middle East Political Science' at the Middle East Institute in the George Washington University: Jean-Baptiste Gallopin, 'The Great Game of the UAE and Saudi Arabia in Sudan', *Middle East Political Science*, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3tSBYLl.

[20] Ibid.

General Burhan and RSF commander (2010-) Lieutenant-General Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo, more familiarly known as Hemeti. Bashir's concessions seem only to have encouraged Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to contemplate overthrowing his government and replacing it with the very military leadership that oversaw Sudanese military operations on the ground in Yemen (i.e., Burhan and Hemeti).[21]

In light of the foregoing, it is possible to assert that the decisive step toward regime change in Sudan originated from within the regime — specifically, from the army and security leadership — with support from abroad (Saudi Arabia and the UAE), and that the military-civilian transitional government was the product of their arrangements. Still, the process of persuading some civilian elements to get on board with the Saudi-UAE plan remained ongoing through various exchanges and agreements that aimed to rally an alignment against the Muslim Brotherhood.[22]

The Political Front: What Happened?

Just as the TMC became a de facto government, the grassroots movement in the sit-in square became the 'revolution government' as well. But it was a government without executive power. The distance between the square and the cabinet building is not a geographic span measurable in miles, but an entirely political span as complex as the gap between revolution and state. At the phase when the revolution only needed to rally the ranks, build enthusiasm, and prepare to make the necessary sacrifices, the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) assumed its leadership[23] and was soon joined by a number of other organisations to form an umbrella entity called the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC). The FFC was a loose political alliance made up of four main groups, each of which consisted of a number of smaller parties (some militant, some unarmed). It was a fragile alliance managed by a steering committee with limited executive powers due to the haste and urgency of the first weeks of the revolution.

Later, when it came time to manage the affairs of the state, revolutionary romanticism ceded way to the need for political realism. The latter compels every party to review its strategy, reach the desired political common ground, break with old alliances, and conclude new ones, depending on what it deems necessary at that juncture. At this point, attitudes and outlooks diverge and the 'getting rid of partners' phase looms. Herein lay the crux of the problem, as clearly identified by some members of the opposition, within the structure of the FFC: it is a large political body but one that lacks a unified executive leadership and strategic

---

[21] Considering the confidential nature of such roles, we have no choice but to rely on two corroborating reports. The first, published by *Foreign Policy* one month after the fall of the Bashir regime and written by French journalist Jérôme Tubiana, a specialist in African affairs, indicated the participation of a Sudanese army division in the Saudi-led coalition in the Yemen war. Leading the division, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Ahmad Dagalo (Hemeti) met with Saudi and Emirati officials and agreed on arrangements for the post-al-Bashir period. The Saudi-UAE side became convinced that the two men (Burhan and Hemeti) met the conditions of Saudi Arabia and the UAE for new leaders without ties with Iran, Qatar, or the Muslim Brotherhood; see: Jérôme Tubiana, 'The Man Who Terrorized Darfur Is Leading Sudan's Supposed Transition', *Foreign Policy* (May 2019), accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3KEbofB.

The second report was published by *Reuters* on 3 July 2019 (three months after the fall of the regime) and was prepared by three reporters based on interviews conducted with more than ten insider sources. The report stated that President al-Bashir reached an understanding with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed whereby the former dispenses with the Islamists and deploys military forces to support Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the Yemen war, in exchange of financial support from the UAE to Sudan. However, president al-Bashir did not fulfil all his pledges, so the UAE cut off its fuel supply to Sudan in December 2018 as a manifestation of its dissatisfaction, exacerbating the economic crisis that eventually led to the fall of the regime; see: Khalid Abdelaziz, Michael Georgy & Maha El Dahan, 'Abandoned by the UAE, Sudan's Bashir Was Destined to Fall', *Reuters*, 3/7/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://reut.rs/36gQXXq.

[22] Among the attendees of those meetings were Mariam al-Sadiq al-Mahdi (National Umma Party), Khalid Omar Yousef (Sudanese Congress Party), and Yasir Arman (Sudan People's Liberation Movement – northern sector); see: '*Thawrat dīsambir: al-siyāqāt wa-l-fāʿilūn wa taḥaddiyāt al-intiqāl al-dīmuqrāṭī fī al-sūdān*', *Reports*, ACRPS, 2/6/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/35TXtn1

[23] The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) is the most prominent component of the Forces of Freedom and Change. Established in 2018, it began its activity with a study on wages and submitted a memorandum about it to the government of President al-Bashir. It included seven professional bodies at the time: Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, Democratic Lawyers Association, Sudanese Engineers Association, Sudanese Journalists Network, Teachers' Committee, Association of Democratic Veterinarians, and Central Pharmacists Committee. It later began to appear in the media a week after the spontaneous outbreak of the popular revolution on 13 December 2018 alongside many other organisations and professional bodies, issuing a declaration on behalf of the Forces of Freedom and Change, the entity that became the platform for popular command ever since.

vision (apart from the January 1st, 2019 declaration, which was a declaration of principles, not a programme for action). The deficiency was detrimental to the FFC's negotiating performance with the TMC. That said, while a 'unified leadership' may have boosted the FFC's strength, the person who stood to benefit from it the most was the Imam Sadiq al-Mahdi in view of his long-established political legitimacy and political party influence. This, however, was an option that appealed little to the other groups in the FFC.

It turned out that some leaders[24] under the FFC umbrella had a regional agenda that was more in tune with the TMC's agenda than with the general mood of the grassroots movement, which was opposed to regional interventions in Sudanese affairs. Such intersections within the FFC confirmed that internal differences were not about tactics and therefore resolvable within the framework of the greater aim. Rather, they reflected essential contradictions related to how the state should manage the economy or foreign relations. The disputes, therefore, were of a nature that was not easily surmountable and that bode ill for the unity of ranks and objectives: if they spread and spiralled, then were fanned by the charged media climate, they could end in a clash that would put paid to any attempt to proceed toward the awaited democratic transition.

Despite its organisational fragility (or due to it), the FFC decided to enter into a partnership with the former regime's military wing and share executive power on the basis of the Constitutional Charter the two sides signed.[25] The FFC thus obtained a number of seats in the Sovereignty Council and all the ministerial portfolios in the cabinet except for Defence and Interior. With this, the TMC's presidency ended, and the term of the transitional government began in September 2019. Abdalla Hamdok became prime minister (2019-2022), and Lieutenant General Burhan became chairman of the Sovereignty Council in the framework of a grand pact backed by around seven political parties.[26]

The Fragile Coalition Between the Military and Civilian Components

We can identify two main stages in the relationship between the military and civilian partners in the transitional government: one shaped by revolutionary impetus, the other by political realism. The first stage brought a relative decrease in the roles of two historically dominant parties — the Democratic Unionist Party and the Umma Party — and a more prominent role played by three left-wing minority parties (the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP), the Sudanese Baath Party, and the Unionist Democratic Nasserist Party), the Sudanese Congress Party, and some professional and civil society organisations. These are the organisations that had challenged the regime beneath the banner of the Declaration of Freedom and Change,[27] and they were the political incubator for the 'revolution government'. It was they who drafted the Constitutional Charter, defined the governmental structures and hierarchy, and shared power with the TMC.

They saw themselves as the real authors of the revolution and the foremost players in the political arena. The FFC, as one of its leaders, Mohammed Naji al-Assam, put it, coordinated the popular efforts and crystallised the options of their struggle. In his view, the military leadership managed to march at their side on the path of revolution and change in order to establish a 'sustainable democracy' in Sudan.[28] Not all members of the FFC shared this optimistic perception of the role of the armed forces. The Sudanese

---

24 In reference to those who conform with the policy of the UAE: Khalid Omar Yousef, Mariam al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, Yasir Arman, and others.

25 'al-wathīqa al-dustūriyya lil-fatra al-intiqāliyya bi-jumhūriyyat al-sūdān', *Conflict Sensitivity Unit*, 19/2/2021, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/35NCBOr

26 The seven main parties participating in the government are: National Umma Party, Sudanese Congress Party, Sudanese Communist Party, Democratic Unionist Party, Sudanese Baath Party, Unionist Democratic Nasserist Party, and Socialist Republican Party.

27 'iʿlān al-ḥurriyya wa-l-taghyīr', *Facebook*, 1/1/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3q0Rrb6

28 'intaṣarnā wa nuṭālib bi-ḥaqq shuhadāʾina: kalimat muḥammad nājī al-aṣam baʿd tawqīʿ al-ittifāq al-tārīkhī fī al-sūdān', *YouTube*, 17/8/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3CDvow5; Ismael Mohammed Ali, 'Siddīq Yūsif: raʾīs al-wuzarāʾ al-sūdānī laysa shuyūʿiyyan', *Independent Arabia*, 20/12/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3KzhMok

Communist Party, for example, did not view the army's actions positively: it held that the generals had staged a 'military coup' to prevent the revolution from fully realising its ends.[29] This researcher anticipates that the difference in outlooks will broaden and eventually lead to the FFC's collapse.

The foregoing begs the question of how the TMC perceives itself and its role in the post-Bashir era: does it see itself as a partner in power, or as the rightful owner? We find an answer to this in an early speech by TMC chairman Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, after talks with the FFC were suspended on 15 May 2019. He said that the constituent components of the TMC, including the leadership of the Rapid Support Forces, were borne of the people, and they had performed an important and effective role in supporting the revolution. The members of the TMC had sided with the people's choice and ensured their victory.[30] The speech appears to represent a fixed strategic line for the military.

Certainly, the army — or, more precisely, the security establishment — refused to open fire on demonstrators on 6 April 2019. It protected them and, in so doing, boldly disobeyed the president's orders, which hastened the end of the Salvation regime. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that, by that point, the spontaneous popular movement had reached a fervour that was uncontainable. It is therefore fair to say that the army and the people should both be credited with the success of the revolution and the overthrow of the former regime, inclusive of its constitution, institutions, and officials. But this created a vacuum that, for practical and legal reasons, the army had to fill, and so it did — thereby becoming the guardian of power in addition to being a partner. Then the TMC became the de facto government in both the executive and legislative capacities.

Although it would not be difficult for the TMC to market its partnership in power by vaunting its support for the revolutionaries, other issues will continue to haunt it. Not least are the 'threads' linking it with the former regime, such as the promotion of several members to the rank of Lieutenant General only a few weeks before the revolution; the operations they took part in; or the atrocities of the 'Khartoum massacre' about which they remain silent. In order to put this matter behind them and prove they had cut all ties with the old regime, the officers signed a decree, in the name of the Sovereignty Council, to form a committee to remove and dismantle the old regime. Thus, only a few weeks after the formation of the TMC-FFC coalition government in September 2019, Chairman of the Sovereignty Council Lieutenant General Burhan issued a decree establishing a committee to disempower and combat corruption and recuperate plundered assets. This brought the dissolution of the National Congress Party: it was struck from the register of official political parties and organisations, its assets were sequestered, and any political fronts, syndicates and professional associations related to the party or any individual or entity empowered by it were shut down.[31] The main Islamist figures whom Saudi Arabia and the UAE wanted removed from power, such as Ali Othman Mohammed Taha, Bakri Hasan Saleh, and Nafie Ali Nafie, had been thrown in prison within a week following the overthrow of the regime.[32]

As expected, some members of the FFC, above all the Communist and Baath parties, welcomed and praised these measures and felt that one of the revolution's most important strategic goals was being undertaken by the Empowerment Removal Committee. These parties, in turn, engaged in fierce haggling over quotas of government posts and ranks, as they hastened to 'empower' their own members in key

---

[29] An interview Ali with Siddiq Yousef, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, conducted by Ismael Mohammed: *Independent Arabia*, 20 December 2019.

[30] 'Shāhid… bayān rảīs al-majlis al-ʿaskarī al-farīq ʿabd al-fattāḥ al-burhān', *YouTube*, 16/5/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3pVRkh1.

[31] Abd al-Hameed Awad, 'al-sūdān: tashkīl lajna li-izālat wa tafkīk niẓām al-bashīr,' *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 10/12/2019, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3MHity5

[32] 'Badʾ muḥākamat al-rảīs al-sūdānī al-sābiq ʿUmar al-bashīr bi-tuhmat al-inqilāb ʿalā al-ḥukūma al-muntakhaba', *Lusail News*, 21/7/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3t7iZh2

offices. Further, the old, recurrent ideological conflict between the Islamist Current and the secularist Left, determined to reconstitute and reorient the whole of Sudanese society culturally, politically and economically, stoked the animosities that seethed behind this scramble.

The strategic aim of the transitional government and its political base, at this stage, was to eradicate the Salvation regime and eliminate its affiliates from all state agencies, especially those concerned with defence, security, economy, education, and the judiciary. But this situation did not last long, and the partners in the transitional government soon had to deal with pending issues on which they found it hard to agree. Also, each side had developed visions and aspirations that would be difficult to realise within the framework of the Constitutional Charter they had signed. Though this is not the place to cover all the bones of contention between them, it is useful to highlight the most salient issues:

1. Companies owned by the army, security forces, and police (and how to bring them under civil authority);
2. Relations with militant movements (and how to include them in the framework of the constitutional charter);
3. The management of the economy (the nature of the desired economic reform and relations with the World Bank and its prescriptions);[33]
4. The management of foreign affairs (how to deal with the UN mission to Sudan, the Saudi-Emirati factor, and the recognition of Israel);
5. The management of the Ethiopian-Egyptian dispute over GERD (what stance Khartoum should take on the matter, and how far).

The task of addressing all these issues and resolving their concomitant questions forced each camp to revise its calculations entirely and re-examine its alliances.

The Phase of Realism and Contentious Issues

The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), which had been entrusted with leading the revolution, did not survive long after the revolution succeeded. It quickly succumbed to a schism that dulled its revolutionary lustre and put it out of action. A contingent within the SPA leadership affiliated with the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) had been accused by fellow SPA members of hijacking the association, using it to further narrow partisan interests and goals opposed to the revolution, and fragmenting the unity of the revolutionary forces. The SCP's response was more severe: it accused components of the FFC of concluding spurious secret deals at home and abroad, leading the alliance toward designs for a counterrevolution, and approving policies that deviate from agreed upon charters and declarations. Moreover, contrary to their stated positions in the FFC Council, those elements were conspiring against the recommendations of the FFC's economic committee and promoting the government's policies which favoured deregulating and lifting subsidies on essential commodities and adopting IMF prescriptions. The consequence was deteriorating standards of living, rising inflation rates, continued high youth unemployment, worsening conditions for displaced persons, partiality toward parasitic capitalism at the expense of patriotic capitalism in industry and agriculture, and a complete coup against the revolution by means of a new constitutional charter.[34] Following this lengthy list of charges, the SCP central committee announced that it had decided that the party would 'withdraw from the national consensus forces and the FFC and work alongside the forces of revolution and change

[33] The Sudanese Communist Party maintains that the transitional government has capitulated to global capitalism which seeks to dominate the Sudanese economy, and that it is moving in the direction of dependency on the West in compliance with all conditions instead of relying on Sudanese resources and internal reforms; see: al-Haj Abdalla Ahmad (Interviewer), 'muqābala maʿ ṣiddīq Kablū, ʿuḍw al-lajna al-markaziyya', *al-Midan* (3797), 25/5/2021.

[34] Bahram Abd al-Moniem, 'al-ḥizb al-shuyūʿī al-sūdānī yuʿlin insiḥābah min al-iʾtilāf al-ḥākim', *Anadolu Agency*, 7/11/2020, accessed on 20/4/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3OpgAXt

that are connected with the causes of the people and the aims and programmes of the revolution'. It added that the party had chosen 'to stand with the masses and their causes rather than to mislead them and plant false hopes to deceive them'.[35]

The internal rift tells us that the FFC's strength stemmed less from a robust strategic consensus as from its components' collective participation in the fight against the Salvation regime. Once the regime fell, the FFC forces collapsed on the shoals of conflicting visions and interests. But another factor that aggravated discord perhaps emerged from an aversion to the responsibilities of the interim period and the possibility of having to shoulder the blame in the event of possible failure, especially in economic affairs. It had become clear to the ruling left-wing parties (as well as to the TMC) that the economic deterioration was grave and there was no avoiding dealing with it.

However, acting effectively required a strong political will and the resolve to take tough decisions and bear full responsibility for the results. In other words, the real battle began to descend from lofty ideological horizons to the daily suffering of the people, and from the left-right dichotomy to the triad of bread, fuel, and medicine. The essential questions now were: who could the FFC choose as a minister with the wherewithal to take on this task? Which regional and international powers would back him? Would the Sudanese public continue to support the FFC government if it could not agree on an economic programme, approve a budget, or pay the debt for flour? Faced with such questions, each camp began to doubt the other, recalibrate its positions, and search for a more solid and rewarding partnership. Those who remained in the FFC grew convinced that the 'partnership' between it and the TMC was unlikely to last much longer.

The TMC, for its part, grew convinced that the FFC had lost its initial momentum and could no longer serve as a reliable political vehicle, and that it now had two options. One was to remain patient and endure the difficulties of the transitional period until the elections, as stipulated in the Constitutional Charter, at which point it might have to stage a loser's exit from the political process (and possibly face criminal proceedings). The other was to act pre-emptively, bypass the FFC, and enter into a new alliance that would include some of the militant movements and receive the blessing of regional and international powers, thus killing several birds with one stone. The TMC opted for the second choice, which is why it moved quickly in order to conclude the Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan (as we will show below). Meanwhile, SCP, the best organised group among the FCC members, quickly grasped that the ruling military wing was not a reliable ally. It therefore began to openly display its hostility toward the transitional government and, as of early 2020, started to call for its dismissal and replacement with another government.

Obstacles to the Transition to a Democratic System

General Obstacles: The Search for a 'Democracy with Guaranteed Consequences'

A frequent question in discussions of democratic transition is: What kind of democracy is being transitioned to, and who wants that transition? None of the participant groups in the transitional government had actually grappled with that question out loud in a deep intellectual way. In fact, some of them, such as the Baath party, were not keen on transitioning to a democratic system to begin with, while others entertained notions that were at odds with the generally accepted concept of democracy. In its simplest definition, democracy is a 'method of government' in which the people chose a leadership to whom they entrust matters of legislation and promulgation of binding laws concerning the general affairs of society.[36] Such a definition

35 'Bayān al-lajna al-markaziyya lil-ḥizb al-shuyūʿī', *al-Midan*, 8/11/2020.

36 Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row Publisher, 1942), p. 243.

presented many problems for the partners in the transitional government and made each camp hesitate on the matter of democratic transition.

The first problem was that democracy would entail, at its most basic level, turning to the people to choose the leaders of government, and the only way to do that would be through elections or referendums. But either of these mechanisms could yield undesirable results, as the polls might not favour the ruling military-civilian alliance. To the military contingent, holding elections to end the transition period would entail the total exclusion of the military clique from the political process, not to mention upsetting all the pledges and agreements they concluded with their regional backers, namely the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. In addition, the elections might pave the way to measures that could hurt the generals directly, whether through legal proceedings or economic measures introduced by the post-transitional government. Given such considerations, the military explored ways to extend the transitional period instead of a return to the polls. Towards this end, it took advantage of three basic issues that offered avenues to perpetuate themselves in power for as long as possible:

1. Achieving domestic peace with the militant movements;
2. Normalising foreign relations with Israel, in conformity with the UAE-Saudi axis;
3. Reordering relations with the Egyptian military junta in its dispute with Ethiopia over the GERD.

Any of these courses of action promised to strengthen the military wing's standing in government. The generals would effectively become a de facto government that no one could dispense with, as we will show below.

Obstacles Fabricated by the Military Component of the Transitional Government

The Relationship with the Militant Movements

The transitional government's military wing saw a domestic peace process as the lifeline it was looking for: it would enter into lengthy negotiations with the militant movements and, if the negotiations succeeded, score points that would ensure it remained in power. Should the negotiations fail, it would have an excuse to prolong the transitional period on the pretext of continuing the pursuit of peace. As we know, the generals in power did, indeed, succeed in reaching an understanding, brokered by South Sudan, with some of the opposition militant movements, such as the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF). Then, in October 2020, they signed the Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan[37] by which the signatory parties agreed to a new transitional period lasting 39 months as of the date of signing. Hence, the agreement effectively cancelled the first year of the existing transitional period and initiated another transitional term based on the newly forged partnership. Of course, this would entail restructuring the current ruling authority — the Sovereign Council and cabinet, in particular — and creating a legislative council. It was clear that Khartoum was on the threshold of a shift from the 'Freedom and Change' government based on the articles of the Constitutional Charter to a new order for which the Juba Peace Agreement had laid the foundations.

Though it is beyond the scope of this article to examine all the articles of this agreement, it should suffice to address one point that represents the agreement's essence and clarifies the relationship between the Juba Peace Agreement and the Constitutional Charter. Instead of accepting the latter as a higher authority, the agreement treats the charter's provisions as on par with its own. Moreover, in the event of a

---

[37] The Sudan Revolutionary Front signed on behalf of the armed opposition, comprising four political movements and five armed movements: the Justice and Equality Movement, the Sudan Liberation Forces, the Sudan Liberation Army, the Transitional Council of the Sudan Liberation Army, and the Sudanese Alliance. Those who did not sign include the Popular Movement – North (led by Abdulaziz al-Helu) and the Sudan Liberation Army Movement (led by Abd al-Wahid Mohammed Nour). For more on the main provisions of the agreement, see: *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 15286, 4/10/2020.

conflict between the two, the text of the agreement would prevail and the charter would have to be amended accordingly. The agreement further called for the creation of a Council of Partners for the Transitional Period made up of the parties to the Constitutional Charter, the prime minister, and the signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement (Article 80).

Such provisions leave little doubt that the military is determined to sidestep the democratic transition process and engineer a shift away from the 'revolutionary stage' and the agreements and charters it generated, toward a new phase of embracing and sharing power and wealth with the militant movements for as long as possible.

The Relationship with Israel

The generals in power were as quick to enter into secret talks with Israel as they were to negotiate with the Sudanese militant movements. During an unpublicised visit to Uganda, Lieutenant General Burhan met with former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in an attempt to impose a fait accompli. He cared little about the censure and criticism he would encounter from some quarters of the FFC, which regarded normalisation with Israel as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause and a departure from the remit of the transitional government.[38]

Reopening the Israeli question was less the brainchild of the military contingent's mindset in the Sudanese coalition government than it was borne of persistent pressures on the part of the Arab Coalition (the UAE and Saudi Arabia). Just as those Gulf powers had prevailed upon Burhan and Hemeti to join the war in Yemen, they subsequently pressured the leaders to sign onto the 'Abraham Accords', a trend, spearheaded by the UAE, aiming to normalise Arab relations with Israel.[39]

Relations with Egypt

All political forces that have come to power in Egypt have held that Sudan falls within the scope of their country's national security and represents its strategic depth. For this reason, Cairo has continually sought to maintain close relations with Khartoum. In this context, the government of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was greatly interested in developing relations with the transitional government in Sudan. The interest was inspired, in part, by the Sisi government's fight against the Muslim Brotherhood and pursuit of its rank and file at home and abroad. But for the most part, Egypt was eager to establish a close relationship with the military component in the transitional government with an eye to incorporating Sudan in the framework of the Egyptian security strategy. This desire was informed, in particular, by the threat Egypt perceives from Ethiopia due to the GERD project.

---

38 For more details on the relationship between al-Burhan and Israel, see: Abd al-Baqi al-Zafir, 'Riḥlat al-baḥth ʿam al-taṭbīʿ maʿ isrāʾīl… limādha ṭalab al-burhān an yakhlud ilā al-nawm ʿind al-ʿawda min abū ẓabī?' *Al Jazeera*, 25/9/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3CFeMnZ. al-Burhan later clarified that the decision to normalise with Israel came after long discussions with political and social powers that did not oppose this step, and that the partners in the transitional government are also partners in ending hostility with Israel. For an example of the objection of the Arab Communist Baath Party that is taking part in the transitional government, see: Abd al-Hameed Awad, 'Al-sūdān: ḥizb sūdānī sharīk fī al-ḥukm yuṭālib bi-muḥākamat al-mushārikī fī al-taṭbīʿ', *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 25/10/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/34E9lZHl.

Sources indicate that the United States, during the visit of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (2018-2021) to Khartoum, imposed normalisation of relations between Khartoum and Tel Aviv as a condition to remove Sudan from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism; see: 'Pompeo yujrī ittiṣālan maʿ ḥamdūk bi-shȧn izālat ism al-sūdān min qāʾimat al-duwal al-rāʿiya lil-irhāb', *CNN Arabic*, 22/10/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://cnn.it/3i4ryCS.

The Israeli Minister of Intelligence, Elie Cohen, and his delegation visited Khartoum a month after the Sudanese government agreed to normalise its relations with Israel on 26 January 2020. This date marked the siege of Khartoum by Ansar al-Mahdi in 1885. It is worth noting that the official media in Sudan made no mention of this visit. The Israeli minister mentioned that the delegation met with the president of the Sovereignty Council, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Defence Minister, Yassin Ibrahim, to discuss diplomatic, security, and economic issues. It is also worth mentioning that Sudan signed the Abraham Accords on 6 January 2021.

39 Here, we should make note of the regional factor in the Sudanese case. What is conspicuous is that the central military command that contributed to overthrowing al-Bashir's government (i.e., Ibn Auf, Hemeti, and al-Burhan) had direct connections with the Saudi-UAE-Egyptian camp; these leaders even participated directly in the Saudi-Yemeni war by deploying Sudanese Army units or the Rapid Support Forces to the battleground.

The Sudanese military leadership, aware of Egypt's influence within the UAE-Saudi-Israeli alliance, understood that getting involved would give them access to the coalition's logistic and/or military services, making them an indispensable player whether in the preservation of regional security and stability or in actual military engagements. In light of such prospects for mutual benefit, Cairo and Khartoum began a series of meetings between their military officials which culminated in a military cooperation agreement, signed on 2 March 2021,[40] followed by joint military manoeuvres between the Sudanese and Egyptian armies in May 2021.[41]

In the preceding paragraphs, we attempted to highlight some policies undertaken by the military side of the transitional government with the aim of protracting its stay in power and diversifying its sources of strength. It has, in fact, succeeded in achieving this end and in joining a regional alliance led by the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. In the process, the leader of this component, Lieutenant General Burhan, managed to prove to his regional allies that he is the crucial strongman in Khartoum whom they need to protect their interests. In the following section we will examine the civilian component to determine whether it, too, was pursuing the end of perpetuating its stay in power or, instead, was seriously committed to democratisation.

Obstacles Created by the Civilian Partner

Given that the civilian contingent in the transitional government consists of numerous political organisations, each seeking to attain its own aims, it cannot be assessed as a single political body. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the fact that ideological and practical reasons have led civilian stakeholders to share their military partners' desire to extend the transitional period and avoid general elections. Foremost among the reasons was that the ideological orientations of some of the constituent organisations are inconsistent with democratic principles; the Baath Party, for example, entertains a concept of democracy that has little to do with generally accepted definitions of democracy. It underscores the difference by using such terms as 'people's democracy' and 'democracy of participation and accomplishment'.[42]

The Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) also baulks at the notion of re-democratisation for ideological reasons, having questioned the value of democracy since the mid-1960s. It argued at times that Sudanese social foundations were too weak to support a Western-style parliamentary system due to the disproportionate weight of the country's conventional feudal forces. At other times it called for a new democracy that would limit the activities of counterrevolutionary forces.[43] The party termed this variety 'democracy of the society' in which the people would have an authentic role in policy design and decision-making, thereby ensuring true democratisation.

The main practical reason why left-wing organisations in power wanted to avoid elections was that any electoral process would open the doors to political forces they deemed undesirable, most notably the Umma Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, the Islamists who had been the mainstay of the former regime, and some traditional social forces. Most of the small parties that have come to dominate the political scene today, such as the Sudanese Baath, the Nasserist Democratic Unionist Party, and the Sudanese Communist Party, would lose their influence or vanish from the scene entirely were free elections held. The Imam Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the Umma Party, wields the 'election card' with precisely this in mind. He has

---

40 'Fī khiḍamm al-nizāʿ bayn al-sūdān wa Athyūbya wa Azmat sadd al-Nahḍa… ittifāqiyya jadīda tuwaṭṭid al-taʿāwun al-ʿaskarī bayn al-kharṭūm wa-l-qāhira', *Al Jazeera*, 3/3/2021, accessed on 20/4/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3xFF60B

41 'Tastamirr li-khamsat ayyām… inṭilāq munāwarat 'ḥumāt al-nīl' al-ʿaskariyya bayn al-jayshayn al-sūdānī wa-l-miṣrī', *Al Jazeera*, 26/5/2021, accessed on 20/4/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3Mm7yJ9

42 Abdulaziz Hussein al-Sawi, *Dirāsa Naẓariyya wa Taṭbīqiyya fī Tārīkh al-Sūdān al-Ḥadīth* (Khartoum: Dar Azza for Publishing, 2016), p. 7.

43 Kamal al-Juzouli, *al-Shuyūʿiyūn al-Sūdāniyūn wa-l-Dīmuqrāṭiyya* (Khartoum: Dar Azza for Publishing, 2003), pp. 79-80. For more on the concept of democracy in Marxist thought, see: Crawford Brough Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1966), pp. 13-17.

reminded those parties that his party had won a majority of parliamentary seats in every election held in Sudan and warned them that if they got up to any 'funny business' he would call for early elections.[44] The smaller political parties, therefore, began to speak of a 'democracy with guaranteed consequences', meaning elections should not be held until they could be assured of winning. Towards this end, they have worked to prolong the transitional period, insisting that elections should not take place until the processes of eradicating the old regime were complete. These included the restructuring of the military and security apparatuses and the realisation of domestic peace. As all these processes take a long time — and time is what those small groups need in order to strengthen their position in power and in society — there was a good likelihood they would reach an agreement with their military partner to extend the transitional period as long as possible.[45]

Although the SCP continued to share this outlook, call for the eradication of the old regime, and waver on the matter of re-democratisation, none of this reduced the mounting acrimony between it and its fellow FFC organisations, nor prevented it from withdrawing from the SPA and FFC. As noted in the party's Central Committee reports, the party leadership had reached the conclusion that the transitional government, in both its military and civilian components, was taking what it termed 'the soft-landing approach', taking up the same policies as the old regime that

> *serve the interests of the parasitic capitalist cliques and promote the linkage with regional and international forces that have no interest in the advancement of the revolution [... Instead, they] are conspiring against it in order to preserve their interests in Sudan and the region as a whole, so that they can continue to plunder Sudan's wealth and resources; use its geopolitical position to control this peoples and countries of the region; use Sudan's Red Sea coast to control that international and commercial waterway; and push Sudan into taking the same political path that leads to a country's underdevelopment, the impoverishment of its people, its subjugation to the dictates of foreign powers, and orbiting in the galaxy of global capitalism and its influence, all in the service of the accumulation and concentration of wealth in capitalist countries at the expense of the people and the nation.*[46]

The SCP would not have taken such a radical position had it not been so alarmed by implications of the Juba Peace Agreement between the transitional government and some of the militant movements.[47] To the party, that agreement signalled a victory for the military contingent, and the militant movements that signed it, such as the Justice and Equality Movement, had once espoused Islamist outlooks. In response, the SCP quickly turned to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, led by Abdulaziz al-Helu. The SPLM-North is a left-wing movement that shares many of the SCP's outlooks and positions. In September 2020, they concluded an agreement to counter the Juba agreement. In it, they reaffirmed their commitment to the revolution's rejection of any compromise or agreement called for by the soft-landing project and stressed the priority of rooting out the former regime and dismantling its parasitic capitalist pillars and system, and the need to begin laying the foundations for a new Sudan based on a socio-political method that achieves real democracy. In an expression of their conviction that the flame of the revolution was still burning, the SCP and SPLM-North released a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to "the achievement of

---

[44] 'Kānī mānī al-Imām.. al-ṣādīq al-mahdī yuṭālib bi-iʿṭāʾ ḥizbih aghlabiyyat ikhtiyārāt wulāt al-wilāyāt… mathā qāl wa limāthā yaʿtaqid thālik? al-ijāba fī al-vīdyu.. #vīdyu_būst #zūl_būst', *Facebook*, 13/1/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3J9R6KM

[45] In a public speech, Mr Mubarak al-Fadil, leader of the Umma Party, said that a military commander in the Sovereignty Council informed him of an offer proposed by the Forces of Freedom and Change to extend the transitional period by ten years.

[46] 'Dawrat al-lajna al-markaziyya yanāyir 2021 – al-waraqa al-siyāsiyya (4/5)', *Sudanese Communist Party Facebook*, 27/2/2021, accessed on 20/4/2022, at: https://bit.ly/37A7xCp

[47] 'Ittifāq Jūba lil-salām fī al-Sūdān: Taḥaddiyātuh wa Furaṣ Najāḥih', *Situation Assessment*, ACRPS, 10 December 2020, p. 3, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3I7e8k6

radical change and the making of a new Sudan"and to reforming the course of the transitional period, to be based on a democracy that is indivisible from the democracy of society, which is itself based on collective, grassroots action outside of official organisational frameworks and is organised through the independent, democratic platforms the masses have created and will create in the future, in order to secure their rights, participate in decision-making, and follow up on implementation.[48]

As a result of this course of action, the SCP now played both sides of the fence as a participant in the government and the opposition. On the one hand, it pushed some of its members to take up posts or duties in the government's administration; on the other hand, following its departure from the SPA and the FFC, it disassociated itself from the government and called for its fall. The strategy led some to dub the SCP the 'hidden ruler'.[49] Such radical, ideologically informed ideas and stances are par for the course among traditional Leninist parties which exclude any political groups that espouse alternative visions for society and try to come to power through periodic elections in accordance with normal democratic procedures. The attitude might be accepted by the party's base and supporters, but it does nothing to advance democratic transition.

Perhaps it is now obvious that neither the military nor the civilian wing of the transitional government have been keen on transitioning to democracy. This leaves only the external factors: will international political and economic powers play a key role in pushing the transitional government toward democratisation, as the Stepan model anticipates?

Foreign Powers and the Democratic Transition

In his transition model discussed earlier, Stepan spoke of some European instances of successful democratic transition via 'external military conquest', citing as examples the imposition of democracy on Germany and Italy after their defeat by the Allied Powers in World War II. He quickly points out that this experience was unique and unrepeatable. He also observes that most re-democratisation processes took place in the 1960s, and that they will be mainly driven by domestic political and social forces for the foreseeable future. While foreign military forces will not be involved, international political and economic powers and political blocs would continue to play an important role.

Stepan reached this conclusion in 1986, yet less than two decades later we watched attempts to impose democracy by external military conquest in Iraq (2003), Afghanistan (2001) and Libya (2011). This naturally leads us to ask: how might foreign powers support the transition to democracy? Will the US administration and EU countries push for democratisation in Sudan? We will attempt to answer these questions below.

EU Countries and the Transition to Democracy

EU countries have shown great concern for the situation in Sudan and maintained a significant presence in the Sudanese political sphere through their various embassies, missions, and envoys. Their interest is motivated by a variety of geopolitical and security reasons. Sudan (according to their assessment) directly influences the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, Africa, and the Middle East. Security circumstances in all these areas have direct and indirect impacts on the security and well-being of EU countries. Therefore, they believe that supporting the Sudanese people's transition to a democratic system will promote peace and stability across the region. We should note, however, that with regard to Sudan per se, they care only about two things: fighting extremism and terrorism, and stopping emigration and illegal migration to European countries. This requires strong governments that can act as border guards and preserve security and stability in the region.

---

48 'Ittifāq Siyāsī bayn al-ḥizb al-Shuyūʿī wa-l-ḥaraka al-Shaʿbiyya – al-ḥelu', *Sudanipost*, 6/9/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3t2O3hL

49 Yassir Mahjoub al-Hussein, 'al-Shuyūʿī' al-Sūdānī… al-ḥākim al-khafiy al-mutalawin', *al-Sharq*, 18/1/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3CHmu0D; Mohammed Ali.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the EU mission in Sudan has focused its attention on the military establishment and on educational standards and the content offered students in order to 'build a new and different generation of professionals for Sudan and the region'.[50] Accordingly, the military establishment's educational system must be developed to include 'combatting terrorism and human trafficking, border management, fighting smuggling, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping and peace-building'.[51]

In other words, when EU countries talk about helping Sudan with its transition to democracy, they mean, among other things, restructuring the Sudanese military establishment and changing its educational curriculum so that this establishment will safeguard and serve European interests and aims in the region. In this context, the strategic aim is not to let the Sudanese revolution succeed completely, which would bolster the Arab Spring wave, yet not to let it fail completely either, which would precipitate a descent into civil warfare that would become a source of instability and security breakdown in the region.

To facilitate this strategy, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2524 in June 2020. Jointly sponsored by the UK and Germany, the decision provided for the establishment of a mission to assist Sudan in the transitional period.[52] The purpose of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), as stated in the resolution, was to '[a]ssist the country's political transition towards democratic governance', the protection and promotion of human rights, and sustainable peace.[53] In his first briefing to the Security Council, Volker Perthes, who was appointed head of UNITAMS, identified the four strategic aims of the mission: to 'assist the political transition; support peace processes; assist peacebuilding, civilian protection and rule of law; and support the mobilization of economic, development and humanitarian assistance'.[54] Subsequently he said that he looked forward to working with the UN and its partners to support the peaceful transition to democracy in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 2524. However, apart from such statements, the EU, in our opinion, is unlikely to take definitive, practical steps to help accelerate democratic transition in Sudan.

The US and the Democratic Transition

One cannot help but note that once the administration of former US President Donald Trump (2017-2021) got what it wanted from Sudan (i.e., adding it to the collection of Arab states that have signed peace treaties with Israel), it stopped pushing the transitional government toward democratisation. When Congress passed the Sudan Democratic Transition, Accountability, and Fiscal Transparency Act of 2020, it met with Trump's veto. Congress overrode this with more than the required two-thirds majority, making the act binding on the Trump administration and its successor.

Will the Democratic administration under President Joe Biden (2021-) put the Sudan Democratic Transition Act into action and push for democratisation in Sudan? Or will it take the line of the Saudi-UAE-

---

[50] The press covered the mission's visit, by the President of the EU delegation Robert Van Den Dool and the EU ambassadors to Sudan, to the Nimeiri High Military Academy in Omdurman. Van Den Dool said that 'we are very interested to understand the level and content of the advanced education offered to students in this central institution, as well as the ongoing educational transformation that will cover human rights and international and humanitarian law that will lead to building a new, different generation of professionals in Sudan and the region'. He further insisted that the EU remains a strong supporter of the Sudanese people's transition to a real democracy [which could become] a beacon of safety and stability in the region. See: 'Al-safīr Robert Van: Amn al-sūdān muhimm jiddan bil-nisba lil-ittiḥād al-ūrūbbī', *SUNA*, 3/3/2021, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/35QVFuU

[51] This is according to Major General Ezz al-Din Othman Taha, director of the Academy, while welcoming the EU ambassadors and insisting that the Academy is in the process of developing an 'educational system' for the military and civilian students in the next stage that ensures fighting terrorism and human trafficking, managing the borders, combatting smuggling, conflict resolution, and peace-keeping and peace-building; see: Ibid.

[52] It is worth mentioning that this resolution followed a speech by Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok on 27 January 2020 addressing the UN Secretary-General, in which he requested the UN pursue a Security Council mandate to establish a process to support peace in accordance with Chapter VI of the UN Charter (viz. pacific settlement of disputes); see: 'Al-Sūdān yaṭlub min majlis al-amn inshāʾ biʿtha khāṣa li-daʿm al-salām', *Anadolu Agency*, 9/2/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3tWJi8V

[53] 'Majlis al-amn yuqarrir inshāʾ biʿtha umamiyya jadīda fī al- sūdān', *UN News*, 4/6/2020, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3i4ujEe

[54] For more on UNITAMS, see: https://bit.ly/3GMroNZ

Egyptian alliance which favours manufacturing a regime in Khartoum in their own image? It is impossible to come up with a definitive answer to this question because the Act was formulated in such a way as to leave things ambiguous. If the administration wants to press towards democratisation, the Act permits this, just as it permits steps to promote economic reform and the fight against corruption. The piece of legislation gives the administration a broad remit. It calls for support for: the protection of human rights, accountability for human rights crimes and abuses, oversight over intelligence and security services, strengthening rule of law and democratic governance, programmes to further economic growth, private sector production, opportunities for peace and long-term stability, utilisation of natural resources, the smooth transfer of power, strengthening government institutions and financial transparency, and fighting corruption.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the (European and American) international community are inclined to support the transition to democracy in Sudan, and to secure economic support for this process. But it is also clear that the international community's support comes with strings attached. The first demand, which is undisputed among partners abroad and at home, is to dismantle the security and administrative apparatuses created by the former regime and restructure these institutions to serve the aims of the European-American alliance and its partners in the region. The second demand is two-pronged. It requires, firstly, the transfer of power from the military side of the transitional government to the civilian side. It is a condition that is hard for the generals in power and their regional allies to accept. Secondly, it requires that Sudan submit to the prescriptions of the World Bank and IMF (especially those pertaining to lifting subsidies on essential goods and deregulating the local currency). The consequences of this would be hard for the Sudanese people to bear, to such an extent that they could trigger another grassroots uprising that would destroy all hope for the transition to democracy. The net result is that the democratic transition will remain incomplete.

Suitability of Alfred Stepan's Model to the Sudanese Case

It may now be appropriate to refer back to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper to see whether the transitologists' model helped us answer them. The explanatory ability of this model, as Stepan formulated it, seems clear and strong in some respects, but less so in others. Stepan anticipated that domestic socio-political forces would be the main drivers of most democratisation process, especially after a major change occurs within the authoritarian regime, and this certainly applies to a large extent to the Sudanese case. Firstly, the change was the product of an act undertaken by a group at the top of the military-security establishment within the regime; secondly, it was a response to grassroots pressures coordinated by a broad political front.[55]

It is irrefutable that the Sudanese Security Council, renamed the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and then became one of the transitional government partners, originated from within the regime. Lieutenant General Abdel Rahman Burhan had served as the inspector general of the armed forces, Lieutenant General Awad ibn Auf as Omar al-Bashir's first vice president and defence minister, and Lieutenant-General Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo (Hemeti) as commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the special forces of the regime. As for Lieutenant General Salah Gosh, the architect and executor of the coup operation against the Salvation government, he had been a pillar of the Bashir regime's security apparatus for many years.[56]

According to Stepan's model, a group of senior leaders in the regime would not take the initiative to overthrow it until the demands of opposition forces reached critical mass, nor unless these leaders could

[55] To speak of the military-security group's role in effecting change is not to diminish the role of the massive popular movement, which witnessed the participation of social sectors and political entities including the youth, professionals, and political parties. For more on this popular movement, see: 'Thawrat dīsambir: al-siyāqāt wa-l-fāʿilūn', pp. 1-4.

[56] It is worth mentioning that Gosh was abruptly discharged from the apparatus in 2009 and appointed a consultant for security affairs. He was discharged again in 2011 and arrested in 2012 on charges of participation in a coup attempt. He was released by presidential pardon in 2013 (after seven months in prison), then reinstated in the apparatus without warning on 11 February 2018.

hope to remain politically active and influential in the following period. This, too, conforms with the Sudanese case. Had key figures in the Sudanese military and security leaderships not felt the force of the grassroots opposition to the regime, and had some of these figures — Burhan and Hemeti, in particular — not wanted to ensure their personal safety and secure the interests of their regional allies, they would not have ventured on the new revolutionary course.

Stepan's model predicts that the opposition forces' success in forging a broad-based coalition is no guarantee of that coalition's sustainability. The alliance could dissolve and lose its potential for collective action just as quickly as it came together unless its leaders were equipped with the organisational skills and ideological flexibility to enable them to engage in essential major negotiating activities. This, too, applies to the Sudanese case. We have seen how the Professionals Association unravelled and how the FFC alliance remains plagued by rifts and fragmentation. We have also seen how the FFC's constituent parties and groups lacked the requisite organisational skills and ideological flexibility to conduct the bargaining processes needed to keep major alliances together.

On the other hand, the Sudanese case departs from the model in that opposition forces' ability to forge a coalition and work together to the regime did not translate into a foreseeable transition to democracy, regardless of whether the process was driven by civilian socio-political forces, as the Stepan model predicts, or by the military-security collective that had turned against the regime.

A starker contrast between the Sudanese case and the model has two facets. One is that the opposition political forces did not enter talks with the Islamist-dominated civilian quarters of the regime's leadership hierarchy but with the military-security component, one which is not supported by an active political institution and lacks deep social roots. This is a sign that we are not looking at a kind of broad coalition that could be expected to carry out the process of democratic transformation.

The second facet reveals a greater divergence from the model. Although senior military and security leaders in the Sudanese regime supported the revolution, as was the case in Spain, this support did not emanate from an independent 'reformist will' such as that displayed by regime figures in the post-Franco era. After Franco died, he was succeeded by Juan Carlos in November 1975. As reigning monarch, Carlos enjoyed full constitutional powers and control of material resources. Yet, he opted to lead a democratic transformation and, as such, personally became the engine of change. Carlos chose Filipe González, a member of the old guard, to serve as prime minister. In that capacity, González drew on his political expertise to extend his influence over the bureaucratic establishment while King Carlos steered the democratisation process with acumen and finesse. The result was one of the few instances of the transition from the grip of an authoritarian regime to a (pluralistic, parliamentary) democratic system through 'reform from above' without civil war, popular revolution, or foreign military intervention.[57]

The Sudanese case has nothing comparable. President Bashir did not leave power as a result of natural death, as had Franco. Burhan did not assume control as a legitimate successor to the head of the former regime nor in accordance with the constitution, as did King Juan Carlos (1975-2014) in Spain; instead, he came to power by dint of a scheme, devised by regional actors (the UAE-Saudi-Egyptian axis), which was antidemocratic and bent on obstructing any democratisation process in the Arab region.[58] Then he was confirmed in this position, in form, by virtue of a new Constitutional Charter co-signed with opposition forces. Unlike González in Spain, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok did not come from the ranks of the

---

57 Eric Solsten & Sandra W. Meditz (eds.), *Spain: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1988).

58 Azmi Bishara, 'Mulāḥaẓāt ʿan al-ʿĀmil al-Khārijī fī al-Intiqāl al-Dīmuqrāṭī', *Siyasat Arabiya*, no. 38 (May 2019), pp. 7-24.

former regime, nor did he have González's ability or expertise to cause government institutions to move in the directions he wanted or to communicate effectively with the various political and social forces.

The Sudanese case thus exposes some shortcomings of the Stepan model. The model gives no consideration to the output of 'dependency theories' studies, nor does it significantly account for the (direct or indirect) influence of external forces, whether in the process of overthrowing the regime or in the process of democratic transition. Azmi Bishara draws attention to these shortcomings in his examination of the role played by external factors in the transition to democracy (at the global level), demonstrating that the transitologists' model cannot be applied to a number of cases, including the Arab case, and underscores the extent to which the regional environment was a factor that complicated the transition to democracy in the Arab world.[59] This study on the Sudan case observes the same phenomena that Bishara noted and described in other cases around the world where the external factor was instrumental to either accelerating or impeding the transition to democracy. In Sudan, the (regional) external factor played a crucial part in the overthrow of the Salvation regime and continued to play a central role in efforts to obstruct democratisation. In fact, in the Sudanese case, we could say that the regional factor is no longer a foreign element but rather akin to a key domestic political player.

In this regard, we must ask a final question concerning the Stepan model. Presuming that the interim government does not wish or is unable to proceed with the transition to democracy, will it evolve into another authoritarian system, or will it collapse, opening the doors to anarchy and civil strife? The model as first formulated in 1986 does not offer a satisfying answer. This led Stepan to publish another study more than 25 years later, in 2013, titled "Democratization Theory and the 'Arab Spring'". He asks what concepts from earlier works on democratisation need to be modified, and what new perspectives researchers need in order to comprehend what happened during and after the Arab Spring uprisings. A major modification (or revision) he introduced to his transition model is particularly striking: Stepan now posited that the transition from an authoritarian regime might not be to a democratic system (the basis of his previous model) but rather to a regime that mixes authoritarian and democratic elements. He termed it the 'authoritarian-democratic hybrid'[60] and explained that, in such a system, most major actors believe that they will lose legitimacy and their followers' support should they fail to embrace certain core features of democracy (such as elections to produce the leaders of government). At the same time, they conclude that they must also retain (or at least allow) some authoritarian controls on key aspects of the emerging polity if they hope to further their goals and (again) retain their supporters.[61]

Conclusion

The new position developed by Stepan will certainly come as a disappointment to advocates of democratisation. But it will be welcomed by authoritarian regimes in the Arab region and met with an element of relief among many European-American decision-makers, especially those who feel morally uneasy toward, and face popular opposition at home because of, their support for authoritarian regimes that abuse human rights, but who simultaneously believe that the fall of those regimes would jeopardise their country's interests in the region. Therefore, it is not unlikely that the agreed-upon aim among those international powers and their authoritarian partners in the region is to transition Sudan into a 'hybrid' system that would leave certain elements of the former authoritarian regime in possession of the keys to power while preserving a minimal level of democracy.

59 Ibid.

60 Alfred Stepan & Juan J. Linz, 'Democratization Theory and the "Arab Spring"', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 24, no. 2 (April 2013), p. 20.

61 Ibid.

Should this be the case, the ruling military-civilian alliance will find support from the US and the EU countries (and their regional allies) that will enable it to dismantle the institutions of the former regime, assimilate a number of militant movements into the political process, strengthen the relationship with the regional power triumvirate (the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt), phase into the international security and economic orders, and gradually evolve into a 'hybrid' regime. Domestically, the transitional government will encounter challenges of a magnitude that could not only bring down the transitional government but may also lead to the collapse of the Sudanese state itself. The foremost challenge has to do with the country's abnormal military structures: Sudan has four active armies operating on the ground, not to mention the forces at the command of the militant movements. Moreover, a portion of the military, security, and police forces remain loyal to the National Congress Party.[62] It is impossible to say for certain whether the military component of the transitional government has the ability to control this complicated military situation and restructure the forces (in accordance with the allies' specifications) or whether it will follow in the footsteps of the Bashir regime and be ousted from power. The other challenges pertain to the civilian contingent of the transitional government: firstly, the splintering of its political alliance and inability of its constituent groups to agree on an acceptable formula for joint action; secondly, the inability to build new government institutions by which the state directs the revolutionary momentum and translates it into realities on the ground; and, thirdly, the inability to remedy the increasingly grave economic crisis.

As it tries to extricate itself from this predicament, the transitional government will find itself following two parallel courses. One is to fully engage in the order of the Saudi-UAE-Egyptian regional triumvirate's axis: a course that will be pursued by the military component and the civilian groups that favour it. The other is to reignite the grassroots revolution by mobilising the poor and underprivileged who can from time to time be roused to march and demonstrate in the streets and squares. This is the course that some left-wing parties (above all the SCP) will take, as well as many youth groups that championed the revolution from the outset. Perhaps these difficult choices are what made the prime minister appear more pessimistic than usual in a speech to the Sudanese people:

> *our country is facing harsh circumstances that threaten its unity and cohesion, in which the discourse of hate and the spirit of tribal discord run rampant. This state of fracture could lead us to a state of anarchy in which gangs and criminal groups prevail. It also contributes to the spread of animosity among all segments of the population, which could bring about a civil war that would destroy everything. This danger threatens not only our country; it could drag the entire region into instability. Any threat of instability in a country such as Sudan will present a unique and qualitatively different situation, unprecedented in the world.*[63]

It appears that the prime minister's reference to a devastating civil war was not so much a diagnosis of the current domestic situation as it was an urgent appeal to the international community (viz. the EU and the US) to step in before it is too late. It echoed a previous appeal Hamdok made to the UN secretary-general to intervene to protect the transitional period.

If there is a lesson we can draw from the successful models of democratic transition (such as that in Spain) it is, as one researcher put it, that 'democracy has to be chosen by real, live political actors who have plenty of room for making the wrong and right decisions', and that 'it hinges on effective and legitimate political leadership supported by competent and well-organised political institutions with deep roots in

62 'Thawrat dīsambir: al-siyāqāt wa-l-fāʿilūn'.

63 'al-Sūdān #sūnā/ khiṭāb dawlat rảīs majlis al-wuzarāʾ dr. ʿaballah ḥamdūk lil-umma al- sūdāniyya', *Youtube*, 15/6/2021, accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3tS2IvB

society'. [64] Unfortunately, most of such qualities and conditions are lacking in the current Sudanese case. Political actors (both civilian and military) do not have the room to make major decisions — many of them lack popular legitimacy and/or executive efficacy, and they are not supported by well-organised political institutions with roots in society. Indeed, Stepan himself said that democratic transformation is not as contingent on the existence of institutions as on the type of leaders who are committed to its values and endowed with political acumen.

[64] Omar G. Encarnacion, 'Spain After Franco: Lessons in Democratization', *World Policy Journal*, vol. 18, no. 4 (Winter 2001/2002), p. 43.

References

‘Ittifāq Jūba lil-salām fī al-Sūdān: Taḥaddiyātuh wa Furaṣ Najāḥih’. *Situation Assessment*. ACRPS. 10 December 2020. Accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3I7e8k6

‘Thawrat dīsambir: al-siyāqāt wa-l-fāʿilūn wa taḥaddiyāt al-intiqāl al-dīmuqrāṭī fī al-sūdān’. *Reports*. ACRPS. 2/6/2020. Accessed on 13/3/2022, at: https://bit.ly/35TXtn1

al-Juzouli, Kamal. *al-Shuyūʿiyūn al-Sūdāniyūn wa-l-Dīmuqrāṭiyya.* Khartoum: Dar Azza for Publishing, 2003.

al-Sawi, Abdulaziz Hussein. *Dirāsa Naẓariyya wa Taṭbīqiyya fī Tārīkh al-Sūdān al-Ḥadīth*. Khartoum: Dar Azza for Publishing, 2016.

Bishara, Azmi. ‘Mulāḥaẓāt ʿan al-ʿĀmil al-Khārijī fī al-Intiqāl al-Dīmuqrāṭī’. *Siyasat Arabiya*. no. 38 (May 2019).

Encarnacion, Omar G. ‘Spain After Franco: Lessons in Democratization’. *World Policy Journal*. vol. 18. no. 4 (Winter 2001/2002).

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twenties Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

Macpherson, Crawford Brough. *The Real World of Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press,1966.

O’Donnell, Guillermo, Philippe C. Schmitter & Laurence Whitehead (eds.). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*. Baltimore/ London: John Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row Publisher, 1942.

Solsten, Eric & Sandra W. Meditz (eds.). *Spain: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1988.

Stepan, Alfred & Juan J. Linz. ‘Democratization Theory and the “Arab Spring”’. *Journal of Democracy*. vol. 24. no. 2 (April 2013).

Wiarda, Howard J. ‘Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Comparative Politics: Transitology and the Need for New Theory’. *World Affairs*. vol. 164. no. 4 (Spring 2002).

Zielinski, Jakub. ‘Transitions from Authoritarian Rule and the Problem of Violence’. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. vol. 43. no. 2 (April 1999).

ANALYSIS FROM THE ARAB OPINION INDEX

Hicham Raïq*

The Digital Divide and Political Apathy

A Multivariate Logistic Regression Analysis of a Sample of Arab Opinion Index Data**

الفجوة الرقمية والعزوف عن المشاركة السياسية

تحليل انحدار لوجستي ثنائي الاستجابة لعيّنة من بيانات المؤشر العربي

Abstract: This study seeks to measure the digital divide and its impact on political participation in selected Arab countries. It focuses in particular on assessing the role of demographic and socio-economic status (SES) in unequal access to the internet. A multivariate logistic regression analysis was used to predict political participation based on SES and internet use. Based on Arab Opinion Index data, the results of the analysis indicate that SES (gender, age, income and educational level) plays a major role in the level of Internet access, and that the purpose for which the internet is used determines the likelihood of political participation. The results also indicate that vulnerable social groups are more reluctant to participate in political activities.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Logistic Regression, Political Participation, Social Inequality, Internet.

الملخص: تركز هذه الورقة على قياس الفجوة الرقمية ومدى تأثيرها في المشاركة السياسية في مجموعة من الدول العربية، وتهدف إلى تقييم الدور الذي تؤديه المحددات الديموغرافية والسوسيو-اقتصادية في الحد من الوصول إلى الإنترنت. جرى استخدام منهج تحليل الانحدار اللوجستي Logistic Regression المتعدد المتغيرات للتنبؤ بالمشاركة السياسية التي تؤثر في المحددات السوسيو-اقتصادية واستخدام الإنترنت. وتشير نتائج التحليل، استنادًا إلى بيانات «المؤشر العربي»، الذي يصدره المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات، إلى أن محددات المكانة الاجتماعية (الجنس والعمر والدخل والمستوى التعليمي) لا تزال تؤدي دورًا رئيسًا في التأثير في مستوى الوصول إلى الإنترنت. وأظهرت النتائج أن الغرض من استخدام الإنترنت يحدد احتمالية المشاركة السياسية، كما أظهرت أيضًا ارتفاع احتمالية العزوف عن المشاركة السياسية لدى الفئات الاجتماعية الهشة.

كلمات مفتاحية: الفجوة الرقمية، المشاركة السياسية، الانحدار اللوجستي، الفوارق الاجتماعية، الإنترنت.

* Professor of Quantitative Methods, Department of Social Sciences; Research Coordinator, Social Sciences and Humanities Cluster, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University, P.O. Box: 2713, Doha, Qatar.
Email: hraiq@qu.edu.qa

** This study was originally published in Arabic in: Hicham Raïq, "The Digital Divide and Political Apathy: A Multivariate Logistic Regression Analysis of a Sample of Arab Opinion Index Data,"*Siyasat Arabiya*, no. 56 (May 2022), pp. 139-155, and was translated by Nancy Roberts. *Siyasat Arabiya* is a bimonthly peer-reviewed political science and international relations journal.

Introduction

Several studies reveal a digital divide between wealthy developed countries and poor developing countries based on unequal access to modern information and communication technology. These studies also highlight differences between urban and rural areas, age, gender, income, educational levels, and other influences on access to modern technology, especially internet use.[1]

According to the latest statistics of the International Telecommunication Union (2021),[2] there are still 2.9 billion people in the world who are not connected to the internet. With weak modern communication infrastructure,[3] the poorest countries miss many opportunities to integrate and involve different social groups in development. The Covid-19 pandemic did nothing to shrink the gap between countries. On the contrary, these disparities were exacerbated by the challenges presented by remote learning, bearing in mind that over half the population of the Arab world have no internet at home,[4] most notably Sudan, Mauritania and Yemen, which have no greater access than the world's poorest regions.[5]

According to the indicators available to the International Telecommunication Union (2021), the percentage of internet users increased from 15% in 2005 to 63% in 2021. However, this does not mean that all countries benefited to the same extent. In Arab countries, this percentage currently comes to 66%, which is lower than that recorded on the European continent (87%) or the American continent (81%). However, the percentage of internet users in Arab countries is higher than that recorded in the poorest countries, where the rate of internet use comes to no more than 27%. It is clear from these figures that there is a digital gap between the regions of the world in terms of internet use, and that Arab countries rank higher than some other regions. However, the percentage of internet users recorded in the Arab world does not reflect the actual disparities among the countries of this region.

The United Nations report titled, "The Digital Divide and Open Governments in the Arab Region"for the year 2021[6] points to major differences among Arab countries. In Mauritania and Yemen, internet users only account for 30% of the total population, while in Sudan and Syria the percentage is no more than 35%. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, by contrast, have the highest rates, with more than 90% of their populations using the internet. It appears from the data provided in this report that the gap among Arab countries is the greatest between a state like Qatar, which comes in first at 99.7%, and Mauritania, which records the lowest percentage (20.8%). The differences can be even more serious when rural areas are compared to urban areas. According to the International Telecommunication Union,[7] 88% of urban areas in the Arab world have 4 GB mobile network coverage (allowing access to wireless internet at a much higher speed), while this coverage comes to no more than 55% in rural areas.

It should be noted that the digital divide separates not only countries and regions, but social groups as well. Data from the International Telecommunication Union report[8] indicates that globally, the percentage of internet use among males comes to 62% as compared to 57% among females. This gap is wider in the

---

1 Jan van Dijk, *The Digital Divide* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), pp. 11-13.

2 ITU Publications, *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2021, International Telecommunication Union* (Geneva: 2021), accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3P7nwaR

3 The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3QdulJd

4 Rasha Faek & Tarek Abd El-Galil, "The Shift to Online Education in the Arab World is Intensifying Inequality,"*al-Fanar Media*, 30/4/2020, accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3C9hWCf

5 Ankita Upadhyay, "Covid-19: How Online Classes Have Widened the Digital Divide,"*The Times of India*, 5/7/2021, accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3bEN5lU

6 UN, "Digital divide and open government in the Arab region,"the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (Beirut: United Nations, 2021), accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3zG8m6J

7 ITU Publications.

8 Ibid.

Arab world, with a rate of 68% among males and 56% among females. The same report indicates that globally, young people (15-24 years of age) record the highest rate of Internet use (71%) compared to other age groups (60%). Similar figures emerge from in the Arab world, where the rate of Internet use among youth is 73% compared to other age groups (60%).

Access to the internet clearly offers many benefits, while the lack thereof has negative consequences. Research on the digital divide has begun shifting from the study of indicators related to the presence of an internet connection (referred to as the first-level digital divide) to indicators on other levels such as internet skills and the tangible benefits of internet use.[9] In this context, the problem of the digital divide can be viewed not only through the percentage of people connected to the internet, but as a basic indicator for understanding the differences among Arab societies in terms of social integration through political participation. Therefore, this paper considers the digital divide as related to the possibility of acquiring digital knowledge and tools in order to exercise citizenship through genuine participation in various activities of relevance to the development of Arab societies. Given the impossibility of covering all areas, the paper is limited to certain types of political participation and the extent of non-participation as a result of the digital divide.

The first question posed by this research is: If Arab countries differ in terms of access to the internet, how does this impact political participation? Can it be said that the lower the percentage of internet use in a community is, the less political participation there will be? The relationship between these two phenomena may overlap with another problem related to social differences in general, especially in view of the fact that, according to several studies, the level of internet use and the purposes behind it may differ as a function of variables such as gender, age, income, and educational level.[10] The second question asks: What is the relationship between internet use and socio-economic and demographic determinants? Based on the answer to this question, the paper discusses the digital divide not only among countries, but also among social groups, recognising that this gap may vary according to economic and political attitudes, and even the characteristics of Arab societies. The third question is: In light of the digital divide, what is the impact of social differences on political participation? This question will enable analysis differences among social groups, and will determine which groups are more aloof from or engaged in political activities. The study crucially utilises data from the Arab Opinion Index,[11] which provides variables for measuring the level of internet use in relation to political participation in a number of Arab countries.

Logistic Regression Methodology for Predicting Political Participation

The methodological importance of this research lies in the use of advanced quantitative tools to study the impact of the digital divide on political participation, especially with the availability of coordinated data for a group of Arab countries. The study focuses on ten Arab countries (Jordan, Tunisia, Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and Mauritania).[12] These countries were selected according to the data available from the Arab Opinion Index Survey (2017-2018), which includes a sample of 16,500 respondents from the aforementioned countries.

9 A. J. van Deursen & J. A. van Dijk, "The First-Level Digital Divide Shifts from Inequalities in Physical Access to Inequalities in Material Access,"*New Media Soc*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2019), p. 355.

10 UN, 2021.

11 ACRPS, Public Opinion Measurement Program, Arab Opinion Index 2017/2018, accessed on 7/8/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3BQ3DCj

12 Saudi Arabia was omitted due to a lack of variables regarding political participation.

Variables Used in the Analysis

Variables related to the use of the internet and social media: This set (as independent variables) consists of a main variable related to Internet use generally. This variable was measured based on respondents' self-evaluation of their level of internet use on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates almost no internet use, and 5 indicates its use several times a day. This variable was used to compare and rank countries by level of internet use. Then the digital divide was assessed based on the relationship between internet use and demographic and socio-economic variables. In addition, a set of nine variables from the Arab Opinion Index (2017-2018) related to the use of social media were selected and measured on a scale from 1 to 5. These variables indicate the purpose of Internet use via social media. Due to the high correlation among variables relating to the purpose for Internet use, the number was reduced by means of a factor analysis,[13] and the conversion of the nine variables into two aggregate axes (see Table 1).[14] The variable is correlated with the axis when the load factor[15] exceeds 0.4, while each axis represents a set of variables that are more consistent with the factor.[16]

It is clear from Table (1) that the first axis focuses on variables such as primarily on family and friends, getting to know people, and cultural and social activities. It measures to some extent the level of social media use without a true orientation towards issues of public interest. As for the second axis, it measures the level of social media use with an orientation towards issues of public affairs, including the aims of obtaining political information and interacting with social and political issues, including the organisation of activities. The variables on the first axis were combined into a single variable representing the average of the four variables on a scale from 1 to 5. Similarly, the second axis's five variables were combined into a single variable representing their average on a scale from 1 to 5.

Table (1): Axes according to the purpose for social media use

Axis 2 Load Factor	Axis 1 Load Factor	Variables Relating to Social Media Use
	0.593	To contact family and friends
	0.651	To meet new people
	0.644	To learn about social and cultural activities/events
	0.572	To find out what people are talking about
0.436		To glean news/political information
0.708		To express an opinion on current political events
0.694		To interact with a social issue
0.894		To interact with a political issue
0.740		To organise an activity relating to a public issue, such as social demands or a political cause

Source: Results of the factor analysis prepared by the researcher based on the Arab Opinion Index (2017-2018). The variable is correlated with the axis when the load factor exceeds 0.4.

13 Norm O'Rourke & Larry Hatcher, *A Step-by-Step Approach to Using SAS® for Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling* (Chicago: SAS Institute Inc, 2007), pp. 43-44.

14 Several methods were used to extract the axes, including rotation, which allowed for the existence of correlation. In this way, the number of axes was determined using a criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1.

15 O'Rourke & Hatcher, p. 22.

16 Cronbach's alpha is above 0.7.

Demographic and socio-economic variables: This set of variables (as independent variables) consists of gender, age, income and educational level. These variables are considered essential for measuring the social gap in Internet use.

Variables related to political participation: The Arab Opinion Index data contain a set of variables to measure political participation (as a dependent variable). The Ekman and Amnå study indicated[17] that there is a type of participation which is linked to activities based on movements by activists to express a position and make citizens' voices heard, and which can be classified as informal political participation.[18] The Arab Opinion Index data includes variables on this subject via the following questions: 1- "During the past twelve months, have you signed a petition or a letter of document of protest?"2- "During the past twelve months, have you participated in a peaceful demonstration/march or sit-in?"3- "During the past 12 months, have you joined an activist group working to lobby/support/mobilise for a public or societal cause?"

Sample respondents answered on a dual-response scale (yes/no). These questions were then collected by creating a new dual-response variable (informal participation) to be determined as follows: 1- Affirmative response to at least to one of the three aforementioned questions, 0- Non-participation in any of the three activities mentioned. According to Ekman and Amnå's classification, there is also formal political participation through activities directly related to voting in elections and party affiliation. The Arab Opinion Index contains the following questions to measure this aspect: 1- Do you intend to vote in the upcoming parliamentary/legislative elections? 2- Are you affiliated with a political party/collective/current or group? 3- Do you intend to join a political party/collective/current or group in the future? Sample respondents answered on a two-response scale (yes/no). These questions were then collected by creating a new dual-response variable (formal participation) to be determined as follows: 1: Affirmative response to at least to one of the three aforementioned questions, or 0: non-participation in any of the activities mentioned.

The Logistic Regression Model

The independent variables in this study consist of: (1) internet and social media use, and (2) demographic and socioeconomic determinants. The logistic regression model was used[19] as a statistical tool to study the impact of independent inputs on the expected output (political participation). In the results table, odds ratios are presented to determine the predictive power of independent variables and their impact on political participation through two logistic regression analysis models. In the first model, "informal participation"was the dependent variable, and in the second model, "formal participation"was the dependent variable. Odds ratios were obtained by converting the logistic regression coefficient into predictive values[20] capable of interpreting and analysing participation (or non-participation) in a manner that would be more accurate and more consistent with the features of the available data. To enhance the model's performance and explanatory power, only the independent variables with statistical significance were kept in the final model. These variables were obtained by means of the backward stepwise deletion regression method.[21] Thus, each time the model removed the least significant variable until it arrived at a parsimonious final model containing only the statistically significant independent variables. In addition, a weighting variable was used to correct sampling errors.

[17] Joakim Ekman & Erik Amnå, "Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology,"*Human Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2012), p. 292.

[18] Xavier Lemyre, "Jeunes, participation et engagement au Canada,"Patrimoine canadien, September 2016, p. 3, accessed on 9/10/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3Vg4BPg

[19] David Hosmer & Stanley Lemshow, *Applied Logistic Regression* (New Jersey: Wiley, 2013), p. 18.

[20] Hicham Raiq & Mohamed Ourya, "The extent of youth satisfaction in light of political and economic transformations after the Arab Spring: A dual-response logistic regression analysis of a sample from the Maghreb,"*Arab Politics*, no. 46 (2020), p. 81.

[21] Hosmer & Lemshow, p. 139.

Digital Opportunities and the Multidimensional Nature of Political Engagement

As stated in an article published on the website of the University of Munich,[22] one of the best definitions of political participation may be the comment made of old by Greek leader Pericles,[23] who believed that citizens never neglect the state, however busy they may be with family concerns, and that even business owners have a positive view of politics and its impact on society. In this context, we go from being merely actors within the sphere of private life to citizens interested in their country's public life. The influence of politics cannot be separated from individuals' daily lives, nor can the impact of individuals' daily practices be separated from the political life of the state as a whole. In his day, Pericles was keen in his speeches to motivate citizens to actively participate in public affairs, and even offered salaries[24] to those who contributed to services that benefited the public. The purpose of this was to foster democratic notions and open the way for participation by new societal groups. Our situation today differs little from that of ancient societies, since the concept of political participation in contemporary societies continues to be linked to citizen activities related to matters and issues of public concern.

Participation in public affairs is linked to multiple areas; it also introduces concepts that have become widespread in the social and political sciences and other disciplines. However, some ambiguities may still prevail. In several studies, for example, the ideas of political participation and civic engagement in reference to the means and levels of citizens' involvement in issues of public concern are combined into a single category[25] that may include overlapping types of activities. This is due in part to the multiple definitions that may either intersect with or complement each other. When Putnam introduced the concept of civic engagement that was popularised in the early 1990s, he emphasised the importance of social capital for citizen participation, including everything from reading the newspaper to local sports, leisure activities and more, without providing a precise definition of the term.[26] The concept of civic engagement has evolved over time, and numerous studies have defined it as "all the ways in which individuals participate in public life,"[27] or "actions taken by citizens in pursuit of common interests."[28] Accordingly, new classifications of political and civic participation have been proposed in view of their multiple dimensions.

Some define civic engagement quite broadly to include multiple concerns, while viewing political participation as narrow, including only those actions and activities whose aim is to impact political outcomes.[29] In another classification, Ekman and Amnå[30] view civic engagement as a kind of latent (or quiet) political engagement which may be transformed from a personal interest in societal issues to collective action through volunteer work within associations to improve conditions in the local community and contribute to charitable work. Such actions differ from Manifest political participation, which is characterised by voluntary activities undertaken by the public to influence public policy. Manifest political engagement may be embodied directly and formally in party affiliation or voting to choose the people who will set policies.

---

22 Berk Orkun Isa & Mustafa Eray Yucel, "A Theory of Political Participation,"in: *Munich Personal RePEc Archive* (2020), pp. 1-2, accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3Vg4BPg

23 He lived in ancient Greece between 495 and 429 BC.

24 Vincent Azoulay, *Périclès: La démocratie athénienne à l'épreuve du grand homme* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2015), p. 109.

25 Reinhold Hedtke & Tatjana Zimenkova, *Education for Civic and Political Participation: A Critical Approach* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), p. 192.

26 Ekman & Amnå, pp. 283-284.

27 Monica Bala, "Civic Engagement in the Age of Online Social Networks,"*Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice,* vol. 6, no. 1 (2014), p. 768.

28 Marko M. Skoric, Qinfeng Zhu, Debbie Goh & Natalie Pang, "Social media and citizen engagement: A meta-analytic review,"*New Media & Society,* vol. 18, no. 9 (2016), p. 1822.

29 Ekman & Amnå, p. 285.

30 Ibid, p. 192.

Several studies have measured such participation based on the rate at which people vote in elections,[31] especially in view of the fact that when citizens vote, their participation takes on a distinctive flavour, since they know that a single vote is unlikely to change the overall outcome, yet this knowledge does not deter them from participating.[32] Yet, however important elections are, Manifest political participation is not limited to election-related activities. There are other, informal, ways in which people can participate, whether individually or collectively. In this context, political participation may take the form of protests, demonstrations or signing petitions to express a position and make citizens' voices heard by those in power.[33]

Studies vary in their understanding of how political participation relates to the internet. They view participation as an "action", whereas merely watching television, visiting websites, or claiming to be interested in politics or information about civil society does not constitute actual participation.[34] The opportunities provided by the internet to inform oneself about what is happening in the political arena may give the impression that there has been an increase in political participation, whereas in reality, such opportunities are no guarantee of genuine participation. Living as they do in an Internet-saturated society, citizens have access to an enormous amount of information related to political and societal life, including applications for dealing with the governmental and non-governmental sectors, which gives rise to the hope that this will stimulate political participation.[35] However, in light of official institutions' domination over network systems, one might reasonably wonder how voluntary citizens' participation really is, and what freedoms they enjoy in this realm. True participation cannot be imposed by directives, rules and the like.[36]

Overall, political participation in developed societies has come to be based on digital citizenship,[37] which requires governments to guarantee citizens' right to freely acquire knowledge and arrive at their own convictions concerning the political and societal issues circulating via digital media. The internet may thus become an ideal tool for supporting greater political participation through the general advancement of individuals' ability to exchange information and communicate without restrictions. These media also provide many opportunities for the exchange of viewpoints via dialogue platforms, which provide a public space where people can take part in activities that foster full-fledged citizenship. Furthermore, the internet provides a wide margin of freedom to voice ideas, attitudes and criticisms relating to issues of common interest, and to scrutinise the laws and rules that govern the exercise of public authority and the implementation of policy.[38] In these ways, the internet can empower citizens to relate with greater awareness to government institutions.

Nevertheless, some studies find that political participation has not improved significantly through the means provided by the internet. Statistics indicate that this participation is mainly limited to using the internet to obtain government services, complete administrative procedures, or engage in activities of a local nature, whereas political participation in the form of elections or political party activities has made little progress.[39] There are two possible reasons for this: First, there is a relative lack of interest in local channels with the domination of major international corporations that monopolize the media sphere (including electronic media). Second: For many citizens in the Arab world, the main source of political information is the official channels of the mass media, where the opinions expressed reflected a notable absence of diversity. In this sort of atmosphere, citizens will not necessarily increase their ambition for

---

31 M. Hawkesworth & M. Kogan, *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, vol. 1 (London/ New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 428.
32 Isa & Yucel, p. 1.
33 Ekman & Amnå, p. 292.
34 Jan W. van Deth, "A conceptual map of political participation,"*Acta Politica,* vol. 49, no. 3 (2014), p. 351.
35 Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 383, 392.
36 Van Deth, p. 352.
37 Aytekin Isman & Ozlem Canan Gungoren, "Being Digital Citizen,"*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences,* no. 106 (2013), p. 251.
38 Darin Barney, *The Network Society* [Arabic], Anwar Jamaawi (trans.) (Doha: ACRPS, 2015), p. 165.
39 Dijk, p. 145.

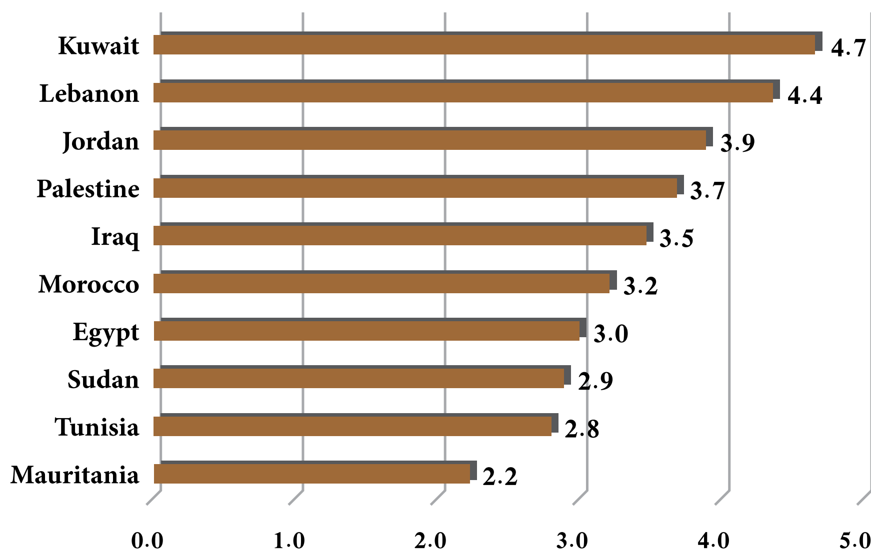
political participation.[40] On the contrary, they may go in search of the endlessly varied opportunities for digital communication in areas that have nothing to do with politics, such as their professional, personal, or recreational interests.

In parallel with the multiple dimensions of political participation, it should be noted that the Arab world has witnessed important transformations since the Arab Spring, in which modern means of communication played a major role. These events had the effect of re-arranging spaces for political participation. Arab regimes' partial openness towards new spaces may well stimulate participation, especially in countries that have witnessed transformations in multiple sectors. However, these countries still face challenges with respect to how to interact with the new spaces for political practice, and how to make them a practical success. Even in the Arab countries that have not experienced major transformations, there is at least some discussion of reshaping the space for political participation.[41] This study examines how Arab citizens have interacted with these spaces based on the internet usage.

Results

Figure 1 shows that according to Arab Opinion Index data, Arab countries differ in terms of internet use. The figures represent the average level of internet use on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 represents almost no Internet use, and 5 represents quite intensive use). The highest level was recorded in Kuwait and Lebanon, while the weakest was recorded in Sudan, Tunisia and Mauritania (lower than 3 out of 5).

Figure (1): Comparative levels of Internet use in Arab countries on a scale from 1 to 5



In addition to the existence of a gap between Arab countries, there is also a gap within each society. It is clear from Table (2) below that internet use differs among social groups according to demographic characteristics, a phenomenon which is found in all Arab countries. For example, the level of internet use among females is lower than that among males (except for Kuwait and Lebanon); similarly, it is low among older age groups (55 years and over), those with low incomes (except Kuwait), and the citizens with low educational level.

40 Pippa Norris, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the internet Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 98.

41 Assia Boutaleb et al., *Introduction aux mondes arabes en (r) évolution* (Paris: Deboeck, 2018), p. 130.

Table (2): Comparing Arab countries in terms of internet use by demographic and socio-economic characteristics. The numbers indicate the averages of internet use on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 represents almost no internet use, and 5 represents very frequent use).

	Jordan	Tunisia	Sudan	Iraq	Palestine
Gender:					
• **female**	3.9	2.5***	2.8**	3.2***	3.5***
• **male**	3.9	3.2	3.0	3.8	3.9
Age:					
• **18-34**	4.2	3.9	3.4	3.8	4.2
• **35-54**	3.9	2.5	3.6	3.2***	3.5
• **55 +**	2.7***	1.7**	1.7***	2.7***	2.0***
Income:					
• **low**	3.4***	1.8***	2.5**	2.9***	3.2***
• **average**	4.1	2.8	2.9	3.6	3.8
• **high**	4.4	3.8	3.5	3.8	4.2
Educational level:					
• **low**	3.5***	1.9***	2.5*	3.1**	3.2***
• **average**	4.2	3.5	2.8	3.5	4.0
• **high**	4.5	4.2	3.7	4.2	4.3

	Kuwait	Lebanon	Egypt	Morocco	Mauritania
Gender:					
• **female**	4.7	4.4	2.8***	2.9***	2.1*
• **male**	4.7	4.3	3.2	3.6	2.3
Age:					
• **18-34**	4.8	4.8	3.9	4.3	2.6
• **35-54**	4.8	4.3	2.6	2.6	2.3
• **55 +**	4.3***	3.7***	1.4***	1.4***	1.5***
Income:					
• **low**	4.7	3.9***	1.4***	2.4***	2.6
• **average**	4.7	4.6	2.4	3.5	2.3
• **high**	4.8	4.4	2.6	3.9	1.5***
Academic level					
• **low**	4.5*	3.9***	2.0***	2.6***	1.4***
• **average**	4.7	4.6	2.8	4.2	2.4
• **high**	4.8	4.9	3.3	4.6	2.6

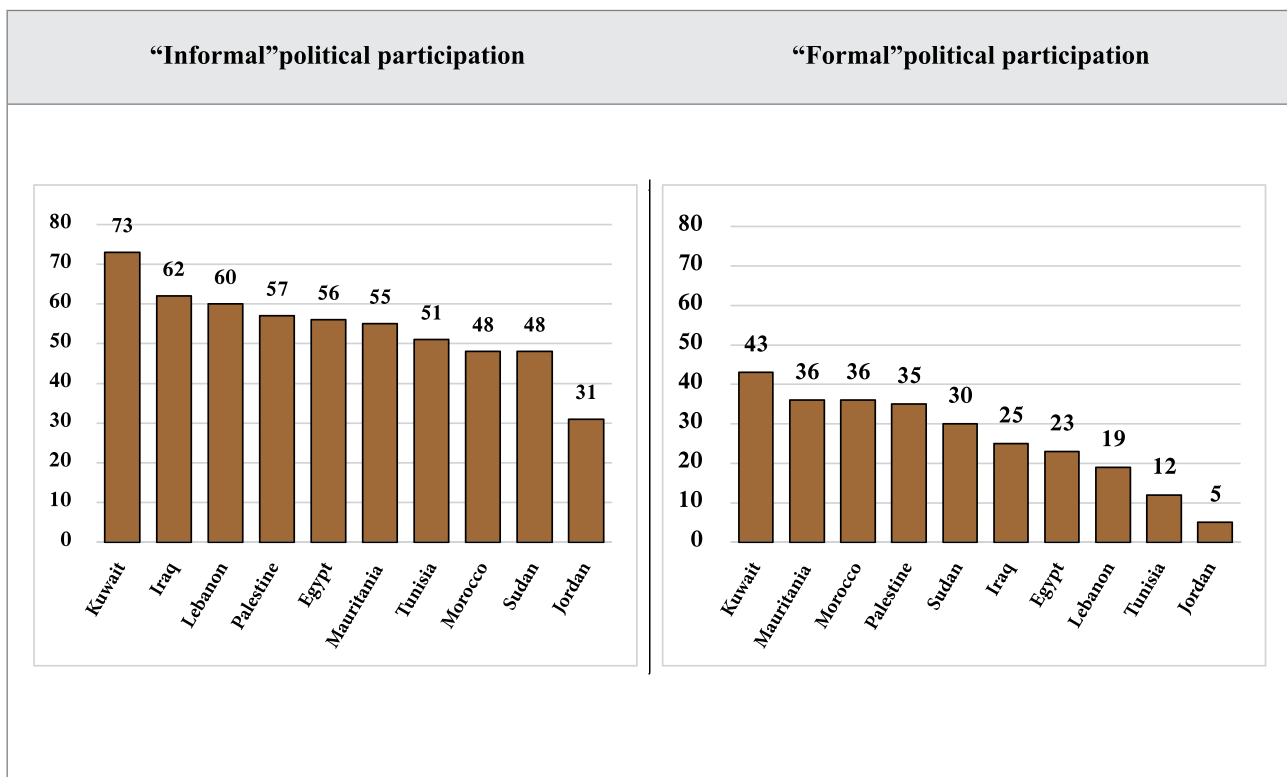
* Statistical significance at the level of 0.05/ **Statistical significance at the level of 0.01/ ***Statistical significance at the level of 0.001

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on Arab Opinion Index 2017-2018 data

Considering the variable “internet use”ordinal, the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test was used to compare means for demographic variables for two groups and the Kruskal-Wallis test to compare the means for three or more groups.

Figure (3) shows that according to Arab Opinion Index data, there are differences between Arab countries in terms of the level of political participation. The “formal”participation rate is higher than the “informal”political participation rate. Overall, Kuwait records the highest rates of political participation, while Jordan records the lowest. Some countries, such as Tunisia, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq, have low levels of informal political participation (less than 30%). Regarding official participation, Lebanon and Iraq registered rates of more than 60%. In general, there is noticeably more reluctance to participate in informal politics than to participate in formal politics.

Figure (3): Percentages of political participation



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on Arab Opinion Index 2017-2018 data.

Figure 4 shows that Arab countries differ in terms of the relationship between the level of internet use and political participation. Kuwait and Palestine record the highest levels of internet use, as well as the highest levels of informal political participation, while other countries, such as Morocco, Mauritania and Sudan, record high levels of informal political participation, but lower levels of internet use. Egypt, Tunisia and Iraq record lower levels of both internet use and [informal political] participation. Jordan and Lebanon report higher levels of internet use, but lower levels of informal political participation.

Figure 5, by contrast, shows a somewhat different distribution for formal participation. Although the rate of formal political participation is higher than that for informal participation, formal political participation has declined in some countries such as Morocco and Sudan, while in other countries, such as Egypt and Lebanon, it has increased.

Figure (4): A comparison of countries in terms of the relationship between the level of internet use and informal political participation

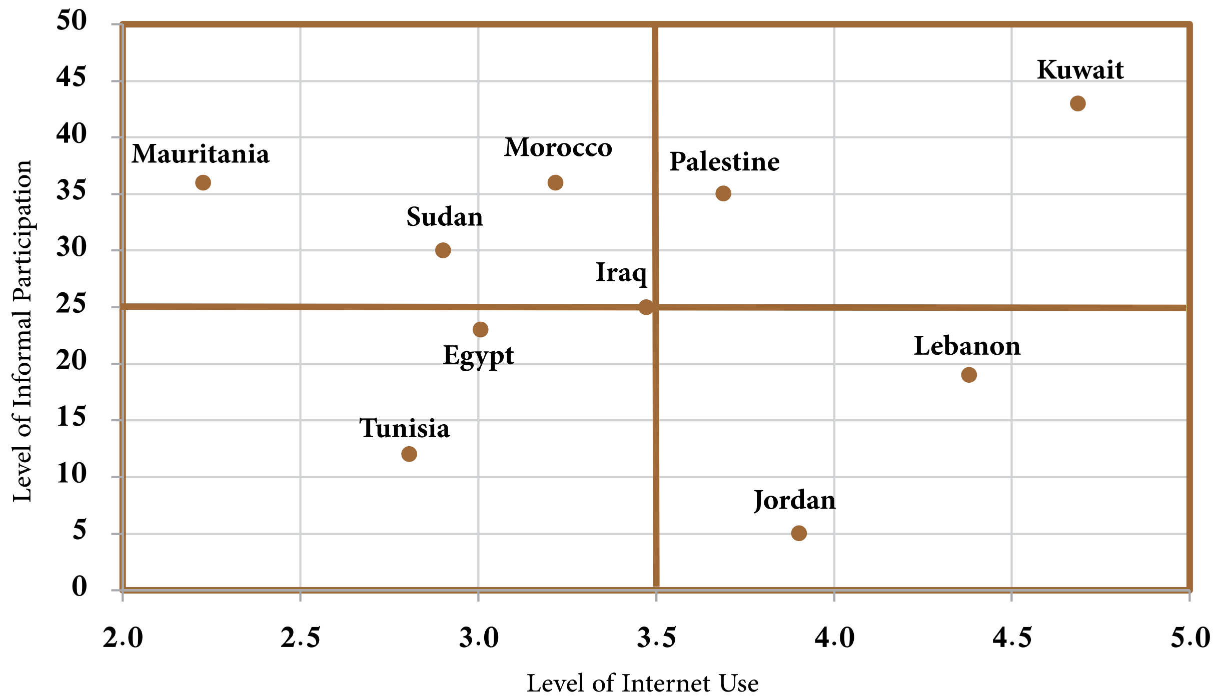


Figure (5): Comparing countries in terms of the relationship between the level of internet use and formal political participation

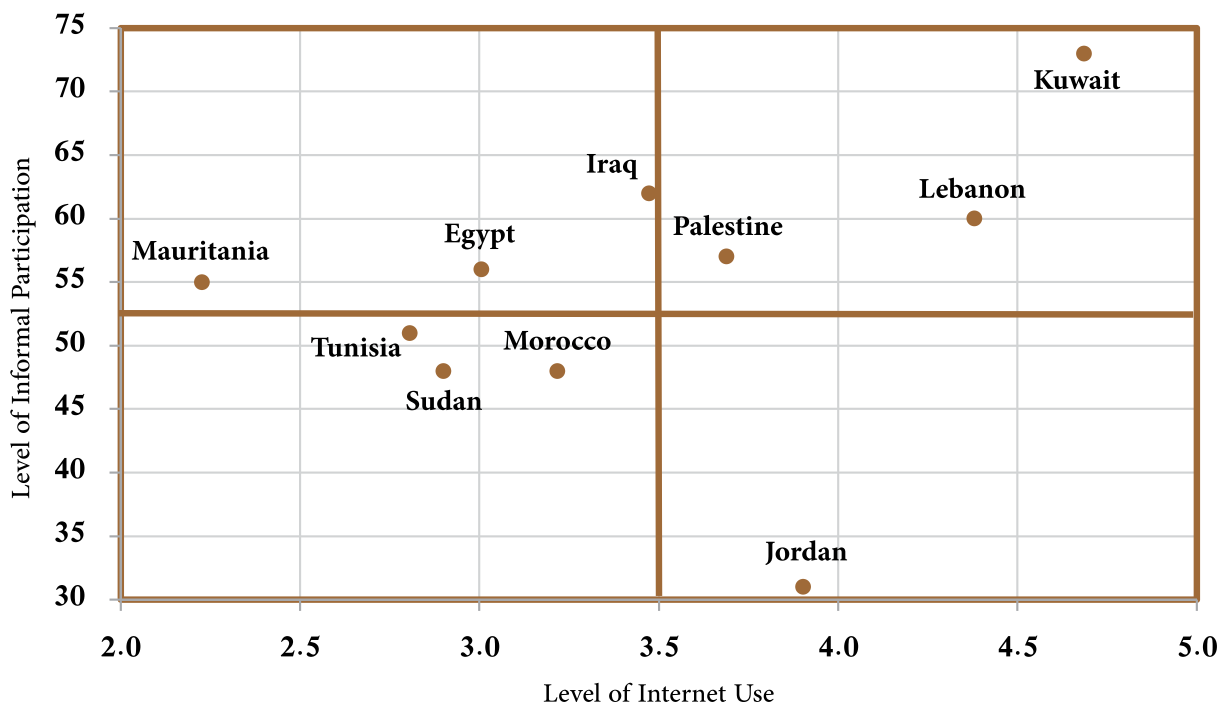


Table (3): Results of logistic regression. The numbers indicate odds ratios for determining the predictive power of determinants with an impact on political participation.

"Informal"political participation as a dependent variable										
	Jordan	Tunisia	Sudan	Iraq	Palestine	Kuwait	Lebanon	Egypt	Morocco	Mauritania
Internet use						6.3***				
Use of social media										
Axis 1[42]			0.8*			0.6***			0.7***	
Axis 2	1.5***	1.6***	1.7***	1.6***	1.6***	1.6***	1.8***	1.7***	2.2***	1.5***
Gender										
• male	3.1***	1.9**		1.7***	2.2***	1.8*	1.4***	2.0**	1.5**	
• female										
Age • 18-34									1.9***	1.3*
• 35-54		2.0*					1.4*		1.8**	
• 55 +		--								
Income										
• high		1.5*		1.7**						2.8***
• average				1.5*						
• low				--						
Academic level										
• high		2.1***	1.6**	--	2.2***	2.0***			1.5**	
• average					1.6*					
• low										

"Formal"political participation as a Dependent Variable									
	Jordan	Tunisia	Sudan	Iraq	Palestine	Kuwait	Lebanon	Egypt	Morocco
Internet Use			**1.6			5.5***			
Social media use									
Axis 1			0.8**		0.8**	0.8**			0.7***
Axis 2		1.1*	1.5***		1.3***	1.3***	1.3***		1.3***
Gender									
• male					1.7***	1.7**			1.4*
• female									
Age • 18-34	0.5**				0.7*	0.5***	0.6**		0.5***
• 35-54	0.7*						0.7*		
• 55 +									
Income									
• high						1.9***	2.3***	4.8***	1.8***
• average						1.4**	1.5**	3.1***	1.4**
• low									
Academic level									
• high				1.3*	1.9***			1.8***	1.6**
• average									
• low									

* Statistical significance at the level of 0.05/ **Statistical significance at the level of 0.01/ ***Statistical significance at the level of 0.001

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on Arab Opinion Index data, 2017-2018

[42] As explained in the methodology, Axis 1 denotes the level of social media use for family/friends/dating, etc. Axis 2 indicates the level of social media use with an orientation towards issues of public concern, such as obtaining political information and interacting with issues.

It is evident from the results of the logistic regression[43] that in most cases where there is statistical significance, it is the use of social media directed towards issues of public concern that stimulates political participation. As the use of social media directed towards issues of public interest increases by one unit on a scale of 1 to 5), the odds of informal political participation rises 1.5 times in Jordan and Mauritania and 2.2 times in Morocco, which represents the greatest degree of increase. The results also indicate that the use of social media for other purposes (family, friends) may increase the odds of refraining from formal or informal political participation in some Arab countries (with an odds ratio of less than 1). Hence, it may not be internet use per se which determines citizen behaviour in relation to political participation but, rather, the purpose behind such use.

The odds of political participation appears to be higher among males than it is among females in all countries where there is statistical significance. In Jordan, for example, males are 3.1 times more likely than females to experience informal political participation. In other countries (Palestine, Kuwait and Morocco), both formal and information political participation is more likely among males than it is among females. For countries where statistical significance was found, age appears to play a role in influencing political participation. There is a high odds of informal political participation in the age groups 18-34 and 35-54, while there is a reluctance for formal political participation among young people compared to older age groups in a number of Arab countries, as evidenced by the odds ratios of less than 1 which appear in the bottom section of Table 3 showing the results of the logistic analysis.

The results also show that in all countries that recorded statistical significance on the income variable, the odds of political participation (formal or informal) is higher among high and medium income earners. In other words, low-income earners are more hesitant to become politically involved than are other groups. The same conclusion applies to academic level. Although the level of influence may differ from one country to another and from one social group to another, the main focus of the study is the relationship between demographic and socio-economic variables on the one hand and political participation on the other. Some social groups may not enjoy as many real opportunities for political participation as other groups do.

Discussion and Summary

This discussion centres around three points related to the main research questions raised in the introduction.

1. **The aim of the first question is to determine whether Arab countries differ in terms of internet access, and what impact this has on political participation.** The most important conclusion drawn from this study is that there are, in fact, differences among Arab countries in terms of internet access. The level of internet usage in Kuwait far exceeds that in Mauritania and Tunisia. There is undoubtedly a wide digital divide among Arab countries, which can be seen in relation to the digital divide globally. In other words, wealthy countries benefit more from modern ICT than do poor countries. In addition to limited internet access, many citizens in poor countries lack the necessary qualifications to benefit from technology, and they live in marginalised rural areas far from the network system.[44] According to the United Nations Digital Development Report,[45] Kuwait, for example, has managed to increase the rate of internet availability in homes to 99.7%, while this rate comes to no more than

43 Based on Arab Opinion Index 2017-2018 data.

44 Jeffrey James, "The global digital divide in the internet: developed countries constructs and Third World realities," *Journal of Information Science,* vol. 31, no. 2 (2016), p. 114.

45 UN (ESCWA), *Arab Digital Development Report 2019 Towards Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness* (Beirut: United Nations, 2019), p. 38, accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3A9CYiu

15% in Mauritania. In addition, rich countries have moved towards using the internet in technical, functional and creative fields that can develop individuals' skills and enable them to take advantage of opportunities and integrate into the digital community.

On the other hand, it cannot be inferred from the results (Figures 4 and 5) that there is a strong relationship between the level of internet use and the level of political participation. Some Arab countries record a fairly high level of internet use without this helping to increase political participation. It may be said in this context that regardless of the rapid development of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, WhatsApp, etc., there are still many countries that have not fully exploited the information revolution in the manner required to use the internet as a tool for promoting political participation. The proliferation of smartphones and other mobile devices can help expand the internet penetration rate and lift barriers to people's participation in politics.[46] But as the results of the logistic analysis have shown, not all internet use bolsters political participation. Using it to keep up with family, get acquainted with others, or dig up people's news does not increase the likelihood of political participation, as indicated by Axis 1 (Table 3), which has no statistical significance in the logistic analysis model. Clearly, the factor related to political participation is internet use directed towards issues of public concern. Notably, according to the results of Table 3, this axis is a more powerful predictor of informal political participation than it is of formal participation in all Arab countries. It may be that the internet provides Arab citizens with a margin of freedom of expression and opportunities to discuss and oppose policies in one way or another far from the constraints imposed by the pathways of official participation. Since the Arab Spring, social media in countries such as Tunisia and Morocco have witnessed the spread of rap songs that are increasingly critical of the political situation. These songs have received millions of views and garnered countless fans on YouTube as movements that break into new spaces, amplifying the voices and sufferings of educated youth from poor circles.[47]

2. The relationship between internet use and political participation should not be considered from a single perspective only. For although this relationship is impacted by social differences, it is impacted by other factors as well. This leads us to the second question: What is the relationship between internet use and socio-economic and demographic characteristics? The results of this study show that there are social differences in terms of internet use not only between countries, but within each single society. With the exception of Kuwait, which has been able to reduce the digital divide between social groups, other Arab countries face difficulties in enabling some citizen groups to access the internet. The findings on Kuwait are not surprising, as several international reports rank the GCC countries among the most developed in terms of high GDP. The Arab Gulf countries have achieved great successes in the use of information and communication technology, with low rates of illiteracy and unemployment.[48] Although the severity of the digital divide differs from one country to another and one social group to another, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia have recorded notable social disparities in terms of internet access. The United Nations report classifies these three Arab countries (in addition to Algeria) as middle-to-low-income societies. The same report indicates that in these countries, which have low rates of ICT use coupled with high rates of illiteracy, nearly 100 million people lack internet access,[49] most of them being from vulnerable social groups, especially in rural areas. By contrast, this study shows that Jordan and Lebanon have managed to curb the digital divide between social groups more

---

[46] Chuan-hsien Chang, "Does Internet usage inspire offline political participation? Analyzing the Taiwanese case," *Japanese Journal of Political Science,* vol. 20, no. 4 (2019), p. 194.

[47] Boutaleb, p. 152.

[48] UN (ESCWA) 2019, p. 128.

[49] Ibid.

successfully than the North African countries. These results are consistent with the United Nations report, which ranks Jordan and Lebanon immediately behind the GCC states, which enjoy advanced levels of the use of modern information and communication technology and widespread access to the internet among different social groups. These two countries are also seeing declining illiteracy rates.[50] Meanwhile countries such as Sudan, Iraq and Palestine suffer from ongoing conflicts which negatively impact their ability to make policies for the development of the technology sector and the reduction of the digital divide. There is also a group of low-income countries (such as Mauritania) that may not have the resources to advance the information technology sector and narrow the digital divide.

3. In the context of the digital divide, the results of the study show that there is a relationship between demographic and socio-economic determinants on the one hand, and political participation (formal and informal) on the other. The odds of male participation is high compared to female participation in most Arab countries. UN Women notes that the Arab region has the world's lowest rate of political participation by women. Arab countries scored 15.2% on the gender gap index (women represented in Parliament according to the commission's report), which causes these countries to rank the lowest in the world on this index, far below the global average of 22.1%.[51] Some studies point to the role played by the Arab Spring uprisings in reducing the gender gap. Since that time, Arab women have played crucial roles in social movements, peacebuilding, and reconciliation processes. A new feminist discourse has appeared in several Arab countries calling for comprehensive and equal citizenship and including support for women as actors in influencing political life.[52] Several Arab countries have passed new laws supporting women's role in the political arena by, for example, raising the rate of parliamentary representation. But there are those who believe that this leap has only emerged in "progressive"forms of political participation, that is, participation in "latent"movements and activities in civil society in relation to issues in areas such as education, immigration, the environment, etc., whereas barriers such as inequality in employment and education as well as socio-cultural considerations continue to restrict women's participation in "traditional"forms of politics.[53] In other words, Arab women are still less well represented than men in several institutions such as political parties, the judiciary, and ministerial posts, a phenomenon which negatively impacts other areas of public life and participation in other political spaces.[54]

With regard to age differences, the results of the study indicate a high odds of youth (18-34 years) participating in informal political activities in countries such as Morocco and Mauritania. There is also a high odds of participation among members of the middle age group (35-54 years) in Tunisia, Lebanon and Morocco. These groups are more frequent users of the internet than older groups. Perhaps the internet may help motivate young people and middle age groups to engage in informal political participation. The interconnection between informal political engagement and the internet applies particularly to young audiences, as issues circulate more and more via digital media[55] away from the formal constraints in the context of which young people may not find the appropriate space for political participation. Indeed, the results of the logistic regression analysis in five countries show that young people are more reluctant to take part in formal politics. A growing number of studies show that younger generations are less likely to vote, for example,[56] while agreeing that older people are less inclined to use the internet than younger people

50 Ibid.

51 UN Women, *Arab States, Leadership and Political Participation*, accessed on 8/8/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3A8ieHM

52 Arab Reform Initiative, field of work, women's political participation, accessed on 6/8/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3A2SknV

53 Nasser Yassin & Robert Hoppe, *Women, Civil Society and Policy Change in the Arab World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 42-43.

54 UN Women, *Arab States*.

55 Laurence Monnoyer-Smith & Stéphanie Wojcik, "La participation politique en ligne, vers un renouvellement des problématiques?"*Participations,* vol. 8, no. 1 (2014), p. 11.

56 Lemyre, p. 9.

are.[57] Older people suffer more from the negative aspects of the digital divide because they may not benefit from the information and opportunities that digital networks provide for informal political participation. Thus, the intergenerational digital divide may lead to older people being excluded from some activities, thus creating a division between younger and older activists on social media.[58]

The results of the logistic regression analysis indicate that low-income groups have the least access to the internet and at the same time are less prone to informal political participation in Tunisia, Iraq, Egypt and Mauritania, and less prone to formal participation in Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and Mauritania. Studies on Arab society show higher-income groups to be the most involved, an outcome which differs only slightly from the results of studies on Western democracies.[59] There is an interaction among indicators whereby internet use may increase participation-related disparities between social classes (low-income versus high-income). High-income groups undoubtedly benefit more quickly from digital communication and receive more opportunities, whereas harsh living conditions pose a barrier to digital connectivity for individuals with low incomes. Some researchers have described this group as "the mobile underclass"or "second-class internet users"who benefit less from digital media.[60] Deep-rooted social and economic inequality in a number of countries in the Arab world may exclude the lower classes and impede their efforts to mobilise online, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will refrain from political participation. In poor circles, even if internet access is available, it will be difficult for people to afford it.[61] Consumer economics theory attempts to explain the digital divide through market costs and the "trickle-down effect". In other words, since the advent of modern digital media, it has largely been acquired by high-income earners, while disadvantaged groups have to wait for prices to fall,[62] contenting themselves with the use of unsatisfactory, low-quality devices that do not enable them to integrate into the digital world and interact effectively with the issues in their communities.

Social vulnerability also appears via educational disparities. The results of the study show that citizens with high (and to some extent, medium) levels of education are more prone to informal political participation in Tunisia, Sudan, Palestine, Kuwait and Morocco; and more prone to formal political participation in Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, Morocco and Mauritania. Notwithstanding the controversy surrounding the relationship between academic level and political participation, the results of a number of studies indicate that educational advancement has a positive and important causal effect on political participation.[63] This does not mean that people with low educational levels do not engage in political activities or do not use the internet at all. Rather, the issue is related to the way "democratic spaces"are accessed[64] and the use of new domains. The online participatory process is designed to operate on the basis of the qualifications that an individual can employ to develop work styles and adapt to new technologies.

On the ground however, some Arab countries still suffer from illiteracy problems[65]. Similarly, participatory spaces outside the formal system remain limited and are sometimes based on contradictory work patterns.[66] Some Arab countries have passed laws under the influence of the Arab Spring which

---

57 CC McDonough, "The Effect of Ageism on the Digital Divide Among Older Adults,"*Journal of Gerontology Geriatric Medicine,* vol. 2, no. 008 (2016), p. 1, accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3diwRzu

58 Julia Schuster, "Invisible feminists? Social media and young women's political participation,"*Political Science,* vol. 65, no. 1 (2017).

59 Saifuddin Ahmed & Jaeho Cho, "The internet and political (in)equality in the Arab world: A multi-country study of the relationship between Internet news use, press freedom, and protest participation,"*New Media & Society,* vol. 21, no. 5 (2019), pp. 1068, 1078.

60 P. M. Napoli & J. A. Obar, "The emerging mobile internet underclass: a critique of mobile internet access,"*Information Society,* vol. 30, no. 5 (2014), p. 330.

61 Mary Chayko, *Superconnected: The internet, Digital Media, and Techno-Social Life* (SAGE Publications, 2017), p. 111.

62 Dijk, p. 11.

63 Alexander K. Mayer, "Does Education Increase Political Participation?"*The Journal of Politics,* vol. 73, no. 3 (2011), p. 644.

64 Darin Barney et al., *The Participatory Condition in the Digital Age* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), pp. 24-25.

65 UN (ESCWA), p. 128.

66 Boutaleb, p. 154.

appear to open up democratic spaces that promote political participation. At the same time, however, there are practices and procedures that restrict citizens. The United Nations refers to some North African and Middle Eastern countries,[67] which have blocked access to the internet, partially disabled it, censored unwanted websites, or cut off the internet "in good faith"to combat cheating on school exams, thereby disrupting communication and obstructing daily activities for millions of other citizens, not to mention causing significant economic losses. Under these circumstances, and in the absence of digital policies geared towards citizen empowerment, it is difficult to attract the interest of every social stratum to engage with issues of public concern. Quite to the contrary, indifference may grow among more and more citizens even if they have the necessary capabilities and communication skills.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this paper demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between political participation and internet use. Despite the progress of some Arab societies in terms of internet access, the increasing opportunities offered by modern means of communication do not necessarily lead to satisfactory results in terms of political participation. This study can help create a shared sense among Arab countries of the importance of overcoming the digital divide, not only by connecting people to the internet, but by providing the skills, training and equal opportunities needed to enable citizens to exploit the tangible benefits the internet us can bring.

The interconnection between the digital divide and social disparities may exacerbate unequal opportunities for political participation by excluding important but vulnerable segments of society from the political process. Arab countries still face major challenges in terms of employing the potentials of the internet to enhance communication and enable citizens to deliberate on issues of common concern. In addition to the failure of digital policies to adapt to the requirements and ambitions of Arab societies and despite the progress made following the Arab Spring, the region has yet to achieve a qualitative leap towards opening up genuine new democratic spaces to guarantee citizens' rights to political participation. The advancement of political participation and digital citizenship might be hampered by fear of the dangers of the internet, such as digital crime or the spread of extremist currents that threaten existing regimes and the stability of society. Hence, clearly more studies are needed on this subject, not only to reduce the digital divide at its various levels, but also to move from an Arab model of technology consumption to one of creating innovative solutions that will reduce risks while expanding rights to political participation conducive to our societies' well-being and stability.

67 United Nations (Human Rights Council), "Internet shutdowns: trends, causes, legal implications and impacts on a range of human rights (2022),"accessed on 8/11/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3QeQPtF

References

ACRPS. Public Opinion Measurement Program. Arab Opinion Index 2017/2018. Accessed on 7/8/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3BQ3DCj

Ahmed, Saifuddin & Jaeho Cho. "The internet and political (in)equality in the Arab world: A multi-country study of the relationship between Internet news use, press freedom, and protest participation."*New Media & Society.* vol. 21. no. 5 (2019).

Azoulay, Vincent. *Périclès: La démocratie athénienne à l'épreuve du grand homme*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2015.

Bala, Monica. "Civic Engagement in the Age of Online Social Networks."*Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice.* vol. 6. no. 1 (2014).

Barney, Darin et al. *The Participatory Condition in the Digital Age*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

Barney, Darin. *The Network Society* [Arabic]. Anwar Jamaawi (trans.). Doha: ACRPS, 2015.

Boutaleb, Assia et al. *Introduction aux mondes arabes en (r) évolution*. Paris: Deboeck, 2018.

Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Chang, Chuan-hsien. "Does Internet usage inspire offline political participation? Analyzing the Taiwanese case."*Japanese Journal of Political Science.* vol. 20. no. 4 (2019).

Chayko, Mary. *Superconnected: The internet, Digital Media, and Techno-Social Life*. SAGE Publications, 2017.

Ekman, Joakim & Erik Amnå. "Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology."*Human Affairs*. vol. 22. no. 3 (2012).

Hawkesworth, M., & M. Kogan. *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*. vol. 1. London/ New York: Routledge, 1992.

Hedtke, Reinhold & Tatjana Zimenkova. *Education for Civic and Political Participation: A Critical Approach*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.

Hosmer, David & Stanley Lemshow. *Applied Logistic Regression*. New Jersey: Wiley, 2013.

Isa, Berk Orkun & Mustafa Eray Yucel. "A Theory of Political Participation."In: *Munich Personal RePEc Archive* (2020). Accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3Vg4BPg

Isman, Aytekin & Ozlem Canan Gungoren. "Being Digital Citizen."*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences.* no. 106 (2013).

ITU Publications. *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2021, International Telecommunication Union*. Geneva: 2021. Accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3P7nwaR

James, Jeffrey. "The global digital divide in the internet: developed countries constructs and Third World realities."*Journal of Information Science.* vol. 31. no. 2 (2016).

Lemyre, Xavier. "Jeunes, participation et engagement au Canada."Patrimoine canadien. September 2016. Accessed on 9/10/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3Vg4BPg

Mayer, Alexander K. "Does Education Increase Political Participation?"*The Journal of Politics.* vol. 73. no. 3 (2011).

McDonough, CC. "The Effect of Ageism on the Digital Divide Among Older Adults."*Journal of Gerontology Geriatric Medicine.* vol. 2. no. 008 (2016). Accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3diwRzu

Monnoyer-Smith, Laurence & Stéphanie Wojcik. “La participation politique en ligne, vers un renouvellement des problématiques?”*Participations.* vol. 8. no. 1 (2014).

Napoli, P. M. & J. A. Obar. “The emerging mobile internet underclass: a critique of mobile internet access.”*Information Society.* vol. 30. no. 5 (2014).

Norris, Pippa. *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the internet Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

O’Rourke, Norm & Larry Hatcher. *A Step-by-Step Approach to Using SAS® for Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling*. Chicago: SAS Institute Inc, 2007.

Raiq, Hicham & Mohamed Ourya. “The extent of youth satisfaction in light of political and economic transformations after the Arab Spring: A dual-response logistic regression analysis of a sample from the Maghreb.”*Arab Politics*. no. 46 (2020).

Schuster, Julia. “Invisible feminists? Social media and young women’s political participation.”*Political Science.* vol. 65. no. 1 (2017).

Skoric, Marko M., Qinfeng Zhu, Debbie Goh & Natalie Pang. “Social media and citizen engagement: A meta-analytic review.”*New Media & Society.* vol. 18. no. 9 (2016).

UN (ESCWA). *Arab Digital Development Report 2019 Towards Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness.* Beirut: United Nations, 2019. Accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3A9CYiu

UN Women, *Arab States, Leadership and Political Participation*, accessed on 8/8/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3A8ieHM

UN. “Digital divide and open government in the Arab region.”the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. Beirut: United Nations, 2021. Accessed on 13/7/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3zG8m6J

United Nations (Human Rights Council). “Internet shutdowns: trends, causes, legal implications and impacts on a range of human rights (2022).”Accessed on 8/11/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3QeQPtFArabic:

van Deth, Jan W. “A conceptual map of political participation.”*Acta Politica.* vol. 49. no. 3 (2014).

van Deursen, A. J. & J. A. van Dijk. “The First-Level Digital Divide Shifts from Inequalities in Physical Access to Inequalities in Material Access.”*New Media Soc*. vol. 21. no. 2 (2019).

van Dijk, Jan. *The Digital Divide*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020.

Yassin, Nasser & Robert Hoppe. *Women, Civil Society and Policy Change in the Arab World*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

BOOK REVIEWS

Hikmat al-Abdulrahman*

The European Union and the Arab Region

A Realistic Portrait of Challenge**

الاتحاد الأوروبي والمنطقة العربية

القضايا الإشكالية من منظور واقعي

Author	Ahmed Qasem Hussein
Date of publication	2021
Publisher	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
No. of pages	431

* Professor, Department of History, Damascus University.
Email: alabdulrahman.hikmat@yahoo.fr

** This review was originally published in Arabic in: Hikmat al-Abdulrahman, "The European Union and the Arab Region: A Realistic Portrait of Challenge," *Siyasat Arabiya*, no. 56 (2022), pp. 189-198, and was translated by Nema Alaraby. *Siyasat Arabiya* is a bimonthly peer-reviewed political science and international relations journal.

Introduction

In Arabic literature, few scholarly works offer deep insight into the European Union's policy and position on the Arab region. The subject of this review, *The European Union and the Arab Region: A Realistic Portrait of Challenge*, by Ahmed Qasem Hussein, is an exceptional study in this field due to the rich contribution it offers to this topic.

The book consists of two separate but interconnected parts that, while complementary, can also be read independently. The first part traces the EU's historical and political trajectory, guiding the reader through European decision-making mechanisms, while the second traces Europe's interaction with and policy towards specific Arab issues. The book is distinguished by its unique analysis of the reverberations of EU policy in the Arab region, making it worthwhile reading for academics, experts, researchers, or any interested party. As a historical, political, and cultural contribution in the Arabic language, it is also significant to those who wish to delve deeper into history and politics of the EU.

In his interpretation of the EU's interaction with four main Arab issues, the author adopts the approach laid out by the realist school of thought in international relations (IR). While realism has been subject to valid criticism within the discipline, it serves as a useful lens through which to examine the EU's treatment of these issues. The theory offers particularly prudent explanations for the establishment and post-World War II and Cold War development of the EU, in addition to offering clear interpretations for the development of the EU's stance on the Arab issues selected for discussion.

Book Chapters and Contents

The European Union and the Arab Region is essential reading for anyone concerned with the EU, EU relations, and Arab affairs within the political science and IR disciplines. The first section includes three chapters in which the researcher traces the EU's establishment and development since 1951, pausing at significant milestones. The first chapter provides a detailed historical review of European unification under the shadow of the Soviet Union as an international and communist power. It examines the role of urgent economic factors in this process, honing in on the critical need to eradicate geographical divisions rooted in nationalism that were forestalling economic growth and capitalist expansion. In this chapter, the book highlights the role of the United States in pushing for European unity, especially through the aid provided within the provisions of the Marshall Plan.

In the second chapter, the author discusses the steps taken since 1963 towards European unification as a political and economic fait accompli. He reviews the main pillars of the Maastricht Treaty (1992) that established the EU; the Economic and Monetary Union, which began to be implemented in 1988 at the Hanover Summit, and the political union described by the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, at the end of 1989. The author also explores developments such as the Dublin Summit (1990) that served as a preparatory step to the establishment of a political union, the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) that took effect in 1999[1] as an amendment of the Maastricht Treaty, the Treaty of Nice that was signed in 2001 and implemented in 2003, the unratified Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in Rome (2004), and, lastly, the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) intended to reform EU institutions.

In chapter 3, the author situates the topic within the IR theory of realism, presenting the primary realist arguments to explain the EU's success as an integrative and cooperative experiment. The author sets out to conduct a realist analysis of the European integration process during two distinct phases: the post-World

1 John Pinder, *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 35.

War II phase, and the post-Cold War phase. He concludes that the structure of the international order has been the most decisive and effective factor in the success of European integration, which truly began after World War II.

The second part of the book includes four chapters. The author discusses the interactions of the EU, as a prominent actor, with specific issues selected for their regional significance. In Chapter 4, the author examines the question of democracy in the Arab region and the conditionality of European support, by alluding to two contradictory facts about the EU's approach towards Arab democracy. First, he argues that the EU's projects intended to support Arab democracy are merely a response to the challenges of the post-Cold War era. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the EU searched for a global and influential role in the international politics, carving out a space for itself in a system controlled by US hegemony. This coincided with the rise of global powers that were working to increase their influence such as China and Japan. Moreover, being a source of major strategic significance European policy planning in the Arab region was dominated by issues such as terrorism, security, irregular migration, and energy security. This led to a shift in priorities and the abandonment of normativity as a prerequisite for supporting Arab political reform in favour of security, which came to be considered a more pressing matter than democracy.

Chapter 5 contextualises the EU's position on Palestine and the fluctuations in Europe's foreign and security policy. This position hangs on multiple issues, most notably the competition between Mediterranean and Atlantic priorities, in addition to international factors such as the structure of the international system. Any unified EU position is also vulnerable to member states' domestic troubles such as Greece's financial crisis and the re-emergence of right-wing populism in Italy and across much of Europe. Chapter 6 addresses the EU's response to the Gulf crisis and its efforts to find a solution to the discord on the grounds that any threat to the stability of the Gulf region, by extension, represents a threat to European economies and their global performance. The author argues that the EU's Gulf policy and its intervention in regional crises are not indicative of any EU ambition to compete with the US, which enjoys rooted historical influence and almost absolute dominance in the Gulf. The EU rather seeks to establish its own specific Gulf policy, especially with regard to Arab Gulf security, which is not so much to do with individual countries as it is about the oil reserves associated with the economic security of the rest of the world, particularly the EU and China.

In the concluding 7th chapter, the author provides a detailed analysis of irregular migration as one of the major drivers of EU policy in the MENA region. He points out that the EU's approach to the issue is influenced by two factors. The first is the demographic factor, that is the continent's ageing population and shrinking youth demographic, and the increased need for immigrants with practical experience and university degrees. There is now a pressing need in Europe to enact some kind of population revival, as the current demographic trend is undoubtedly an existential threat to the future of Europe. In contrast, the second factor involves mitigating the challenges posed by irregular migration's security, economic, and social repercussions. Many European countries have come to realise that, in order to gain benefit from the positive returns of irregular immigration, they must bear the negative repercussions too.

The legal and legislative challenge posed by dealing with migration and its consequences compelled the EU to develop laws and legislation commensurate with the conditions of the new phase. And so a set of laws, agreements, and treaties designed to form a unified front to face these challenges emerged in the shape of the Schengen Agreement (1985), which entered into force in 1995. In this context, the author highlights Libya as a model for how the EU dealt with this issue. Libya has turned – due to the civil war – from being a stable destination country to a transit country for migrants. The author points out that the solution to this challenge lies in supporting a strong Libyan government capable of establishing a stable

environment and a central authority, and building civil as well as military state institutions. The migration crisis in Libya is a reflection of the collapse of state institutions and the chaos of armed conflict.

The EU: Historical and Political Conditions

The EU defines itself as "a unique economic and political union between 27 European countries". Its goal is a unified European citizenship to allow freedom of movement, transport, and civil and political rights and it works to support and consolidate a unified European foreign, trade, and security policy.

The concept of a union between the European countries that collapsed at the end of World War II was an urgent political, economic, and security necessity. Politically, the union was intended to act as a tool to restore Europe's deteriorating international role and to offset the dominant global powers, namely, the communist Soviet Union and the capitalist US. The European Union sought to transcend political, geographical, and national boundaries and divisions through free trade-based economic unity and the elimination customs barriers. At the security level, the enormous destruction that Europe incurred in the war triggered a desire to establish a political and economic entity that contributes to the prevention of internal wars, conflicts, and disputes. The union would also be a means of defending Europe against foreign threats.

Nonetheless, European will to join a unified political-economic entity did not prevent individual countries adopting strategies to impose a unilateral vision of how the union should manifest. The author here refers to, inter alia, Charles de Gaulle's project "Union of European States", through which the French President wanted to impose his vision of Europe's political configuration and future, and to use the European Economic Community (EEC) as a means of boosting France's power and leadership.[2] The French leader assumed that his good relationship with the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, might lead to the creation of a strong agreement between Germany and France that would steer the EEC's foreign policy, putting pressure on other small European forced to submit to Paris and Bonn. Neorealists have explained this position by indicating that the EEC and, subsequently, the EU, have not been able to bring about radical changes in the relations between the member states. And, as a result, these states continue to primarily pursue their national interests and seek to maximise their power both within and outside the union.[3]

However, the French President had other goals. De Gaulle worked to frustrate Britain's application to join the EEC as a strong rival to France that could serve as an obstacle to his own ambitions. It is noteworthy that history has repeated itself in the EU's treatment of Turkey; whose application to join the EU has been consistently rejected by France. Moreover, the French rejection of the British application was backed by Germany because it would affect the status of the two countries in the EU. However, the continued French rejection of Britain's accession, and the replacement of Adenauer with Ludwig Earhard, resulted in a disagreement between Germany and France regarding EEC policy. The new German chancellor was Atlantic and US-oriented, and sought to strengthen his country's relations with Washington while opposing the French President's policies on Europe.

The EU's expansion correlated with a decline in its ambitions. Although the EU seeks to be a central player parallel to the US, it is still subject to the rules of conditionality and normativity, vulnerable to internal divisions and a lack of consensus among its member states, particularly the more influential members that enjoy significant economic and political power. Thus, the EU enjoys international power that is nonetheless reined in by its own expansion and magnitude.[4]

2 Ibid., p. 24.

3 Ibid., p. 15.

4 Rosemary Hollis, "Europe and the Middle East: Had the EU Missed its Moment of Oppurtunity?"*Ortadoğu Etütleri*, vol. 2, no. 2 (January 2011), p. 35.

The EU from a Realist Perspective

In IR, theory helps to filter and organise information and to understand, explain, and interpret political phenomena in the relationships between the actors of the international system. Theory represents an intellectual map to better understand the formation of an international actor and the formulation of ideas. Nonetheless, realism is not one homogeneous theory, but six different approaches that concentrate on the concept of power, while neglecting other factors that are particularly socially effective.[5]

Thus, realism may not offer a comprehensive interpretation of European integration, but some realist literature is useful in studying two main phases of European integration; the first in the aftermath of World War II and the second between the end of the Cold War and the present day. The author indicates that the structure of the international system and the distribution of power within it have played a major role in advancing European integration and in shaping the course of Europe's foreign policy in the Arab region. In this regard, the author outlines Kenneth Waltz's assertion that one of the most significant advantages of the bipolar international system is that it facilitates international cooperation more than unipolar or multipolar international systems. He further provides the example of when Europe still fell under the structure of a multipolar international system, which can partially explain the constant stream of wars and conflicts. However, the conditions that accompanied the bipolar order prompted European states to consider the common European interest, particularly among the major European powers: France, Germany, and Britain. The author therefore argues that he cannot offer an accurate picture of the European integration process without studying and understanding the events and changes that the structure of the international system has undergone.

The collapse of the Soviet Union posed a challenge for realist interpretations of the new international system with the loss of explanatory factors such as the balance of power and bipolarity. The rise of a new international power in the EU, considered a normative force for good, contradicted many realist assumptions. Undoubtedly, viewing the EU as one candidate to balance power in the international system forces neorealism to reconsider its main assumption when interpreting the European integration in terms of both internal administration and foreign policy. This calls for new hypotheses that could help offer a deep understanding of European security integration and defence and its regional and international impact.

Another stream of thought, offensive realism, assumes that anarchy in the international system has its own repercussions. If the security dilemma is the primary driver for states to pursue power of their own, then the quest to maximise the power does not stop at achieving security. It goes beyond that to seek hegemony and control over other states that — from an offensive realist perspective — represent an opportunity for greater sovereignty. However, a new realist approach has emerged that goes beyond the essentially military-centric security dimension to include broader non-military social and cultural concepts, as well as the challenges posed by post-Cold War globalisation. The neorealist approach represented by Barry Buzan assumes that the EU seeks its own security umbrella not subject to or under the auspices of another power, as well as to consolidate its role as an international actor on a global level, against a hegemonic and unilateral global power (the US) and a rising global force that harbours hegemonic ambitions (China). As such, a challenge is represented in the space that the EU must occupy in the international landscape and in the role it must play in facing global problems or issues that arise as a result of the nature of relations between states and the existing international system. The answer, however, remains contingent on the nature of the EU's potential response to new security challenges, or responses that the international system can muster in its existing form.

---

5 Khaled al-Masry, *Naẓariyyāt al-ʿIlāqāt al-Dawliyya* (Damascus: Syrian International Academy for Training and Development, 2018).

Eduard Soler, a researcher at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and Silvia Colombo, head of the Mediterranean and Middle East Programme at the International Affairs Institute (IAI) in Rome, notes that assessing what kind of global player Europe can and wants to be in the Arab region requires rethinking EU strategies, policies, and tools. It is undoubtedly a long journey, interspersed with difficult steps. It can thus be said that the EU, due to geopolitical fluctuations and regional and international policy changes, will need more than a realist re-examination and evaluation of all the policies and strategies it has adopted to which it must adhere.[6]

In conclusion, the author conducts an important analysis of the shortcomings and limitations of the realist approach. The European experience was assumed to be successful because it was particularly dependent on the international composition of the bipolar system, meaning that any change in the international system was a potential threat. However, the opposite proved true. The change in the structure of the international system did not lead to the collapse and decline of the experiment but rather accelerated the European integration process, contradicting realist assumptions. This has raised questions about whether the end of the Cold War undermined realist theory and assumptions, or at least contributed to diminishing their power and relevance.

The EU and Arab Democracy: Between Normativity and Strategy

The author focuses on conditionality as a cornerstone of European interaction with the Arab region, and asks: What lies behind this conditionality? What is its purpose? Is it an effective means for the EU to bolster genuine democratic transition that guarantees stability and security in the region, safeguarding the interests of the EU and its member states? Or is it merely a response to the changes taking place on the international level? Is it in reality a way to reposition the EU and enhance its presence as an international acting power? The book notes that although the EU is a normative actor in international policy that uses conditionality to deliver certain concepts and values, the weakness in the democratic transition process in the Arab region is clear and a result of internal factors. This is in addition to the difference between what the EU demands and the environment necessary for those demands to materialise. This is at a time when many — according to the book — point out that the EU's normativity is, in fact, only a means of achieving its strategic interests, and therefore EU policy is rational and realistic, not normative.

The crises (and revolutions) that have overwhelmed the Arab region have changed the course of democratic transition. Despite a history of reliance on internal factors to pursue democratic transition from the inside, revolutions erupted to reveal the importance of regional and international factors and their role in changing governance systems. Moreover, external interference in the objectives of the governance systems was inconsistent with the goals of intervention to support the democratic transition process. This interference changed the trajectory and objectives of the Arab uprisings, and it would not have occurred without those states' agendas and supposed interests. The "Arab uprisings"regenerated the role of small regional states and the intervention of other regional actors who found an opportunity to achieve global and regional goals, while at the same time reviving the historic ambitions of the EU and states such as China and Russia.

Undoubtedly, the events that have unfolded in the Arab region since early 2011 have influenced the EU's strategy in the Arab region. The EU's interest in implementing and expanding democratic transition and working towards cooperation between both shores of the Mediterranean was eclipsed by Europe's

6 Silvia Colombo & Eduard Soler, "Europe and the 'New' Middle East, Geopolitical shifts and strategic choices,"*Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2021), pp. 417-418.

"security first"principle through a series of actions to address cross-border threats, in particular those posed by irregular migration and the asylum process.

Conditionality of the EU and the Palestinian Question

The EEC first interacted the Palestinian issue when French Foreign Minister, Maurice Schumann, submitted the Schumann Document in 1971 for European Political Co-operation. Although the document was formulated internally, it stipulated how the EEC would formulate a collective position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The European position evolved over the course of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War when the EEC called on the UN to implement Security Council Resolution 242 on the Palestinian issue.

The impotence of European solutions, projects, and proposals was tied up with the US position on the one hand, and internal divisions on the other. But the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War served as an opportunity for the EU to exercise an active role independent of the US. In this regard, the EU launched a series of initiatives concerning the Palestinian issue, most notably the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (1998), also known as the Barcelona Process. The Partnership was launched to advance the peace process in the region through areas that, from the European point of view, support its development. These include economic and financial areas, as well as the integration of Israel and Palestine into multilateral regional action mechanisms, the most important of which is the regional Economic Development Action Group. The Partnership also provides financial support through funding vital infrastructural projects in Palestine, such as those in the Gaza Strip.

The book categorises the EU's relations with the Palestinian cause since the beginning of the 21st century according to three historical phases. During the first phase (2000-2006) European aid focused on reforming the security sector in Palestine. Once the EU had taken on the role of an economic supporter and a financier for Palestine, it assisted the establishment and reform of Palestinian security institutions, with two goals in mind. The first was to control security and effect stability in the areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority, and the second was to protect Israel's security and stability.

In the second phase (2007-2011), the EU encountered a democratic threat in the shape of the 2006 Hamas victory in the Palestinian legislative elections, in addition to the moral dilemma that surfaced with Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip following the kidnapping of the Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, on 25 June 2006. In this regard, the EU threatened to freeze aid to the Palestinians if the new Palestinian government did not meet the conditions set by the Middle East Quartet at its first meeting following Hamas' victory.

Although acutely aware that the integration of Hamas into any Palestinian government remains unlikely, the EU sets that as a condition for any revision of its policy towards the movement's military wing. This is why the gap between the EU advocacy of the two-state solution as a political objective and its practice on the ground raises questions about the EU's credibility.

In the third phase (2011-2017), which followed the outbreak of the Arab Spring, the EU found itself compelled to seek new mechanisms and strategies to deal with the Arab region. The crises that emerged in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings have pushed the Arab issues that once held huge significance for the EU right down on its list of priorities. Reforms, democracy, the Palestinian cause, and the course of the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations were all shelved to make way for the emerging issues of security, terrorism, human trafficking, and irregular migration.

Concluding his discussion of the European position on the Palestinian issue, the author notes that there is a huge gap between the strategic principles in the EU's dealings with the two parties of the conflict. While many Europeans call on Israel to freeze settlements and for the identification of Israeli goods,

champion the right of Palestinians to establish their independent state based on international resolutions, and criticise Israeli measures that threaten a two-state solution, the EU remains unable to effect a decisive policy to resist Israel's settler-colonial policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and stand up against the systematic discrimination of Palestinians.

The EU leaders are naïve in their belief that using a carrot and stick policy in economic and financial aid could contribute to maintaining the status quo at a time when the EU has failed drastically to prevent Israelis from expanding settlements. Furthermore, the EU has also failed to stand with Palestinian attempts demanding that the political reality of the Palestinians is altered.

In his book *Europe and the Arab World*, published in 2016, researcher Bichara Khader notes that despite the absence of a common and coherent European policy towards the Palestinians, EU policy contributed to Palestinian legitimacy and played a significant role in increasing international recognition of Palestinians' rights. However, he also notes that the EU continues to be a peripheral partner in the peace process, playing a complementary role to that of the US. The author explains that the reason for this is that the EU has failed to curb Israeli violence while limiting its own role in supporting Palestinians to providing financial aid and not finding a permanent solution to their cause.[7]

A strong and rich EU can deal with a turbulent Middle East but its voice is inaudible and its power depends not so much on the power of its member states but on their agreement and concerted efforts. The EU's position is only as strong as the unity of the position held by its many member states who are able to put their own agendas and interests aside.

The EU and the Gulf Crisis: A Multilateral Approach

The book alludes here to Bichara Khader's discussion of the factors driving the Gulf's significance to the EU. The region is of huge economic importance, in addition to being an essential source of energy for many countries globally. Further, it is an indispensable trading partner for the EU and fertile ground for European investments. The Gulf's consensus with the EU is of significant value on several regional issues, such as Yemen and the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moreover, the GCC member states view the EU as an important global partner that, like China, provides them the opportunity to expand and diversify their global allies. Nonetheless, relations between the two parties remain limited, despite the GCC's status and are of less significance compared to the diverse interests and significant financial investments of the EU in the Arab region.[8]

Since the 1990s, there have been no significant transformations in the EU's policy towards GCC states. Just as the EU's interaction with Middle Eastern countries has been bound by conditionality, it has also become too invested in the GCC states emulation of Europe's internal market and standards and establishing a trade agreement based on European terms. This demonstrates Europe's failure to acknowledge the changes in the strategic interests of the Gulf states, whose interest in EU policy and agreements has slowed in recent years. Meanwhile, the Gulf countries seek to consolidate a network of ties and relations with East and Southeast Asian countries, larger and more important than ever before.[9]

The outbreak of the 2017 Gulf crisis proved a major opportunity for the EU to break away from the US and define an independent approach to the region, particularly with regard to the Gulf's security and

---

7 Khader Bishara, *Urūbā wa-l-ʿālam al-ʿArabī: Ruʾya Naqdiyya lil-Siyāsāt al-Urūbiyya min 1957 Ilā 2014*, Akram Ali Hamdan (trans.) (Doha: Aljazeera Centre for Studies, 2016).

8 Ibid., pp. 291-292.

9 Hollis, p. 53.

stability. This approach differed somewhat from the EU's responses to more significant issues such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which created a major European internal divide. In fact, the EU's position on the US occupation of Iraq was marked by division. While Britain, Italy, Poland, and Spain supported the intervention, France and Germany strongly opposed it.[10]

Without straying too far into the history of European-Gulf relations, the book endeavoured to deconstruct the EU's stance as one of the leading powers in the Gulf crisis. The EU policy adopted a fence sitting approach, reflected in its impartiality, in an attempt to maintain EU relations with all GCC states and ensure communication with all parties to the crisis. The EU did not back the Arab Quartet's call to boycott Qatar, nor provide it with any special support. From this, could it be concluded that the EU sought to establish an independent European position and policy under the influence of its core states, France, Germany, and Britain?

The EU's response to the Gulf crisis was the product of the interdependence of Gulf-European relations. Any breach of the Gulf's security, as an essential source of energy, would subsequently impact the region's position, with a knock on effect for the EU member economies. Consequently, Brussels worked on a strategy of interdependence, developed in line with the various agreements between the two parties, in order to push for and develop three goals: a friendly Iran, a secure and stable Arab Gulf, and durable and stable energy security.

The EU and the Challenges of Irregular Migration

The MENA region, particularly the countries that have undergone crises since 2011, is the principal source of migrants and refugees for the EU, which has long been considered the target destination for those seeking a fresh start. But migration represents a major source of public debate in in Europe, bringing two major issues to the fore, and huge pressure on governments. The first issue is the threat migration poses to internal security and stability through the spread of issues like unorganised crime, terrorism, extremism, and so on. The second issue is the increased pressure on governments applied by far-right groups and opposition parties who have capitalised on fears around "illegal"migration and its repercussions for European economic and social programmes. Migration has thus become the scapegoat for populists who frame it as the source of all their country's woes and as a threat to domestic security.

Despite conflicting opinions among European politicians, the EU recognises the benefits of migration for economic development and demographic growth, albeit implicitly. Brussels has historically worked on developing laws and policies to address the mounting challenges of migration, including the Single European Act (1 July 1987), the Maastricht Treaty (7 February 1992), the Vienna Action Plan (3 December 1998), and the European Council meeting in Finland (15 and 16 October 1999). The latter was the fundamental pillar for establishing a common European migration policy, leading to the adoption of an integrated and comprehensive approach among EU states to deal with migration and establish a common asylum system. It would also adopt mechanisms and measures relating to the legal treatment of citizens of non-EU states, most notably to combat racism, xenophobia, and cooperation in the management of refugee and migrant flows, as well as the development of a common policy on visas and forged documents.

Subsequently, uprisings in some Arab states have been a catalyst for EU member states to review and reassess their migration policies, under pressure from migrant flows. Most notably, the Communication on Migration of May 2011 and the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility framework (GAMM) of 8 November 2011, which aims to boost EU solidarity in the areas of migration and asylum.

[10] Pinder, p. 114.

The author concludes that despite the EU acknowledging the importance of establishing the necessary legislation to face the phenomenon of illegal migration, the current legislation still reflects the contradictory interests of its member states.

Conclusion

On Wednesday, 23 February 2022, the ACRPS organised a symposium[11] to discuss the book. Hassan Nafaa[12] noted that the author was selective in the issues he discussed, and wished if he could have addressed the Brexit issue and its repercussions on other European countries. Moreover, he preferred the use of "Arab world"rather than "Arab region"in the title of the book, which Nafaa deemed problematic, because the "Arab world"better reflects the presence of common features and culture among the various regions. In his commentary, Bishara Khader wondered why the book did not raise the issue of the Balkans' and Turkey's wish to join the EU. He also pointed out that the second section of the book should include an introduction to Arab-European relations to serve as an introductory for their history and path. However, Khader commended the book's note on the EU's leniency with certain Arab regimes on the issues of freedom, democracy, and human rights, while it followed a stringent political discourse with other states and regimes, thus putting into question the issue of conditionality on which the EU deals with Arab states.

Aforementioned criticism notwithstanding, *The European Union and the Arab Region: A Realistic Portrait of Challenge* constitutes a broad and well-researched overview of one of the world largest and most prominent integration experiences, offering in-depth insight into the EU's interaction with the most significant Arab issues, deconstructing the mechanism by which decisions are taken on those issues and unpacking their veiled objectives.

The author's interpretation of the European integration process and its stance on Arab issues was rooted in his academic background in IR, especially his use of the assumptions and approaches of realism, which are often criticised for being intellectually restrictive.[13] Furthermore, History, from another side, can provide a deeper and more comprehensive explanation of the EU's integration process and the development of its positions towards the Arab issues discussed in the book. History also has an important function in interpreting the role of internal and external factors and their impact on the EU's establishment, decision-making, and the development of its stances. History can further explain, in depth, how the end of World War II and US aid (the Marshall Plan) contributed to the establishment of the EU. History also allows for a clear and sequential explanation for Germany's role in the EU's development, with deeper insight into the German experience and fears about the re-militarisation of Germany, in Paris especially.

In addition to the academic value the book adds to the Arabic library, it is an accurately documented study that offers broad prospects for researchers, academics, and postgraduate students seeking to understand the many problems discussed.

---

11 See: "Nadwa Niqāshiyya fī Kitāb ʻal-Ittiḥād al-Urūbī wa-l-Manṭiqa al-ʿArabiyya: al-Qaḍāyā al-Ishkāliyya min Manẓūr Wāqiʿī'," *Youtube*, 23/2/2022, accessed on 30/4/2022, at: https://bit.ly/3dT9X1Z

12 See his book on the EU: Hassan Nafaa, *al-Ittiḥād al-Urūbī wa-l-Durūs al-Mustafāda ʿArabiyyan* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2004).

13 I believe that David Mitrany's functionalism theory offers theoretical grounds that help understand European integration and development.

References

al-Masry, Khaled. *Naẓariyyāt al-ʿIlāqāt al-Dawliyya*. Damascus: Syrian International Academy for Training and Development, 2018.

Bishara, Khader. *Urūbā wa-l-ʿālam al-ʿArabī: Ruʾya Naqdiyya lil-Siyāsāt al-Urūbiyya min 1957 Ilā 2014*. Akram Ali Hamdan (trans.). Doha: Aljazeera Centre for Studies, 2016.

Colombo, Silvia & Eduard Soler. "Europe and the 'New' Middle East, Geopolitical shifts and strategic choices."*Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*. vol. 23. no. 3 (2021).

Hollis, Rosemary. "Europe and the Middle East: Had the EU Missed its Moment of Oppurtunity?"*Ortadoğu Etütleri*. vol. 2. no. 2 (January 2011).

Nafaa, Hassan. *al-Ittiḥād al-Urūbī wa-l-Durūs al-Mustafāda ʿArabiyyan*. Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2004.

Pinder, John. *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Lotfi Aïssa*

Arab History and Arab Historiography

Past and Present Forms of Writing**

التأريخ العربي وتاريخ العرب كيف كتب وكيف يكتب؟

الإجابات الممكنة

Author	Multiple Authors
Date of publication	2017
Publisher	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
No. of pages	1056

* Professor of Cultural History, University of Tunis, Tunisia.
Email: lotfiaissa@gmail.com

** This review was originally published in Arabic in: Lotfi Aïssa, "Arab Historical Knowledge Production: Contexts of Constructing Meaning and Forms of Interpreting the Representative,"*Ostour*, no. 12 (July 2020), pp. 169-181, and was translated by Nick Lobo. *Ostour* is a semi-annual journal on historical studies.

Introduction

The book begins with a 20-page introduction that includes the background paper for the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies' Third Annual Conference for Historical Studies, held in Beirut on 22-24 April 2016. Next comes a preface written by Dr Wajih Kawtharani, conference coordinator and chair of the Academic Committee, entitled "Arab Historiography: Between Universal and Partial History". It is followed by a leading article by Lebanese historian Khaled Ziadeh, offering a structured summary of observations regarding "The Use of Documents in the Writing of Arab History".

The conference's various themes provided a solid framework for 32 methodological and historical contributions, all of which were deliberated during the conference proceedings and subsequently drafted and prepared for publication by the conference coordinator. The papers come in one volume (1056 pages, with a 39-page index) divided into three sections. The first is titled "Writing Arab History: Content, Periodization, Method"and consists of 10 submissions (315 pages); the second, "Issues and Trends in National Histories", consists of 8 submissions (270 pages); and the third is "Comparative History and Issues in the Field of Memory and History"(384 pages), with contributions centred around two main subjects: comparative history (with 5 contributions) and the relation of memory to history (with 9 contributions), or what may also be termed "Forms of Historically Interpreting the Representative".

Starting Points

The book begins with the conference background paper, which discussed the broad concerns that prompted the organisers, or supervisors, to hold the event, all of which related to the process of knowledge building and the production of historical significance in the Arab contemporary period. It specifically addressed the importance of knowledge accumulation in both the Mashreq and the Maghreb and the presence of epistemological barriers to historical research, overshadowing the interpretation of temporal contexts, the construction of historical epochs, and the definition of disciplines—or spatial settings, topics, sources, methodologies, and research approaches and/or models. All of these are impediments which warrant contemplation around the best possible way to overcome them.

It would be irrational to continue replicating the classical European model of historical divisions in light of the increasing demands to re-examine its marked, universally ethnocentric orientations. Further, it is unproductive that the deliberate ambiguity of Arab historiography should proceed from the Arab and/or Islamic concept of *umma*, keeping with the Orientalist school's accomplishments through the works of Carl Brockelmann, Albert Hourani, and others to avoid falling into projection or "anachronism"when constructing comprehensive Arab/Islamic histories or major regional monographs (i.e., on the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Maghreb). The same applies to the difficulty of incorporating the history of the Arabs within comparative world histories, as addressed in the writings of Arnold Toynbee, Henri Pirenne, Fernand Braudel, André Miquel, and others. This is also true of the Arab-Islamic Golden Age between the ninth and fourteenth centuries AD, as demonstrated by the works of Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 282 AH/ 897 AD), Muḥammad bin Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH/ 923 AD), ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī (d. 346 AH/ 957 AD), Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548 AH/ 1153 AD), and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Miskawayh (d. 421 AH/1030 AD).

Contributions on national or territorial histories, too, were influenced by the faltering trajectories of postcolonial states, primarily established for the purpose of civil development and the dubious formulation of nation-state projects. These processes were generally unsuccessful in offering precise answers on a wide range of topics related to borders, plurality of belonging, and the relationship with pre-Islamic histories

as well as foundational myths of national consciousness. This fact was confirmed as new generations of Arab historians shed light on unfamiliar subjects that, until recently, had been considered taboo, directing us toward the lives and works of important historical figures, as well as their religious, ethnic, and cultural particularities.

The background is followed by a preface by Chair of the Academic Committee Wajih Kawtharani, in which he deconstructs the predicament of the universal and the partial within contemporary Arab historical writing. This issue is what compelled researchers approaching this history from outside to use specific terms rooted in the "history of Arab/Islamic peoples", for whom the geography of language and culture took part in forging or constructing homogeneity within an "abstract society", as embodied by the movements of large ethnic groups and the commercial, religious, or intellectual elite from the Mashreq to the Maghreb.

Iraqi historian Abd al-Aziz Duri (1919-2010) dealt with this topic in his book *The Historical Formation of the Arab Nation*. Yet historical efforts such as this, based on a structural perspective presenting broad historical narratives, were not met with promising engagement from the contributors to this volume, who have instead employed territorial or national histories. The authors renounced what Kawtharani described as "the structural, or synthetic, universal history of major regions"(i.e., the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, the Nile Valley, and the Maghreb; p. 33) in their efforts to expand upon or critique Abdallah Laroui's work in the early 1970s, through his comparative structural outline *History of Morocco*. It became evident that the section on historiographies of the individual and the questions around how memory relates to history, as well as the focus on the history of minorities and the marginalized based on inter-disciplinary approaches, comes as part of an attempt to address the shortcomings of previous scholarship – to avoid the heavy toll of hesitating to engage epistemologically with what has come to be universally conceptualised as the "historical-cultural turn".

The conference coordinator chose to place Khaled Ziadeh's contribution in the introductory section of the book given the centrality of the relationship that ought to link historical knowledge to its various corpora, and because its content aligns with the background paper. In his study entitled "The Use of Documents in the Writing of Arab History", the Lebanese historian emphasises the need to expand access to archival records and employ them to build historical hypotheses on Arab histories. This need was previously highlighted in studies by Orientalists (e.g., Gustave Le Bon and Karl Brockelmann). In their study of Arab societies and their economies, Arab historians still rely heavily on sources such as consular documents and Sharia court records, on the model of André Raymond's research. They thus move beyond the reviews and books that only address collections of narrative prose (*kutub al-akhbār*) and political and military events, to extensively investigate the issues related to the evolution and rise of prices, social protest movements, and other contexts indicative of a shift from traditional reality and an aspiration in the Arab world to assimilate with the age of modernity. In this vein, Arab historians should draw upon the work of the French Annales school – which contributed to shaping this approach after World War II – if they are to move beyond the various Arab narratives that remain concerned with implicit or explicit ideological perceptions.

The Making of Arab Histories: Between Universalism and Localism

It is no small task to utilise all the various insights as to how the rapid transformations that have influenced, and continue to influence, historical knowledge universally are related to the different forms to which the production of Arab histories at Arab and non-Arab research institutes has been subject over the past century. This book includes at least ten contributions that, through an array of methodologies, pose a set of issues which may be critically classified according to two main themes. The first re-visited the issue of Arab historiography from the perspective of world history through collective or universal histories,

as modelled by Ahmad Shboul, Ahmed Abushouk, Ibrahim Boutchich, Mohammed Maraqtan, Ammar al-Samar, and Mohammed al-Azhar al-Gharbi. The remaining contributions from Mohammed Ezzeddine, Abdulrahman Shamseddine, Anwar Zanati, and Amal Ghazal dealt with the same topic through specific sources or particular examples.

As representations of the limited development of Arab historical knowledge during the late Middle Ages, the corpora of ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 AH/ 1406 AD) were re-evaluated using modern methodologies that invoke contexts for the formation of human civilisations, as modelled by Fernand Braudel, William McNeil, and Oswald Spengler, and how these contexts have been applied within the Orientalist perspectives of Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, around the "Clash of Civilizations"concept, or the writings of those who continue to argue against it. Further, addressing the various challenges that have obstructed consensus on best practises for temporally constructing the events of Arab history has re-opened the discussion on the universality of historical writing and prompted research on how best to situate this historical narrative within the three eras of universal analysis (i.e., ancient, medieval, and modern) or Braudel's three temporalities (i.e., the long-term or the structural, the periodical or the social, and the incidental, or rapid political events). The same applies to the contributions of the Orientalist school through the works of Will Durant, Marshall Hodgson, and Shelomo Dov Goitein, in opposition to counterarguments for the "Islamisation"of those histories based on the proposals of some Islamists and in support of the epistemology of eras as articulated in the works of Mohammed Arkoun and Abdallah Laroui.

This representation is experiencing a substantive qualitative shift in light of calls to transcend political eras and associate our understanding of Arab histories with an approach based on cultural eras: one which explains key phenomena from the premise of epistemological (not political) transformations, accounting for the "shock"the Arab region experienced as a prelude to a second Arab renaissance that would bring the accomplishments of the 19th century to completion. The new universal era of human history heralded significant transformations by way of the digital revolution, producing novel human action following its success in hybridising religious, linguistic, national, and gender identities. The "cyber era"brought a decisive end to an old world, such that the universe became a new entity where historians needed to develop their tools according to the dictates of "presentism"and anticipate what the future has in store for humanity by examining relevant field research or theory on the mounting dynamism of social media networks.

It may be the case that considerations regarding how the Arab World's earliest ancient civilisations[1] emerged are intimately linked to the need to rethink the methodology of their historiography, and to reconsider the extent to which the Arab *umma* is inclusive of their associated identities. Yet recognising the paucity of insightful reflection on the subject and the dominance of Western archaeology, in its colonial-mundane and Biblical-religious conceptions, invites us in the present to engage decisively with advancements in the discovery of artifacts and engravings on the Arabian Peninsula over the past three decades, such as Assyrian and Babylonian inscription tablets as well as Syriac, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Sabaean sources, to bypass the limited or stereotypical historical depictions as to the ancient history of the Arabian Peninsula and its civilisations which sources from Arab-Islamic heritage have proliferated. This, in our estimation, was the objective of the two remaining contributions on the subject, which sought to examine not only the official attempts at writing Arab history but also the extent to which those attempts produced accurate, authentic knowledge about the economic history of the Arabs. Despite contributors'

1 For example, the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian civilisations in Mesopotamia; the Pharaohs in Egypt; the Ebla Kingdom, Ugarit, Canaanites, and Arameans in the Levant; the Dilmu and Magans in the Arabian Peninsula and Oman; the Sabaeans, Qatabanians, Minaeans, and Himyarites in the western Arabian Peninsula; the Kindites, Lihyanites, Tayma, Nabataeans, Hatra, or Tadmur in the northern Arabian Peninsula and its peripheries, as well as Numidians and Amazigh in the Maghreb.

praiseworthy efforts in understanding official experiences in Syria (which have not been fully explored) and the achievements of the Arab League's Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation in publishing the seven-part *Sourcebook for the History of the Arab Nations*, consistent with the multitude of constraints its authors encountered, the results indicate that reaching these stated objectives is impossible, as asserted by the German historian Ulrike Freytag in her *Syrian Historiography 1920-1990: Between the Scientific Approach and the Hegemony of Ideology*.

Moreover, interrogating the space occupied by economic history at the core of Arab historical knowledge and the scope of historians' participation in adopting its various approaches, in pursuit of a greater understanding of the different historical periods or stages that Arab states have experienced, is a matter worth contemplating and an issue which Arab historical knowledge has been conclusively shown to be inadequate in addressing. The consensus is to attribute this fault to Arab scholars' limited access to archival materials, or the total absence thereof; Arab culture's disregard for the value of material evidence; an aversion to the political economy that has taken shape since the European renaissance as condemnable (*makrūh*) or unadvisable (*ghayr mandūb*), along with the inability of present-day Islamic movements to formulate an Islamic mode of economic thought; the failure of Arab liberation movements to offer an alternative; and the weakness of those movements' policies, when compared to an excessive focus on political histories tainted with glaring ideological inclinations.

In any case, the rest of the contributions on the subject sought to investigate, in detail or in part, the foregoing arguments as to forms of engagement with Arab historiographies and how their methods have developed under the guiding notions of producing universal histories. The paper on the methodology employed by Kamal Salibi (1929-2011) at various points in his work *The Bible Came from Arabia*, for instance, illustrated Salibi's deployment of the Bible's historical geography and the names of places to prove that the Arabian Peninsula region (i.e., the Hijaz and Yemen) – not Greater Syria and Egypt – was the space that witnessed the foundational events in the cosmic message of the Abrahamic religions. Salibi's methodology, thus, required a good knowledge of unmarked Ancient Hebrew, free of short vowels, for which Arabic served as a reference as the primary living Semitic language, all the while taking account of phonological and orthographical variation to explore the significance of the places mentioned in the Bible, which he regarded as a creation narrative derived from Semitic languages including Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, and Old Aramaic. These were deciphered using the techniques of substitution and translation.

The product of scrutinising the contributions on Morocco's *nawāzil* corpora and the role of network organisation in strengthening capacities for resistance and mobilisation across the Arab region for Ibāḍī religious minorities appears to clarify a set of technical and methodological applications. These practises operated at the source of particular corpora that undoubtedly helped broaden the horizons of Arab historical studies, especially on economics and society, beyond excessive focus on the Middle East to acknowledge the importance of scholarship on peripheral regions in formulating an Arab narrative inclined toward the network-building approach. Such a narrative would connect the Ibāḍī communities in Oman, Zanzibar, the Mashreq, and the Maghreb, whether during the era of the Arab Renaissance and Islamic reformism or the period of Arab unity and decolonisation. The narrative of Arab historical interdependence in language, culture, and religion ought not to be prematurely constructed; instead, this construction should take upon itself the task of crafting a new Arab geography.

Exploring the various chronologies related to crafting the Arab historical narrative through a process that "investigates lost time all over again"involves clarifying how writing Arab history relates to the production of universal history, by taking stock of the profound transformations of Egypt's post-authoritarian temporalities and decoding their relationship to the dualism of history and memory according to the

conceptions Benedict Anderson put forth in *Imagined Communities*. Thus, it was necessary to clarify the roles associated with "synchronous experience", "representation", and "the wheel of production"in formulating national affiliations and, thereby, to reveal the Egyptian state's failure "to produce daily time"and, under Hosni Mubarak, the concentration of its legitimacy within a reprehensible discourse of development while also pushing for engagement in the downward spiral of "remembrance"(p. 203) and revising, or incorrectly remembering, the facts—an alarming truth whose catastrophic nature was uncovered by the revolution when secret archives were opened and documents came to light on the Arab-Israeli wars. As a result, it was necessary to consider the inaccuracy of the official discourse while opening the door to a precarious temporality for political and civil society actors, all of whom had been implicated in the endorsement of deplorable practices under the guise of building and strengthening Arab nation-states.

"Into the Light of Day": Writing National Narratives and the Impasse of Political Implementation

Papers in this section were geographically distributed between two major regions. The first considers instances from the national histories of Arab Middle East (i.e., Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq), while the second delves into the histories of North African countries (i.e., Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania).

Noha Khalaf's contribution builds on the memoirs of Palestinian journalist Issa El-Issa (1878-1950) and employs a micro-historical approach to reveal understudied aspects of Palestinian history, blending the subjective with the objective and the past with the present. Hence, the micro-analysis being conducted at the intersection of space and time provided the opportunity to fill in the blanks of Palestinian history, especially from the Ottoman era until the foundations of the Zionist state had been laid, covering Ottoman rule of the area and the Great Arab Revolt.

This micro-historical approach to the content of El-Issa's memoirs demonstrated how the Ottomans gave way to the Zionist movement, supported feudal lords in the seizure of land from peasants, then squandered those lands away by selling them to Zionist immigrants. It further substantiated that the Zionist movement cooperated with Arab regimes during the 1936 Palestinian revolution; that the first generation of political actors were aware of the differences between various Zionist factions during the British Mandate; how the partition plan negatively impacted the peasantry and led them to establish a strong basis for the resistance; and how conservative landowners opposed them in the total absence of a bourgeoisie. These renewed intuitions support the notion that attending to place, memory, community, culture, and identity helps reveal competition and struggle, whether avowed or concealed, between various historical actors, to further understand the reasons behind the failure of the act of resistance in the Palestinian case.

Makkawi discussed the transitions that shaped the historiography of modern Egypt "in orientation, theory, methods, and leadership"beginning with the Egyptian national academy's shift from the civil to the governmental in 1925. Makkawi investigated the levels of transformation, or transition, in the formulation of historical knowledge and the construction of an epistemological accumulation following the adoption of the individual role in crafting historical action to the relationship of that same production to collective action, corresponding to the materialist interpretation of history espoused by Marxist-influenced leftist historians and, thus, engagement with the dictates of identity in the investigations and explanations of Islamist scholars.

The goal of this process was to clarify the roles of historians amidst the ideological shifts and contextual particularities that guide their academic research. It sought to explain how using such knowledge could serve different cultural and political goals, ultimately leading to the emergence of schools of thought in Egyptian

historical writing. Makkawi acknowledges that examining a) the actions of leaders and officials as catalysts for Egyptian historical development or the contexts of how ruling political regimes were constructed, b) the levers and trajectories of the history of the national movement, and c) the nature of developments within the structure of the historical self has been wholly called into question in the wake of the violent shock of the incidents of early 2011. These events led the younger generations to confront the despotic tendencies of authority, especially through its guardianship over various segments of society, such as the falsification of living memory, the deliberate erasure of records and photographs concerning the events of the revolution, and the concealment of the conditions that preceded the revolution and shaped its access to the truth. It is as if the regime's insistence on invoking nationalist discourse and reproducing the elements of authoritarianism and exclusion only stimulated the younger generations' yearning (and, indeed, their determination) to rid themselves of that legacy and to call openly for a break with its disastrous consequences. Instead, it encouraged a re-reading of Egypt's modern history, free of misinformation and fabrication.

The remaining contributions on the Mashreq region, namely Mohannad Moubaydeen's presentation on Jordan's relationship with national history and Nusair al-Kaabi's work on the shifting contexts for historical writing in Iraq, revealed how historical knowledge is characterised by a state of artificial continuity, or deceptive stagnation in the Jordanian case – a key cause of which appears to be apprehension around the discussion of embarrassing political issues for the ruling Hashemite dynasty and its close allies – even though it has been shown that those histories were constructed in light of the Arab issue or around the question of the coalescence of Jordanian personality and the elevation of the role of the national movement. This historiography has branched out into four institutions working in unison: universities, national committees, research centres, and independent historical studies that tend to be of an avowedly ethical, social character. Yet the volume of research in political history would suggest that historians, with some exceptions, have not been successful in going beyond the officially sanctioned scope to formulate a philosophical or intellectual background reflecting autonomy – to say nothing of engaging critically with the history of the national movement or examining disasters, famines, prisons, disease, and other tangential issues emerging from various modernist and reformist historiographical trends.

Within the same framework comes the section on analysing the contexts and methodological approaches of Iraqi historical writing, seeking to re-evaluate the stereotype of shifts in official ideology that dominate collective action internally, in light of the effect of transitions in the prevailing mode of production for economic management in Iraq on historical knowledge, and considering the plurality of the Western educational backgrounds of the originators of that knowledge externally. Thus, it becomes totally imprecise – in the absence of intellectual accumulation and a modern, merit-based academic culture – for there to be a school of historical thought with the requisite professional specifications and theoretical, authoritative functionality in Iraq, even though historiography has seen several "established modes"which al-Kaabi describes as the "local-national mode", "Marxist mode", and "variable modes"such as "Islamic national historiography", "national history", "confessional history", and the "mode of economic-national writing". All of these patterns discuss "the story of the *umma* and its role in history"while clarifying the contributions of key historical actors by assembling their life courses, in the manner of Abd al-Aziz Duri's *The Historical Formation of the Arab Nation: A Study in Identity and Consciousness*.

The four contributions on the Maghreb region (two on Morocco, one on Tunisia, and one on Mauritania) echoed the same dilemma emerging from various readings of the issues of nation-state narratives and the construction of the foundational narratives of civil and development projects.

Abdelrahim Benhadda presented on three generations of historians and their research areas, such as investigation, monography, and the relational history of the Mashreq, Europe, and Africa, as well as

interrogating Otherness, grappling with contemporary history, and formulating structural accounts while navigating different frameworks and institutions of academic publication and their associated pitfalls in Morocco. That the work of Moroccan historians accounts for nearly a third of knowledge production on Morocco in the social sciences and humanities, his research argues, must not obscure the fragility of this historical knowledge accumulation, given an inability to initiate the next generation of scholars while ensuring the desired research quality and credibility and a decline in scholastic production over the past two decades.

Similarly, Mohammed Habida spoke on the ambiguity of the "pre-colonial"to examine the functions of conceptual divisions of time and potentialities for investigating them from the standpoint of social, economic, and cultural structures. He sought to adapt the concept to the demands of the *longue durée* and its universalist applications, proposing a reassessment of how "pre-colonial"time is deployed, whether by historians or social scientists, and an interrogation of all such studies in light of "contemporary trends in historiography". After thoroughly analysing the topics of his research, each of which relating to implementations of pre-colonial time, and investigating the use of the concept in the context of the Maghreb countries and the anthropology of their societies, Habida concluded with ways in which the *longue durée* may in turn be employed with respect to bridging the gap between the Middle Ages and the modern era to better understand the history of the southwestern bank of the Mediterranean (Morocco in particular) until the French occupation of Algeria in 1830. This result corresponded with Fernand Braudel's assertion, echoing Edmond Faral, that fear of the long-term perspective is what truly damages this history.

Although Fatima Ben Soliman offered a complementary view on this question in her paper, entitled "The Nation-State in Modern Tunisian Historiography", it was her reliance on the methodological approaches of "subaltern studies", as well as the methods of Ottoman Studies specialists within "postcolonial studies", that led her to the shift in historical approaches to the state and to issues of identity, citizenship, democracy, and development in Tunisia. The study of these questions in the wake of colonisation investigated a paradigmatic shift in perspective and interpretation by which it became possible to move beyond the first generation of Tunisian historians' view of the state as a complete entity and the source of all action or supposed transformation toward incorporating its various initiatives within an intricate network of historical actors, as proposed by the research of scholars of later generations.

Ben Soliman situated her epistemological assessment and methodological insights toward all imported trends within an enquiry as to the contexts in which the first generation of historians – whom she described as "obsessed"with "the state concept"– examined what she termed "the archaeology of the Tunisian nation-state"; these scholars understood the state as a system of violence and domination, the product of an imported modernity, the foundation of a local hereditary dynasty, and, thus, the effusion of a self-sufficient "nation"emerging from the Ottoman Caliphate/Empire. She concluded, conversely, by situating this ongoing epistemological shift within the transformations of social history, which has addressed the history of the state from within and diversified methodologies to attribute all readings of Tunisian state formation to a "ceiling"that renders that state inseparable from how its modern history, in all its dynamism, relates to its legal status as a province of the Ottoman Empire/Caliphate.

This very trend ran contrary to the many studies of Abdeljelil Temimi, later deepened through the work of Asma Moalla and Leila Blili. Its internal structure has been deconstructed through research on the roles associated with various actors within the governing apparatus such as central and local aides, slaves, wives, concubines, and relatives, pending an expansion of that tendency through the comparison of state formation in Tunisia to that of the other Arab provinces during the Ottoman period.

However, the deductions of Hamahoullah Ould Salem's contribution as to what he dubbed "the crisis of national history in Mauritania"bring us back to square one regarding the agitation of pre-state tribal and

regional institutions against all other parties, thereby consecrating a “fragile national identity”emanating from the simultaneous crises of a) the state project, b) its historiography, and c) the accumulation of objective knowledge on the state. Such a blight afflicting historical knowledge has, in truth, expanded to afflict all narratives put forth on state formation and the coalescence of the national self in Africa or the Maghreb region, to such an extent that ibn Khaldūn himself has nearly become the subject of a territorial dispute among these countries. Ould Salem’s paper examined the literature on the periods of Mauritanian national history, making note of Arab and local sources, contemporary schools of thought, and challenges to writing that history, foremost among which being the legacy of French colonial sociology; the completion of school curricula, structural works, and university theses; and the negligence afflicting political-ideological narratives. As well, the author considered the difficulties of crafting collective identity, managing land borders and tribal authority, to say nothing of cultural sensitivities around Arabisation and the Blackness of those whom Herodotus dubbed “the ones with burnt faces”, the dilemma of local history, and other stumbling blocks. Broadly speaking, this would indicate the failure of the nation-state project and the incompetence of its institutions in managing tribal and familial histories, which is cause for a swift reconditioning of national cultural norms to construct a rational national consciousness around true historical issues and a national history that “permits balance between the particular and the universal, the territorial and the national”(p. 524).

In any case, historical research on the making of transitional experiences toward nationalising modern territorial vocabulary and post-colonial nationalism – despite the critical detail and variation they have provided these historical contexts – still need to closely engage with the experiences of other modern Arab political entities in Yemen, the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf, and the rest of the Arab countries (e.g., Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Algeria). It is useful when evaluating phenomena under study, in a manner equitable toward historical contexts, to consider the transformations these cases witnessed, to compare them to one another, and to examine fluctuations within Arab processes of modernisation – whether by expounding on modern civic tendencies or by pulling experiences of political and territorial centralisation toward conservative perceptions of a pan-Arabist or Salafi persuasion.

Knowledge Accumulation in Arab Comparative Histories, or the “Poor Relative”

The volume also includes research on collective impact that takes pause at the issue of knowledge accumulation on Arab comparative histories. Five contributions from Samer Akkach, Ezzeddine Djessous, Saleh Alwany, Tariq Madani, and the late Mohamed Tahar Mansouri explored the potential to develop these histories and identified some key studies in the field.

These studies addressed an array of new questions posed by the historiography of science in the Arab world, in line with the shift in how Western historians have examined the issue. Three studies evaluated the outcomes of historiography on the “Islamic West”and/or “North Africa”and the ways in which ibn Khaldūn’s thought has inspired the crafting of this region’s history, past and present, as well as the evolution of research on the history of al-Andalus and its position within Arab and Western scholarship. The remaining two contributions sought to highlight the import of this research, by way of lexicography, in the depiction of the Byzantines within Arab heritage and civilisation.

If it has been conclusively shown that motives for Arab engagement with the history of science have transcended responding to the Western narrative’s disregard for Arab scientific and creative contributions, then the West’s awareness of the gaps in this reading, even its acknowledgement of negligence and modification of methodologies to emphasise the Arabs’ important role in scientific development, is what

obliges a move beyond stereotypical interpretations, restricted to traditional points of contention, in the present. The objective would be to craft a new narrative of the history of science, free of impressionistic rebuttals and the many shades of Western supremacy that have characterised this research and manifested within the structures of Western scientific production through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; in particular, Western historical research has closely documented the role of Eastern peoples in the development of knowledge, specifically Arab-Islamic advancements in mathematics and astronomy. Yet "the documentation of scientific information is one thing, and the way it is deployed in the historiography of science is another"(p. 633).

The irony here is that opposition to the marginalisation of the Arab role in universal scientific production has resulted, conversely, in that role's hasty confinement to the medieval period. Hence, Arab historians of science ought to comparatively address the post-Copernican stage to situate the evolving intellectual position of the Arabs within the course of scientific development and to construct an Arab narrative that clarifies the true causes, following the shift driven by the discovery of the Earth's location within the solar system, of the accelerated realisation of a Western scientific revolution while the same key development met with apathy within the Arab-Islamic intellectual sphere. Further, one must take care to avoid falling into impressionistic justifications that serve none other than a narcissistic, Western reading of history, as well as the Salafi viewpoint that rejects the notion of a Western scientific revolution, and to instead focus on the concept of "acquisition"rather than "borrowing": something that came to the Arabs' aid when their civilisation flourished in the transmission and acquisition of knowledge from previous civilisations, without regard for the identity of its producers.

This point draws particular support from the studies that have elucidated the depiction of the Byzantines in the Arabic language throughout the medieval period, profoundly and meaningfully substantiating the transmission and fusion of the Greek language within the lexicon of Arabic, as if the former were the product of the latter. What is interesting is that the search for alternatives or parallels – whether to bring the Byzantine experience within the scope of an Arab mentality, to Arabise its terminology, or to incorporate these terms into Arabic directly – coincided with the spread of Greek Orthodox communities across the Islamic world and the emergence of close ties between the two groups. These relations served as the foundation for the abundance of Greek terminology in the Arabic lexicon, whether in general nomenclature, political institutions (e.g., central government and empire), military institutions, proper nouns, and religious and financial terms – broadening knowledge, strengthening an atmosphere of curiosity, and aiming to better understand aspects of the Christian Other, like Banū al-Aṣfar (the Romans), as evoked by the Arab proverb: "he who learns the language of a people shall be safe from their iniquity"(*man taʿallama lughata qawmin amina sharrahum*).

Contributions that addressed the methodology of historical approaches to the Maghrebi-Andalusian sphere sought to scrutinise their conclusions and the extent to which researchers were under the influence of Western Orientalism during the colonial presence, and to clarify the levels by which these studies departed from this inept approach by considering developments across historical periods, especially the Islamic era. This objective involved the consultation of many Arabic-language corpora touching on different trends in religious thought, revealing an aversion on part of Western scholars to delve into these sources and, indeed, a failure to intellectually engage therewith in order to broaden their understandings and historical horizons on the subject – something very surprising, especially given that the pretext of having a limited command of the Arabic language would not necessarily contradict taking care to examine what has been written and to make use of its considerable accumulation. Rather, to do so would promote the movement of ideas and the enrichment of scientific production across both shores of the Mediterranean.

Literature reviews of research on the history of the Maghreb countries since decolonisation have elucidated this very point, examining the extent to which these studies adopted Western approaches tinged with blatant Orientalist inclinations given an inability to overcome the ideological difficulties of national narratives. This has been an assessment which is neither serious nor in many cases precise. According to the same studies, the conditions for progression, or salvation, lie in re-reading ibn Khaldūn's corpus (viz. *al-Muqaddima*, *al-ʿIbar*, *al-Riḥla*, and *Shifāʾ al-Sāʾil*) in light of the concerns of the Annales schools, especially the methodological research of Marc Bloch as to the critical importance of modifying temporal metrics and examining natural, cultural, and social structures, before shifting focus to the investigation of events as soon as they take on the distinctive vocabulary of the philosophy of history. All these are conceptions that, despite their originality, appear unfair to historical eras, pushing for the interpretation of this vast body of work on the foundations of universal historical knowledge so as to address matters its proponents had never considered.

We observe a similar trend in research on the history of al-Andalus: a space of convergence between East and West which has long suffered a pathological deification of its past, transforming it into a kind of myth that detracts from its history and brings its inclusive portrayal into a dubious space that has bolstered the effect of memory and the representative. This means that knowledge production stemming from research on the history of al-Andalus, from East and West alike, has not been without its flaws, whether with respect to defining concepts (e.g., Muslim Spain, al-Andalus, *la Reconquista*, Eastern despotism, and the question of ethnic origin) or departing from the notion of a lost "paradise"in favour of alternative lines of questioning that would put a stop to impressionistic reactions that distort reality. In this way, researching the history of al-Andalus would become "worthy of consideration in and of itself, not for what it is supposed to be"(p. 707). Especially after the collapse of Francisco Franco's dictatorship in 1975, historical knowledge on Andalusian-era Spain has made important progress toward candidness and self-reconciliation in line with the dictates of openness, and to strengthen cultural pluralism and democratisation.

It has become clear that these studies in comparative history have concentrated on cases of Otherness that depart from the civilisational context or geographical particularities. Methodologically, they have not addressed points of consensus and contention with respect to horizontal, not vertical, correspondence, as if to affiliate with the same nominal-political, cultural, or civilisational space is to exempt oneself from the representation of differences within the unified Arab field's various structures, as a way to manage their particularities and illustrate their courses through a comparative reading.

Forms of Interpreting the Representative in Arab Histories

This final section, devoted to interpreting the historical representative, included nine contributions that fall under two categories. The first sought to address corpora of mythical tales (Yahia Boulahia), hierarchies of the First Companions of the Prophet (Mohammed Hamza), foundational biographies (Abdullah Ali Ibrahim), and popular biographies (Amr Mounir and Abdelaziz Labib) by interpreting texts and the contexts of their production. These efforts came as an attempt to bring the construction of historical reports back within the scope of mental representations, rooted in the deep permeation of memory within the individual and collective imaginary of their historical personalities and their true origin and belonging. The remaining contributions evaluated the relationship of memory to history and the historiographical modes of intellectual concepts, or representations, within the experiences of Morocco (Abdulaziz al-Taheri), Algeria (Massoud Doulaymi), and Sudan (Mahasen AbdulJalil). The book concludes by assessing the academic level of knowledge production in historical anthropology and closely inspecting topics addressed by university historians in the Algerian journal *Insaniyat* (Abdelwahad al-Makani).

The presence of memory in the work of Moroccan historians has benefitted from specific contexts to open the door to political and social freedoms and the implementation of transitional justice on part of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission since the turn of the century. There has also been an increase in social demand for histories like these, particularly in reference to the recent past (i.e., colonialism) and the current past (i.e., independence) rather than earlier historical periods. Hence, such an approach should be firmly implemented and expanded to cover previous historical periods by interrogating traditional, colonial, and national historiographies, evaluating academic research from universities, and relating that to contemporary history via the relationship between eyewitness and historian. In this way, one may clarify the divisions between selective emotional, impressionistic, and mythical representations of memory in comparison with attempts by historiography to rationalise and critique the past.

The situation does not greatly differ in relation to evaluating the ambiguous relationship of historical knowledge on Algeria to the problems of reviving memory and the negligence, even deceit, afflicting the scholarship – whether over the long period of colonisation or through the output of academic institutions following the state's independence – let alone the various attempts to manipulate history and deploy it for ideological purposes before there came to be greater openness, protection of academic freedoms, and a critical re-evaluation of scholarship, whether by Algerian researchers or otherwise, on Algerian history since the 1990s.

Building on this was the invocation of what has been termed "the historical anthropology turn"within the Moroccan context, and the historiographical shift from "hot"content related to "resistance, revolutions, and liberation movements"to "cold"content based on "patterns and mentalities more than personalities, turning points, and events"(p. 997). The evaluation process revolved around studying the "anthropological turn"and interacting with its archives, methods, and paradigms concerning questions of Sufism (i.e., an area where scholars employing a comparative approach have gone conspicuously unmentioned), family, blights, endemics, famines, and how all of that relates to plant nutrition. Meanwhile, positional analysis has aimed to evaluate the contents of the Algerian periodical *Insaniyat*, published regularly since 1997 – as a complement to its Tunisian and Moroccan counterparts *IBLA* (since 1937) and *Hespress* (since 1927), respectively – while applying some conclusions from the Maghreb region to the Mashreq, to promote the development of that critical turn toward improved research on "historical and comparative periods, the relationship of the local to the central and of the territorial to the national […], and renewing research models by intensifying the interrogation of the familiar or static [of a given subject]"(p. 1015).

It is not unlikely that clarifying the issue of "suppressed history"– a blatant licence to obscure, distort, and erase – could represent an innovative and courageous attempt to strengthen extant scholarship on the history of insanity, history of slavery, and relationships following both by connecting this research to the representative, denial, social neglect, suppression, the emergence of "taboos"and their resilience to being dissolved or transcended, and how all of this relates to the history of sexuality, gender, and re-integration. Such an elucidation would deconstruct relationships of renunciation, marginalisation, and exclusion, and it would expand on excavations in the "archaeology"of historical knowledge in order to gather documentation on the history of the suppressed in Sudan and open its archives; examine memoirs, personal letters, oral interviews, and field research; then extract and interrogate their contents regarding the meanings of suppression and how they relate to history, especially that of insanity and slavery (overseas and at home; as an imposition upon the body and a kind of destiny). In doing so, one may better understand the congruence of that history with subjective and social history; its having spread through memory within the oral record; and the dramatization, intensification, and complication of news to the point that historians now need "to update their tools and devise new ones"to overcome the challenges of constructing historical knowledge (p. 922).

However, what separates myth from history? How might mythology be of use in crafting historical facts? What are the boundaries between Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, Edgar Morin's epistemology, and Maurice Halbwachs' collective memory? How might we employ new methods (anthropology in particular) when reading these studies? What justifications are there for studying Andalusian mythology (especially the myth of the House of Wisdom) alongside its innovative counterparts concerning the Japanese Amaterasu as a way to capture positive, foundational moments of development when re-reading history and avoiding deep-seated traps within our collective memory? These were the essential questions driving the remaining studies, which investigated the stories of the First Companions or analysed the representative within folktales about the "Conquests of Egypt"or the "Epic of Banū Hilāl"as mythically-charged events and the controversy they elicited as retrospective depictions of the Islamic Age. Further, these studies considered how the depictions constructed fixed standards and values by cleansing collective ethics of political interests and addressed problematic texts on ethnic groups and fringe communities (i.e., those of mixed pan-Arab and pan-African roots) and the capacity for conflict resolution as a "cultural climate"and a "historical event": one that permits the writing of an "alternative history"by way of "marginal testimonies diverging from mainstream interpretations that celebrate the world of the collective, with its strange tales and the madness of its poets"(p. 991).

There has undoubtedly been a diversity in the works of Arab historians that, during nation-state formation and decolonisation, broke with dimensions of recreation or classical immersion in historiography, even though this content has been affected by Western methodological schools. The contributions to this volume on Arab historiography and the history of the Arabs has offered a valuable opportunity to assess the intellectual accumulation in the discipline across four themes. The first two related to contextual concerns that suggest the reconsideration of the nominal eras of Western history, and the extent to which Arab historical knowledge engages with universalist conceptions intrinsic to knowledge production. Themes also included assessing the challenges of research on national issues as independent from hegemonic official narratives with bias to nation-state projects, or of studies detached from those narratives and based instead on pan-Arabist or Salafi-Islamist conceptions, whether explicit or implicit. The rest of the contributions investigated the stability of horizontal comparative histories of Arab countries, as well as aspects related to archaeology, heritage, or anthropo-history by approaching the complex relationships that connect memory to history. The content and methodological inclinations of all of these themes were productively evaluated in a manner that scholars of Arab history may find useful when diversifying and developing historiographical methods, and in addressing the question of comparative history in the manner of the early Annales school and its scholarship on Europe, ever since the publication of Marc Bloch's seminal essay on historical methodology in the early twentieth century.

ACRPS

CONFERENCES

PAST CONFERENCES

Iranian Studies Unit Conference

The Raisi Presidency One Year On

22-23 August 2022

bit.ly/3EiRDJ0

Sports, Politics, Society Symposium

1-2 October 2022

bit.ly/3gkjnF4

Ninth Annual Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Forum

22-23 October 2022

bit.ly/3AiJJxZ

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

The Fourth Round of the Winter School

Political Culture Revisited: How Values Drive Politics

7-17 January 2023

bit.ly/3hIrUlz

Annual Palestine Forum

January 2023

https://bit.ly/3Ok38mU

The Ninth Social Sciences and Humanities Conference

The Concept of “Political Culture”and

Political Cultures in the Arab world

March 2023

bit.ly/3tDs2FH

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

Books

Author's name, Title of the book in italics (Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication), page number. As an example:

Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin, 2006), pp. 99 - 100.

Successive footnotes would be in the form: Pollan, p. 3.

If there is more than one reference by the same author, we use a short title: Pollan, *Omnivore's Dilemma,* p. 3.

The corresponding bibliographical entry: Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals.* New York: Penguin, 2006.

Books written by four or more authors should follow the same rules as above, but only the first author is named, followed by " et al.". As an example: Dana Barnes et al., *Plastics: Essays on American Corporate Ascendance in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 142.

In successive footnotes: Barnes et al., p. 142.

The corresponding bibliographical entry: Barnes, Dana et al. *Plastics: Essays on American Corporate Ascendance in the 1960s,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Periodicals

Author's name, " Title of the article,"Name of Journal in italics, volume number, issue number, page number. As an example:

Robert Springborg, " State-Society Relations in Egypt: The Debate Over Owner-Tenant Relations,"*Middle East Journal,* vol. 45, no. 2 (Spring 1991), p. 247.

Corresponding Bibliographical Entry: Springborg, Robert. " State-Society Relations in Egypt: The Debate Over Owner-Tenant Relations,"*Middle East Journal,* vol. 45, no. 2 (Spring 1991), pp. 232 - 249.

Newspaper articles

Newspaper articles should be cited only in the footnotes (not in the Bibliography). As an example:

Ellen Barry, " Insisting on Assad ' s Exit Will Cost More Lives, Russian Says,"The New York Times, 29/ 12/ 2012.

Electronic Resources

Author's name (if available), " The electronic resource's title,"The website name, Date of publication (if available), accessed on d/m/y, at: shortened URL. As an example:

"Sovereign Wealth Fund Rankings 2015,"Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, accessed on 9/ 8/ 2016, at: http:// bit.ly/1sQqBfr

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR ACRPS PERIODICALS

AlMuntaqa’s editorial board maintains confidentiality and adheres to objectivity in the peer reviewing process. It adopts an anonymous peer review process, where the editorial board selects the appropriate reviewer to assess paper suitability for publication, according to specific criteria. In case of a conflict between the reviewers regarding the publication’s assessment, a third reviewer will be selected.

AlMuntaqa relies on a pool of experienced peer reviewers who are up to date with the latest developments in their field.

AlMuntaqa adopts a rigorous internal organization with clear duties and obligations to be fulfilled by the editorial board.

Disclosure: With the exception of the editor in charge (Managing Editor or those standing in for the editor), neither the editors, nor the peer reviewers, are allowed to discuss the manuscript with third parties, including the author. Information or ideas obtained in the course of the reviewing and editing processes must be kept confidential and cannot be used for personal gain.

When needed, based on the reviewer report, the editorial board may offer researchers methodological, technical and other assistance in order to improve the quality of their submissions.

AlMuntaqa’ s editors commit to informing authors of the acceptance or otherwise of their manuscripts, based on the reviewers ’ report, or to notify authors in case of rejection, specifying the reasons for rejection.

The journal is committed to providing quality professional copy editing, proof reading and online publishing service.

Fairness: The editors and the reviewers evaluate manuscripts for their intellectual and scientific merit, without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs or political views of the authors.

Conflict of interests: Editors and peer reviewers should not consider manuscripts in which they have conflicts of interests resulting from competitive, collaborative or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or institutions connected to the papers.

Confidentiality: Unpublished data obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and cannot be used for personal research.

Intellectual property and copyright: The ACRPS retains copyright to all articles published in its peer reviewed journals. The articles may not be published elsewhere fully or partially, in Arabic or in another language, without an explicit written authorization from the ACRPS.

AlMuntaqa’ s editorial board fully respects intellectual property when translating and publishing an article published in a foreign journal, and will not proceed before obtaining the authorization from the journal in question.

AlMuntaqa does not make payments for manuscripts published in the journal, and all authors and researchers are exempt from publication fees.

The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) is an independent social sciences and humanities institute that conducts applied and theoretical research seeking to foster communication between Arab intellectuals and specialists and global and regional intellectual hubs. The ACRPS achieves this objective through consistent research, developing criticism and tools to advance knowledge, while establishing fruitful links with both Arab and international research centers.

The ACRPS encourages a resurgence of intellectualism in Arab societies, committed to strengthening the Arab nation. It works towards the advancement of the latter based on the understanding that development cannot contradict a people's culture and identity, and that the development of any society remains impossible if pursued without an awareness of its historical and cultural context, reflecting its language(s) and its interactions with other cultures.

The ACRPS works therefore to promote systematic and rational, scientific research-based approaches to understanding issues of society and state, through the analysis of social, economic, and cultural policies. In line with this vision, the ACRPS conducts various academic activities to achieve fundamental goals. In addition to producing research papers, studies and reports, the ACRPS conducts specialized programs and convenes conferences, workshops, training sessions, and seminars oriented to specialists as well as to Arab public opinion. It publishes peer-reviewed books and journals and many publications are available in both Arabic and English to reach a wider audience.

The ACRPS, established in Doha in autumn 2010 with a publishing office in Beirut, has since opened three additional branches in Tunis, Washington and Paris, and founded both the Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. The ACRPS employs resident researchers and administrative staff in addition to hosting visiting researchers, and offering sabbaticals to pursue full time academic research. Additionally, it appoints external researchers to conduct research projects.

Through these endeavours the ACRPS contributes to directing the regional research agenda towards the main concerns and challenges facing the Arab nation and citizen today.

The Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI) is an independent institute for learning and research in the fields of Social Sciences, Humanities, Public Administration and Development Economics in Doha.

Through its academic programs and the research activities of its professors, the DI aims to achieve its mission of contributing to the formation of a new generation of academics and intellectually independent researchers who are proficient in international scholarship standards and modern interdisciplinary research methodologies and tools, and leading professionals who can advance human knowledge and respond to the needs of the Arab region, resulting in social, cultural and intellectual development.

The DI seeks to establish an intellectual hub that will benefit the Arab region in particular. The DI supports academic research that deals with Arab issues, in an atmosphere of institutional and intellectual freedom.

The DI works in cooperation with the ACRPS and the Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic Language to facilitate its students and faculty members in their research of the most important current issues related to the Arab world and the wider international community. The involvement of students in the most important research projects is at the heart of the DI's interests.

The DI adopts Arabic as its official and primary language for education and research. English serves as an accompaniment to Arabic, with both languages used in presenting and research.

المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies