



2019

Identity In The Wake Of The State: Local, National, And Supranational Dynamics Of The Syrian Conflict

Victoria Gilbert

University of Pennsylvania, vicki.gilbert22@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations>

 Part of the [International Relations Commons](#), [Near Eastern Languages and Societies Commons](#),
and the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gilbert, Victoria, "Identity In The Wake Of The State: Local, National, And Supranational Dynamics Of The Syrian Conflict" (2019).
Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations. 3349.
<https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3349>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3349>
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

Identity In The Wake Of The State: Local, National, And Supranational Dynamics Of The Syrian Conflict

Abstract

While much of the civil war literature considers the impact religious or ethnic identities have on the character or duration of conflict, scholars have failed to address why different identities become salient in territories outside the state's control. Using subnational case studies from the Syrian conflict, I claim that we must consider the interests and character of those actors who strive to attain authority and build governing institutions in the absence of the state. I find that civilian actors are more likely to promote local identities, such as clan, tribal, or city-based identities. Armed groups, however, are more likely to choose more abstract or space-based identities, such as ethnic or national identities. The three cases vary in terms of the involvement of civilian and armed actors in institution building. The first case study analyzes an area where civilians played the primary role as institution builders, the second case study describes two areas in which armed groups served as the primary institution builders, and the third case covers an area in which civilian and armed actors controlled different aspects of public life. External actors can also play a supporting role in the development of institutions by local actors or a negative role by destroying groups' capacity for institution building. The project leverages the availability of materials created by local authorities and disseminated over social media to evaluate identity promotion in dangerous areas. It also uses photos and videos of protests to evaluate the effectiveness of local identity promotion efforts in shifting the salience of civilians' identities. This work joins an ongoing conversation on the character and effects of rebel governance as well as debates on the relationship between local dynamics and national/international cleavages in times of civil conflict. It also adds to a growing literature on Syria by illustrating the variation of local institution building and identity promotion and by problematizing the emergence of particular cleavages.

Degree Type

Dissertation

Degree Name

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Graduate Group

Political Science

First Advisor

Ian S. Lustick

Keywords

Conflict, Governance, Identity, Institutions, Syria

Subject Categories

International Relations | Near Eastern Languages and Societies | Other International and Area Studies | Political Science

IDENTITY IN THE WAKE OF THE STATE:
LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND SUPRANATIONAL DYNAMICS OF THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

Victoria Gilbert

A DISSERTATION

in

Political Science

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2019

Supervisor of Dissertation

Ian Lustick

Professor of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania

Graduate Group Chairperson

Alex Weisiger, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania

Dissertation Committee

Rudra Sil Professor of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania

Jessica Stanton Associate Professor, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota

To my spouse, without whom I would starve spiritually, emotionally, and literally.

Acknowledgement

There are many people and organizations who contributed to this project. My thanks to the Browne Center and the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania for supporting this project. Special thanks need to go to those who assisted me in the massive undertaking of recording and translating the protest materials that I used for this project: Noor Halabi, Rawad Wehbe, and Ibrahim Bakri. A special thank you to Hazem Shekko, Gaith alHallik, and all of my Arabic teachers for your patience and tutelage. There were many passionate teachers who shaped my outlook a few of whom I would like to thank by name: my committee members, Ian Lustick, Jessica Stanton, and Rudy Sil, as well as Amílcar Barreto, Malik Mufti, Amahl Bishara, and Beatrice Manz.

Alf shukur to the Syrians who were willing to take a chance and talk to someone around the world whom they met only briefly or had never met in person.

ABSTRACT

IDENTITY IN THE WAKE OF THE STATE: LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND SUPRANATIONAL DYNAMICS OF THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

Victoria Gilbert

Ian Lustick

While much of the civil war literature considers the impact religious or ethnic identities have on the character or duration of conflict, scholars have failed to address why different identities become salient in territories outside the state's control. Using subnational case studies from the Syrian conflict, I claim that we must consider the interests and character of those actors who strive to attain authority and build governing institutions in the absence of the state. I find that civilian actors are more likely to promote local identities, such as clan, tribal, or city-based identities. Armed groups, however, are more likely to choose more abstract or space-based identities, such as ethnic or national identities. The three cases vary in terms of the involvement of civilian and armed actors in institution building. The first case study analyzes an area where civilians played the primary role as institution builders, the second case study describes two areas in which armed groups served as the primary institution builders, and the third case covers an area in which civilian and armed actors controlled different aspects of public life. External actors can also play a supporting role in the development of institutions by local actors or a negative role by destroying groups' capacity for institution building. The project leverages the availability of materials created by local authorities and disseminated over social media to evaluate identity promotion in dangerous areas. It also uses photos and videos of protests to evaluate the effectiveness of local identity promotion efforts in shifting the salience of civilians' identities. This work joins an ongoing conversation on the character and effects of rebel governance as well as debates on the relationship between local dynamics and national/international cleavages in times of civil conflict. It also adds to a growing literature on Syria by illustrating the variation of local institution building and identity promotion and by problematizing the emergence of particular cleavages.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Key Concepts: Identities and Institutions</i>	4
<i>The Argument</i>	6
<i>The Syrian Context</i>	10
<i>Research Design and Case Selection</i>	13
<i>Organization of the Text</i>	21
CHAPTER 2: IDENTITIES AND INSTITUTION BUILDING IN THE WAKE OF THE STATE	23
<i>Identities</i>	24
<i>The State and State Retreat</i>	35
<i>Institutions & Identity Promotion</i>	40
<i>Institutions & Identity Promotion in the State’s Wake</i>	44
<i>The Role of External Actors in Identity Promotion</i>	55
<i>Conclusion</i>	60
CHAPTER 3: CIVILIAN INSTITUTIONS & IDENTITIES IN NORTHWESTERN SYRIA: IDLIB PROVINCE AND THE CITY OF MA’ARAT A-NU’MAN.....	63
<i>Introduction</i>	63
<i>Background</i>	64
<i>Meeting the Criteria for Civilian Rule</i>	68
<i>Source Material</i>	75
<i>Identity Promotion by Civilian Actors</i>	79
<i>The Role of External Involvement in Identity Promotion</i>	96
<i>Protest Analysis</i>	98
<i>Responses to the Local Council of Ma’arat a-Nu’man’s Facebook Posts</i>	105
<i>Conclusion</i>	107
CHAPTER 4: <i>REBELOCRAECIES</i> : IDENTITIES AND INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE DEMOCRATIC UNION PARTY AND ISLAMIC STATE.....	109
<i>Introduction</i>	109
<i>Background</i>	110
<i>Meeting the Criteria for Rebelocracies</i>	112
<i>Source Material</i>	122
<i>Identity Promotion by PYD Institutions</i>	124
<i>Identity Promotion by the Islamic State</i>	138
<i>The Role of External Involvement in Identity Promotion</i>	141
<i>Protest Analysis</i>	144
<i>Conclusion</i>	148
CHAPTER 5: CIVIL AND UNCIVIL INSTITUTIONS & IDENTITIES IN SYRIA: THE CASE OF EAST GHOUTA AND THE CITY OF DOUMA.....	151
<i>Introduction to the Case</i>	151

<i>Background</i>	152
<i>Meeting the Criteria for Hybrid Institutional Arrangement</i>	157
<i>Source Material</i>	162
<i>Identity Promotion by Civilian Actors</i>	164
<i>Identity Promotion by Armed Groups' Institutions</i>	177
<i>The Role of External Actors in Identity Promotion</i>	185
<i>Protest Analysis</i>	190
<i>Conclusion</i>	197
CHAPTER 6: IN THE WAKE OF THE STATE: PATTERNS AND EXTENSIONS	198
<i>Revisiting the Argument</i>	199
<i>Taking the Argument Outside Syria – Libya and Yemen</i>	207
<i>Taking the Argument Outside the Middle East – The Collapse of the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan</i>	214
<i>The Fall of the Ottoman Empire</i>	217
<i>Conclusion</i>	219
APPENDICES.....	226
BIBLIOGRAPHY	232

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1 Map of Syria 2015 (Carter Center)	14
Figure 2 Map of Syria identifying the locations of Douma, Ma'arat a-Nu'man, and the Jazira Canton	15
Figure 3 Overview of the Cases	21
Figure 4 Diagram of the Argument	62
Figure 5 Map of Ethnic Composition of Syria in 2010 (Izady 2010)	80
Figure 6 The Logo for the Idlib Governorate Council	82
Figure 7 Identity References by the Local Council of the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man	86
Figure 8 Photo posted by the Local Council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man on June 7, 2016 of men doing repairs	90
Figure 9 Logo for the Local Council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man	91
Figure 10 Identity References in Protests in Ma'arat a-Nu'man by month.....	99
Figure 11 Identity References in Protests in Ma'arat a-Nu'man by Year	99
Figure 12 Flags used in protests in Ma'arat a-Nu'man by year	100
Figure 13 Still shots from video of protest held in Ma'arat a-Nu'man on April 15, 2016	101
Figure 14 Still shot from video of protest in Ma'arat a-Nu'man April 15, 2016	103
Figure 15 Still shot from video of protest in Ma'arat a-Nu'man April 15, 2016	104
Figure 16 Map of the Ethnic Compositiion of Syria in 2010 (Izady 2010).....	124
Figure 17 Identity References by the PYD Rojava Facebook Account	127
Figure 18 Frequency of the appearance of the terms “Syria,” “North Syria,” and “Syrian Democratic Forces” on the PYD Rojava Facebook Page	129
Figure 19 Identity References by the Syrian Democratic Council.....	130
Figure 20 Logo of the Syrian Democratic Council	132
Figure 21 Identity References on the Jazira Internal Body’s Facebook Page	133
Figure 22 Relative frequency of the appearance of forms of “Syria” and “Rojava” on the Jazira Internal Body’s Facebook Page	134
Figure 23 Logo of the Internal Body of the Jazira Canton.....	136
Figure 24 Identity References by the Internal Body of the Jazira Canton Facebook Account.....	137
Figure 25 Cover from 4th grade history textbook produced by the Islamic State.....	140
Figure 26 Map of Eastern Ghouta and its surroundings, December 2016.	154
Figure 27 Map of Eastern Ghouta, indicating areas controlled by different armed actors. The blue area was held by Jaish al-Islam in May 2017.....	155
Figure 28 Map of Ethnic Composition of Syria in 2010 (Izady 2010)	165
Figure 29 Identity references by the Local Council of Rif Dimashq Governorate and the Council for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq – East Ghouta. The Blue bars are for the Local Council of Rif Dimashq Governorate. The Orange bars are for the Council for the Governo	167
Figure 30 Word counts from Facebook account of Local Council for the City of Douma	168
Figure 31 Original logo for the Local Council of Rif Dimashq	170
Figure 32 New logo for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq.....	170
Figure 33 Identity References on the Facebook account for the Local Council of the City of Douma	172

Figure 34 Relative frequency of appearance of the word "God" by Month, Local Council of City of Douma.....	172
Figure 35 Old Local Council Logo for Douma.....	176
Figure 36 New Local Council Logo for Douma.....	176
Figure 37 Identity References by the Judicial Council of Eastern Ghouta.....	178
Figure 38 Logo for the Judicial Council of Eastern Ghouta.....	180
Figure 39 Photograph posted by the Facebook page of the Shura Council's Local Executive.....	184
Figure 40 Identity References by the Shari'a Body of Damascus and its Countryside...	185
Figure 41 Identity References in Demoncrations from the City of Douma, January 2012-December 2016.....	191
Figure 42 Logos for Suqour ash-Sham.....	206

Chapter 1: Introduction

يا أبناء سورية الأحرار
أيها الأبطال الصامدين في القصير وحمص وكل شبر من الأرض السورية،
منذ سنتين وانتم تخوضون معركة الشرف في مواجهة أكثر النظم وحشية وعنصرية
،تدافعون فيها عن حرياتكم وكرامتكم
، عن حرمة حياتكم وحياة نساتكم وأطفالكم
، عن حقكم في أن يكون لكم وطن يحضنكم ويحميكم ويؤمن مستقبل أبنائكم ككل شعوب العالم
تدافعون عن تاريخكم وكل القيم الانسانية التي جعلت من بلادنا موطن المحبة والأخوة والثقافة والحضارة، موطن الأبدية والأديان الالهية
والقيم الروحية.

*Oh sons of Syria of the free
Oh steadfast heroes in Qusair and Homs and every inch of Syrian land
For two years you have fought a battle of honor in the face of the most brutal and racist regime
You defended your freedom and your dignity
For the sanctity of your lives and the lives of your women and children
For your right to a homeland that embraces you, protects you, and believes the future is your children as
people of the world
You defended your history and all the human values that made our country the homeland of love,
brotherhood, culture, and civilization, the homeland of divine religions and spiritual values.*

*-Burhan Ghalioun. Sociology Professor at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle and first
President of the Syrian National Council
Shared by the Local Council of the City of Douma Facebook Page on May 20, 2013*

Following mass mobilization against decades of dictatorship, the states of Libya, Yemen, and Syria were all engulfed in civil strife. Peaceful protests were followed by state violence and armed insurrection. As conflict escalated state institutions retreated or, in some cases, collapsed entirely. To outsiders, order had been replaced by chaos and violence. Protests swathed in national flags and symbols had been replaced by rebel groups wearing religious phrases, or secessionists with different flags. The group known as the Islamic State exploded onto the scene, promoting an extreme interpretation of what it meant to be a true member of the Muslim community. In Yemen groups calling for the re-creation of an independent South Yemen painted the flags of the former state on walls. In northern Syria the Kurdish Democratic Union Party set about establishing a civil society organized around the region's various ethnic communities.

Yet variation in the goals and identities of the numerous actors which have emerged in what remains of Libya, Syria, and Yemen is often downplayed by outsiders. Media narratives largely select a single cleavage around which to construct their narratives of each conflict, describing Syria's civil conflict as sectarian due to the religious divide between the majority Sunni Muslim opposition and the Alawi heritage of most of the regime's ruling members. Yemen has been depicted as a second arena in which the division between Sunni and Shi'a is the most significant cleavage, and the Houthi uprising and acquisition of territory is depicted as the will of the Iranian state. Libya's strife is described as a conflict between religious and secular actors. The assumption that conflicts are shaped by a single identity cleavage bears little similarity to the reality on the ground (Bergholz 2016: 272, Kalyvas 2006). Intrastate conflicts are often labeled "ethnic" or "sectarian" with little consideration of how salient ethnic or religious identities are amongst civilians or even how many armed actors embrace such identities. Focusing on these larger divisions obscures more local dynamics of conflict (Kalyvas 2003). Among the local dynamics which are concealed are the array of identities available in those areas in which state institutions and the identities they promoted have eroded.

The salience of different kinds of identities has significant ramifications at theoretical and practical levels, distorting efforts to understand conflicts and undermining attempts to stop them. There has been significant research which indicates that the salience of particular kinds of identities can influence the characteristics of civil conflicts. Civil wars in which religious cleavages are salient are more lethal for civilians and fighters and last longer than other civil wars (Toft 2006). There is also significant evidence that conflicts in which ethnic identities are salient are more difficult to resolve

(Rose 2000, van Evera 2001, Kaufmann 1996, Kaufmann 1998, Kaufmann 2006, Horowitz 1985, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2010).

In addition, when identities are embraced by those who provide governance, the selection and promotion of particular identities can have significant impacts on the governed. Just as the distinction between membership or exclusion from a national community can shape an individual's rights, opportunities, or survival, the identities embraced during civil conflict can have similar ramifications. Armed actors who promote an ethnic identity may attack or drive out individuals who do not share their ethnic identity. Co-religionists may find themselves protected and provided with essential services while those of other religions are persecuted by armed groups. The Islamic State became notorious for its acts of violence directed toward communities deemed heretical by the armed group.

Under ordinary conditions, when the state is present and has not failed or retreated, the state shapes identities. This has been explored in depth in the nationalism literature, who have pointed to state institutions as the means through which national identities are formed or altered (Gellner 1983, Byman 2000, Weber 1976). Other works have explored the connection between state institutions and ethnic identities (Lieberman and Singh 2012, Akturk 2011, Marx 1998, Lieberman 2001, Dumitru and Johnson 2011) or the ability of states to reduce or enhance the salience of religious identities (Ben-Porat and Turner 2011, Laitin 1986). What we have not yet explored is why and how identities change in the absence of the state.

When the state has failed or retreated, when its institutions are no longer capable of influencing identities, why do different group identities emerge or change? What are the factors which explain why certain religious, ethnic, national, or local identities

become salient after the state fails or retreats? This project examines the different identity projects promoted or activated by the conflict in Syria, explain why different nonstate actors embrace different kinds of identities in their symbolic repertoires, and learn why some identities become salient and others do not in areas from which the state has retreated. To do so, this work focuses on what makes it possible for some rebel groups and civilian nonstate actors to influence the salience of particular identities.

The argument presented here has theoretical ramifications as well as consequences of interest for policy makers. As was previously discussed, single national cleavages, be they religious or ethnic, do not accurately depict the dynamics on the ground. However, actors operating locally do not only focus on local concerns, and may promote an array of group identities at varying levels of abstraction. I argue that a generalizable pattern exists, that different kinds of identities are likely to be promoted by armed and civilian institution builders and that the balance of power between these groups of actors will influence the array of identities promoted in an area. This may have lasting and significant ramifications for Syria's future. Establishing consistent national order will become significantly more complex due to the competing identities which have emerged in different parts of the country. Where local institutions or those individuals who were involved in local institution building remain, these competing identities will likely persist, providing an organizational and symbolic groundwork for future challenges against the state.

Key Concepts: Identities and Institutions

This work is concerned with identities and the different actors who use shared identities to ensure compliance. In this work, the identities of interest are social identities, the identities which are rooted in one's membership in social groups. Each individual

possesses multiple identities that are predicated upon membership in different communities or social groups (Volkan 1999, Hogg et al 1995, Wilmer 2002). Due to their basis in the social world, it is our interactions with that world that construct, mold, and change these identities. Not all social identities are politicized and an identity may even be socially relevant for decades while not becoming a basis for political action (Posner 2005, Chandra and Wilkinson 2008). We therefore should not assume that it is natural for particular identities to become politically salient and we should look to contextual factors rather than the identities themselves to understand changes in their relevance (Lawrence 2013: 11).

Evaluating the existence of particular identities can be difficult and poses some significant but not insurmountable challenges. Works on nationalism often rely upon the materials produced by elites (Lawrence 2013: 13, Abdelal et al 2009; Phillips 2013; Suleiman 2003). This study focuses on the references to identity made by those who step in to provide order in the absence of the state. As such, elite references or appeals to identities are a necessary part of the study. However, elite expressions of identity are not the only expressions of significance and should not be assumed to reflect the sentiments of the wider population. While we cannot assume that particular behaviors are tantamount to expressions of identity (Ibid. 13), ordinary citizens also engage in a variety of discursive practices. They use symbols and make appeals to identities in a variety of ways, some of which, such as public protest, is public and observable.

Institutions play an important role in the formation and development of social identities. North et al define institutions as norms, social rules, beliefs, and formal laws (North et al 2009: 15). State institutions play a pivotal role in the creation and shaping of identities (Byman 2000, Weber 1976, Laitin 1986, Gellner 1983). Public education

systems, legal systems, and militaries have all been pointed to as institutions which promote ethnic and national identities (Byman 2000, Weber 1976). The greater the number of institutions that reinforce an identity, the more effective the state's identity promotion efforts are expected to be (Lieberman and Singh 2009: 34). Those who live in relatively strong states will often interact with a number of state institutions that promote a national identity subtly (what Billig (1995) referred to as "banal nationalism") or explicitly.

The development of institutions is not something in which only state actors engage. The rebel governance literature focuses on the efforts of non-state actors to rule, a process which necessitates the development of new institutions (Förster 2015, Arjona 2014, Mampilly 2015, Menkhaus 2006/2007, Kasfir 2005). The creation of new institutions to provide governance may encourage changes in the salience of identities of perhaps support the creation of new identities (Arjona 2014). Just as states strive to promote identities, nonstate actors also use symbols and engage with identities (Mampilly 2015). Institutions created by nonstate actors play an important role in providing order in the absence of the state, and therefore it is to variation in nonstate governance that we should look to understand identity outcomes. However, why nonstate actors emphasize particular identities over others has been a subject that has not been explored.

The Argument

To understand why particular identities emerge as salient in the state's wake, I argue that we must look to the sets of identities and symbols non-state actors use to legitimate their rule, the symbolic repertoires of rebel governance. While the popular view of civil conflict or state failure assumes total chaos and disorder, actors on the ground strive to establish new orders in the state's absence and to provide basic public

goods. To do so, these actors must attain the compliance of the population. Coercion can be prohibitively costly, and it is therefore logical for any actor who wishes to govern to acquire legitimacy (Lustick 2002). To do so, they engage with a variety of narratives and symbols, referring to and promoting particular identities (Brown 1994, Hobsbawm 1996, Mampilly 2015, Posen 1993). Each non-state actor has a set of identities that it could appeal to, from which a limited set are actively incorporated into the group's repertoire.

To understand which identities are utilized by particular non-state rulers, we must consider the characteristics which distinguish nonstate actors from one another. The most fundamental distinction to be drawn is that between armed and civilian actors. While much of the literature on state failure and civil conflict focuses exclusively on armed actors, civilian actors can also construct institutions and govern in the state's absence (Arjona 2014). I argue that when civilians rule,¹ the repertoires which they employ are local, predicated upon pre-existing communities that are tied to a limited place. Clan, tribal, or city identities would all be examples of the kinds of local identities we would expect to be the focus of civilian actors' salient identities. These are identities which are established before the removal of the state and are tied to social groups that are limited in size. These communities do not have to be imagined in the way that a nation is as they are not so large nor so abstract. In unimagined communities, members could meet or hear of all other members of their community, a possibility that is infeasible for social groups like nations (Anderson 1983: 6).

The reliance upon local identities by civilian actors is driven by several factors. First civilians cannot coerce locals to ensure their compliance as civilians, by definition,

¹ Arjona calls a civilian wartime order an *aliocracy*, the rule of others (2014). The civil war literature generally labels all non-combatants as civilians.

lack the required capacity. This also means that they cannot force people to select their chosen identity. The lack of coercive capacity has other effects. When the state has failed people live in an atomized political landscape as a lack of consistent law and order makes travel and the transportation of goods dangerous. While armed groups may shape the boundaries of the areas they control, striving to expand their reach over greater areas, civilian actors lack such capacity. Building institutions and providing governance, if undertaken by civilians, is therefore more likely to take place at a local level. While national civilian entities may exist, it is generally up to locals to build governing institutions, as was the case in post-failure Somalia which experienced the “radical localization’ of politics” (Menkhaus 2006/07: 85). Local institution builders often get their organizational start with extant civilian institutions, another factor which also leads me to expect that local identities will form the basis of their identity repertoire. In addition, civilians cannot defend themselves against armed groups. Therefore, civilian rulers strive to avoid promoting any identities which could be perceived as competing against identities promoted by armed groups.

Armed groups, however, have distinct interests which shape their identity repertoires. As Mampilly (2011) discusses not all armed groups wish to provide or are capable of providing governance. The armed actors of interest here are those who build institutions and therefore interact with the civilian population. While the repertoires of civilian rulers are characterized by an attachment to specific places, the repertoires of armed actors emphasize commitments to abstract spaces. The identities they appeal to are imagined communities, which can be national, religious, or ethnic in character. There are several factors which influence which imagined community an armed group may embrace. One of the most important is the objective of the armed group, the space that

they aspire to eventually control. An armed group which seeks to secede, carving out a limited part of what used to be a unified state, will not make a national identity a component of its identity repertoire. However, an armed group that has national aspirations will.²

The coercive capabilities of armed groups make it possible for these actors to be innovative in their repertoires and to shut down dissent in a way that civilian groups are not. However, the ability to use force of arms to promote at least public acquiescence to an identity repertoire does not mean that armed groups are unconstrained in their identity promotion. For example, armed groups that control large areas cannot use entirely distinct repertoires to appeal to every local population that they rule as such subterfuge would surely be discovered and the legitimacy of the rebel rulers questioned. The identity embraced by an armed actor may alienate some civilians, causing friction with the local population as took place in the Syrian city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man. Thus, the salient identity of ruling armed groups (*rebelocracy* according to Arjona) is shaped by a set of factors that is distinct from those that shape civilians' repertoires.

However, such coercive capability and the desire to provide governance come with costs. The acquisition and defense of territory is an expensive project, which often drives armed actors to cultivate patrons from outside the state (Salehyan 2010: 507). Those groups whose identity repertoires appeal to external actors, I argue, will be more likely to have access to outside support. Some armed groups may even alter their identity repertoires to appeal to outside actors. These factors may lead to greater viability of armed actors whose repertoires incorporate an identity preferred by a wealthy patron or

² The membership of the group at its beginning constrains choices that the group may make. An armed group populated by blue people cannot promote an identity rooted in greenness. Armed groups are also somewhat constrained by the identities they have chosen to embrace. They cannot just change to suit whoever they rule in each location as this would damage their credibility and legitimacy.

set of patrons. This will influence the ability of locals to build institutions that will allow them to influence the identities of civilians. Yet the incorporation of particular identities in a promoted repertoire can also have significant risks. External actors may intervene directly, attacking groups that have embraced particular identities, ideas, or patrons. While outside support and attacks may influence the ability of both civilians and armed actors to build institutions and effectively promote identities, the additional pressures armed groups face to compete against other armed actors will lead external actors to have greater influence on identity outcomes in areas under the rule of armed groups.

So far I have proposed two kinds of institutional arrangements, situations in which civilians rule and promote local identities and situations in which armed actors rule and promote more abstract identities based on their objectives and the competitive pressures they face. However, not all political spaces fall into either of these neat characterizations. In some locations, both armed groups and civilian actors strive to build institutions and compete with each other to govern. In these hybrid circumstances armed groups continue to be driven the factors discussed above. However, civilians may face pressure from the armed group to adapt their identity repertoire to placate the armed group, leading them to appeal to an array of identities. The mix of identities promoted, I argue, make it unlikely that ruling actors will effectively alter the salience of identities for the local population.

The Syrian Context

Before exploring identity transformations which took place in the absence of the Syrian state, it is vital to provide some context about identity promotion under the Syrian state. In the decades between Syria's independence in 1946 and the 2011 uprising several identities were embraced and promoted by the Syrian state: Arab nationalism, Greater

Syrian nationalism, and Syrian nationalism. The Ba’th (Renaissance) Party began with a set of ideas developed by Michel ‘Aflaq and Salah ad’Din al-Bitar, two middle class Damascenes who met while studying at the Sorbonne in Paris (Batatu 1978). They called for a single Arab nation-state and combined this with a set of socialist principles (Hinnebusch 2007: 264). Ba’thism would be adopted as the ideology of the Syrian state after the Ba’th Party took power in a coup in 1963.³

When Hafez al-Asad took power in the “corrective revolution,” his identity options were fairly limited. As a member of the minority Alawite sect in a religiously diverse state with a clear Sunni Muslim majority, religion was not available as a legitimizing tool. Syria’s rulers historically had to deal with the difficult task of establishing a unifying identity to hold the Syrian populace together while simultaneously maintaining a selective distribution of power. In order to deal with the contradictions between officially embraced identity and political reality, the al-Asad regime strove to employ salient symbols to legitimate its rule (Wedeen 1999: 15). Having taken charge of a state in which Arab nationalism was accepted, established, and institutionalized, carrying the pan-Arab banner was one path to legitimacy. This can be seen in al-Asad’s efforts to continue discussing unification with fellow Arab states, a move seen by scholars as a tactic “to cover his ideological flank” (Mufti 1991: 232-233). However, an Arab national identity was not the only identity available to Syria’s political elites.

Greater Syrian nationalism calls for the formation of a political unit that is comprised of what had been the Syrian province under the Ottoman Empire, although the exact proposed boundaries have varied (Muslih 1991: 169, Kienle 1995: 59). Political

³ Two experiences are consistently cited to explain the shift away from a fervent adherence to Arab nationalism in Syria. The first of these is the experience of the United Arab Republic, which led to Syrian elites feeling supplanted by Egyptian officials. The second is the loss of the 1967 war, which was seen as a blow to the viability of the Arab nationalist project (Dawisha 2003, Mufti 1996, Barnett 1995, Ajami 1978).

parties that promoted this national vision did not fare well in Syrian domestic politics in the 1950s and largely lost out to parties which promoted Arab nationalism, like the Ba'th Party (Ibid).⁴ While Greater Syrian nationalism was revived as a tool to justify Syria's intervention in the Lebanese civil war, although these limited efforts at identity promotion were not considered successful (Mufti 1996). Thus, while a Greater Syrian nationalism was one of a field of possible identities that could have been promoted by the Syrian regime, it rarely featured in the official identity repertoire.

The third identity which was a viable alternative for the Syrian regime was a Syrian national (*watani*) identity. Starting in the 1970s, elites decided the construction of institutions was the best way to modernize Syria, and this became a primary focus of the regime (Trentin 2009: 497; Kienle 1995: 67). Developing state institutions increased the degree to which citizens interacted and identified with their state (Barnett 1995: 481). Hafez al-Asad, who came to power in a putsch in 1970, also expanded government-supported organizations in an effort to involve more of the Syrian population in a selectively Syrian society (Mufti 1996: 237). In addition to the expansion of Syria's state capacity, references to a Syrian national (*watani*) identity became more common, and by the late 1980s the regime's identity repertoire incorporated a Syrian national identity (Kienle 1995, Phillips 2013).⁵ This trend continued under the reign of Bashar al-Asad, who used Syrian national symbols in his efforts to construct a cult of personality (Gilbert 2013). While the Syrian regime under Hafez al-Asad and subsequently under his son,

⁴ Antun Sa'ada is largely cited as the first to articulate a vision of a Greater Syrian national identity (Dawisha 2003: 289-290). One of these, the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP), was a rival to the Ba'th Party (Hinnebusch 2007: 264-265).

⁵ The passage of time also supported the development of national identity. An increasing proportion of Syria's population was born after Syria's independence, making Syria a fact that they had lived with for their entire lives (Mufti 1996, 247).

Bashar, would continue to rhetorically gesture toward Arab nationalism, an Arab national identity was no longer central to the regime's identity repertoire.

National identities also played prominent roles during the initial phases of the 2011 uprisings. This was reflected in the use of national symbols, such as flags, as well as chants that referred to *ash-sha'b as-suri*, the Syrian people. To Ismail this indicates an interest in challenging the equation of Syria with its leader, as in the oft-used phrase *Suriyya al-Asad*, Asad's Syria (Ismail 2011). These national challenges were sometimes made through humorous re-articulations of slogans or signs associated with Bashar al-Asad and the Ba'thist regime (Wedeen 1999, Della Ratta 2012, Gilbert 2013). A Syrian national identity played a prominent role in the state's identity repertoire in the decades leading up to the uprising and during the initial months of demonstrations. However, as will be discussed here, a variety of identities emerged as the peaceful protest gave way to armed conflict and the Syrian state lost control over significant territory.

Research Design and Case Selection

Case Selection

The Syrian conflict has been one of the most lethal human catastrophes in recent decades. It also presents a unique opportunity for understanding dynamics outside of the state's control. By studying a conflict still in process there was no need to sift through widely adopted and established societal narratives about the conflict. The research could be conducted without concerns about the ways in which memories change over time. Human beings are not impartial when it comes to deciding which collective memories are remembered and how (Zerubavel 2012: 2). The narrative that emerges about a conflict generally reflects "society's interests" and change over time (Nets-Zehngut 2012: 255-

256). Anachronistic views on the conflict can be avoided by researching events in real time or focusing on materials or records produced while events unfolded.

The other characteristic which sets events in Syria apart at the time of writing is the availability of information. A tremendous quantity of data was produced by participants and civilians as the conflict progressed (Lynch et al 2014, Power and O’Loughlin 2015). Access to the technological means for producing and transmitting information as well as the degree of technological experience possessed by many

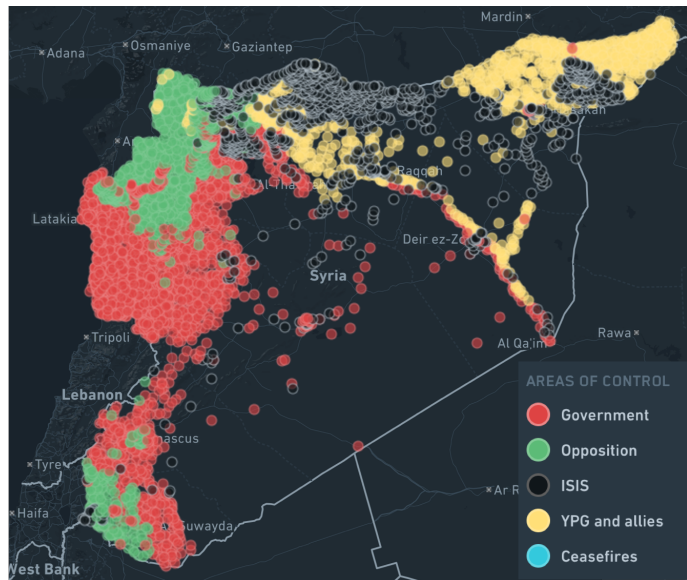


Figure 1 Map of Syria 2015 (Carter Center)

Syrians provided, “unprecedented access to events on the ground, oftentimes in close to real-time” (Power and O’Loughlin 2015: 174). Facebook and YouTube were the sites most favored by Syria’s numerous citizen journalists (Wall and Zahed 2015: 724). The use of social media and video-sharing platforms allowed for the development of a time-stamped discourse accessible to individuals located around the world.

This work focuses on three communities within Syria from the start of 2012 to the end of 2016: the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān in Idlib Governorate, the Jazira canton in predominantly Kurdish northern Syria, and the city of Douma in the Eastern Ghouta region. This work also draws on research and a limited set of materials produced by the group known as the Islamic State, which for a time, controlled significant territories in eastern Syria and treated the city of Raqqah as its de facto capital. There were several criteria which

drove the selection of these communities. First, areas were chosen that were in very different parts of the country. The geographical variation was intended to ensure that events in one community would not necessarily have spillover effects that influenced action in another city or region. Another consideration was demography. Ma'arat a-Nu'man, Douma, and much of the territory held by the Islamic State had similar ethnic and religious composition (predominantly Sunni Muslim and Arab populations) and there were actors present in each area which espoused a religious identity. This allowed for a degree of comparison across these three cases while holding a number of factors about social composition constant. The areas governed by the Kurdish PYD, however, were more ethnically and religiously diverse.

Most significantly, these cases varied on the independent variable as they are examples of different institutional arrangements. Ma'arat a-Nu'man, a city in Idlib Governorate, was ruled by civilians in the time period considered here, who primarily promoted a civic, local identity. The areas under the Kurdish Democratic Union Party

(PYD) and Islamic state illustrate the dynamics under the rule of armed groups, with each of these groups promoting abstract identities. In the case of the PYD, a group intent on attaining a greater degree of regional autonomy, a pan-ethnic



Figure 2 Map of Syria identifying the locations of Douma, Ma'arat a-Nu'man, and the Jazira Canton

identity was promoted across the institutions it built, including its armed wings. The Islamic State, a group dedicated to the destruction of modern state boundaries and the construction of a caliphate, promoted an extreme interpretation of a Sunni Muslim identity. In the third case, the city of Douma in an area known as the Eastern Ghouta, civilian and armed groups competed for political control and engaged in institution building. This led to a mix of identities promoted by the different institutions built in the area.

Within each of these areas, it was important to identify key actors. Who was building institutions on the ground and thereby had the means through which to influence civilians? I leveraged an array of news sources and reports from inside and outside Syria in order to identify who significant players were in each areas. In two of the three cases I was also able to conduct remote interviews with an individual who was presently living or had recently resided in the cities that were the primary focus of the case. This allowed me to verify my reading of the local political situation and the institutionalized nature of locals' interactions with local authorities. While civilian actors and armed groups built institutions to provide an array of public goods, I focus here primarily on governing institutions as well as institutions related to dispute resolution, such as courts. This was a decision largely guided by the literature on state formation and works on rebel governance.

Analysis of Identity Appeals

In order to evaluate the promotion of identities by actors within the Syrian context, this work engages with text and images from the social media accounts of several local institutions in three areas of Syria. There have been concerns that relying on information gathered from social media accounts in Syria leads to analysts only having access to information which fits the “agenda” of the posting group (Lynch et al 2014: 15). However, in this case it is exactly that agenda that is of interest. It is assumed that actors have an

interest in promoting themselves, on increasing their legitimacy in the eyes of whoever is consuming the media they produce. To do so, they engage with identities and ideas which they believe will resonate in their communities. Therefore, references to places, identities, and behaviors should fit with this agenda and their expectations about what will increase their legitimacy. It is imperative when working with social media, as with other fields, not to select on the dependent variable. This means avoiding collecting only those posts that receive particular kinds of responses or hashtags (Tufekci 2014: 507-509). In addition, I did not use Twitter as Twitter posts are limited to short messages. By using Facebook I had access to posts of varying lengths and complexities. By scraping all of the posts created in the time period of interest (the start of 2012 through the end of 2016) I was able to ensure there would be no selection bias in developing the corpora.⁶

The text from these Facebook accounts were subjected to several types of analysis. First, the texts of the posts were subjected to content analysis using a list of identity related terms was compiled, which can be found in appendix 1. Words that were coded for potentially appealing to a religious identity included the Arabic words for “God” and “prayer,” ethnic identity included “Arab” and “Kurd,” local included the name of the city or region, and national included words such as “Syria” or “nation.” This list was not

⁶ Many local institutions created Facebook pages, although not every institution did so (for example, the education office under the Local Council for the City of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān did not appear to have its own page). In addition, some local institutions created pages at varying times, with some local councils creating Facebook pages in the first few years of the conflict while for others this did not take place until later. One thing that is worth noting is that, for those local institutions who wish to prove to potential donors that they provided goods and services to the local population, social media provided a means for doing so that did not require a great deal of technological expertise. While a couple local institutions did eventually create websites as well as Facebook accounts, this was generally done later which I believe can be attributed to the familiarity many Syrians had with Facebook and the lower degree of technological expertise required to set up such a page. While the availability of online information played some role in case selection, the ability and decision to create Facebook pages does not seem to have altered which identities were promoted by local institutions, as the significant variation between institutions and over time indicates. In addition, while the social media accounts of armed groups (particularly Islamist armed groups) were regularly attacked and taken down due to pressure by foreign governments, this has not been true for many of the local institutions which they built, such as Consultation Councils and Judicial Councils.

intended to serve as an exhaustive evaluation of the appearance of appeals to particular kinds of identities. Instead, this method is intended to give a sense of general trends and additional means of comparing between different social media accounts produced by different institutions.

This step was also taken to limit the corpus of material. The first goal was to limit the set of included posts to those which were potentially identity-related. Many of the institutions analyzed for this project have thousands of posts, the bulk of which focus on mundane procedural matters. Any mention of one of the search terms was sufficient to allow for a post's inclusion in the corpus. This decision was based on work in the nationalism literature which claims that even the unnoticed appearance of identity-related symbols can influence attitudes and identities (Billig 1995, Penrose 2011, Phillips 2013, Butz 2009, Jones and Merriman 2009). The corpus was also limited temporally and all posts after 2016 were removed. There were several practical reasons behind this choice. First, the conflict was occurring as research was being conducted. Attempting to update the information on the cases and to code additional posts would have made the project infeasible. Second, data for the three case studies was collected and analyzed at different times. Establishing a common starting and ending point for the corpora from all three cases meant there would be more consistency in terms of significant national and international changes. Finally, making the end of 2016 the ending point meant the data preceded significant acquisitions of territory made by the regime and significant shifts in the boundaries of statelessness.

The second step of the textual analysis was to look at the content of the included posts and to evaluate qualitatively the ways in which these key identity terms were used. Subjecting material to qualitative as well as quantitative analysis is one of the means for

limiting the potential of producing biased results when working with social media content (Tufekci 2014: 513). In the third step I used Voyant, an online software, to generate a count of the most frequently used words within the corpus. By implementing three different methods for analyzing the materials I was able to mitigate concerns regarding potential biases in the coding scheme or the qualitative analysis.

In addition to analyzing the text generated by local institutions, I also analyzed the logos of these different institutions as well as a limited number of photos. The text produced by local institutions and their logos together were analyzed to look at which identities these institutions referred to or promoted. Analyzing iconography involves considering the meaning that the creator was trying to convey based upon what is included in an image (Phillips 2011: 8). The logos produced by many of the institutions in question look quite professional and some groups went through multiple logos over time. The logos also appear in photos indicating that these logos were not solely for online consumption but for local residents. Given their consistent use by local institutions and the care put into their creation, their content appears to be significant.

This project strives to look not only at the identities promoted by different actors but also evaluates whether the salience of different identities changes in the months and years after the state's retreat. To do so, with the aid of research assistants, I translated chants, songs, and banners from protest videos from three Syrian cities, one within each of the case studies. New technologies ushered in a wave of citizen journalists around the world (Tufekci and Wilson 2012: 373). The videos and photos these individuals produce are not subjected to the filters and gatekeeping of conventional, mainstream media (Andén-Papadopoulos 2014: 754). Social media has played a significant role as a means

for posting coverage of protest events from a variety of perspectives (Tufekci 2014: 11).⁷ In Syria, the emergence of local and national news outlets during and after the 2011 uprising meant that locations often ignored by Syria's mainstream media had a voice of their own (Wall and el Zahed 2015: 721). Videos and photos were collected from a national news source, a national level archive, and two local sources from three cities selected. Facebook and YouTube were two of the most popular outlets used by citizen journalists in Syria (Ibid. 724). Therefore, these were some of the main sources of photos and videos of protests. The translated materials were then subjected to content analysis, using a coding scheme (which included counting flags) as well as qualitative analysis.

The protest footage was subjected to a content analysis that focused on possible references to identities, similar to the analysis conducted on the posts by local and regional institutions. When analyzing documentation of protests, one can focus on the text of signs or consider a banner's elements from a visual perspective, considering how a text is laid out or the colors used (Phillips 2011: 8). Symbols and images function as "political identity markers," delineating members of political groups and implemented as components of individuals' political arsenals (Khatib 2012). Since identities can be appealed to through textual, visual, and auditory components of protest the protest analysis included all three in the analysis. Any banners and posters which could be read in full were transcribed, translated, and analyzed. If the posters included significant visual elements (such as a cartoon, border, or a specific set of colors) these were also coded. The type and number of flags were also counted for each photo and video. Flags are often

⁷ Tufekci also argues that the use of social media and related technologies has had fundamental impacts on how and what people protest. She claims that the use of technology instead of formal institutions to conduct politics leads to a focus on expression, on conveying concerns or identities, but avoids "traditional politics" (2014: 203).

a significant part of political protests. In 2005 protests in Lebanon national flags were an important visual element of the protests (Khatib 2013: 484). In those instances in which videos had been edited to show different parts of a protest, flags were only counted before the first edit in the video to prevent double counting. Songs and chants were transcribed and coded, as were speeches given by individuals. In addition to coding all of this material, information was also recorded about the estimated number of attendees in the photo or video and whether the recording showed a protest or a rally. All of this information was used to evaluate which identity or identities were referred to by protest participants and to evaluate changes which took place over time.

Organization of the Text

By exploring the institutional variation and identities promoted in these different parts of Syria, this work strives to shed light on why particular identities emerge as salient in the state’s wake. The following chapter will provide additional detail on the theory being argued in this work. It discusses in greater depth the key concepts employed and draws upon the work from the literature on identity, state formation, civil wars, and rebel governance to expand upon the arguments outlined in this introduction. It will then proceed with the three case studies, with each providing background information on the case, a

Overview of the Cases		
Institutional Arrangement	Case Study Location	Kind of identity promoted
Civilian rule	Ma’arat a-Nu’mān, Idlib Governorate	Local, civic
<i>Rebelocracy</i>	Jazira Canton, northeastern Syria	Pan-ethnic
<i>Rebelocracy</i>	Raqqā, eastern Syria	Religious
Hybrid	Douma, Eastern Ghouta	Mixed

Figure 3 Overview of the Cases

discussion on the state of local governance and the identities promoted, as well as an analysis of local protests to evaluate the salience

of various identities within the population. The first of these case study chapters considers civilian rule in Idlib province, particularly the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man. The second case study focuses on governance by an armed actor and looks at the PYD (and its armed wing, the People's Protection Units) as well as the Islamic State. The third case study chapter explores the competition between armed groups and civilians to provide governance in the city of Douma in the area of the Eastern Ghouta. The final chapter synthesizes insights from these three Syrian cases and discusses the argument's application in contexts outside of Syria, including Libya and Yemen. It also considers some of the potential long-term ramifications and the future work to be completed on this subject.

Chapter 2:

Identities and Institution Building in the Wake of the State

To answer the question of why different kinds of identities emerge after the state has retreated, we must in fact consider why actors promote different identities as well as why some of these promotion efforts are successful. To explain the identity selection of different actors, I consider three sets of factors. The first is the way in which state retreat weakens or removes the identity promoted by the previous state, allowing new identities to emerge as salient. The second set of factors includes the pressures and incentives faced by armed and civil groups which emerge in the state's wake and their capacity to build institutions with which they promote a primary identity. While armed groups have greater room to innovate and promote identities that may not already be salient among the population, civilian groups will promote identities which are already salient. In addition, the capacity of armed groups to change their geographic reach makes them more likely to promote a national or supranational identity than civilian actors. The third factor is the involvement of external actors. They can play a role in providing incentives to the groups which emerge after the state's retreat, shaping the field to favor the survival of groups which embrace a particular identity. External actors can also play a supporting role in the development of institutions by local actors or a negative role by destroying groups' capacity for institution building, thereby influencing the ability of groups to promote their primary identity to the larger population.

The second question is why certain identities that are promoted are in turn adopted by the larger population. I argue that it is the provision of public goods which allows civilian and armed actors to influence the salience of identities in the wider population. I

argue that it is through institutions that non-state actors, like state actors, are able to convey identity narratives and thereby alter the salience of identities.

This first part of this chapter defines identity and discusses relevant literatures on the subject. The second part discusses the factors which this dissertation claims are key to understanding the salience of identities following state retreat. This section will begin by providing an overview of state retreat's impact on the field of available identities. It will then go on to describe the ways in which objectives shape the identity options available to civil and armed groups. The institutional arrangements established by civilians and/or armed groups also make it possible for groups to promote their primary identity to the population. Finally, this theoretical overview will discuss the final variable, external actors. This summary, like the over-arching project itself, will draw on short, illustrative examples from the Syrian context as well as other instances of total and partial state retreat.

Identities

Why Identities?

Identities play an important role in political elites' pursuit of legitimacy. Symbols are often used by elites in order to legitimate past or future acts as well as their positions of power (Brown 1994; Migdal 1988: 26). The construction of a shared "identification" between ruler and ruled is one of the elements that may give a ruler legitimacy (Mampilly 2015: 76). It is in the interest of leaders to be perceived as legitimate as it makes it possible for them to attain compliance from the ruled efficiently.⁸ When a regime or leader

⁸ Lustick (2002) employs a framework developed by Amitai Etzioni three ways through which ruling elites attain compliance from the ruled, "coercive, utilitarian, and normative" mechanisms. The coercive method of attaining compliance requires, as the name employs, either the transparent threat of or use of force. If this method were used in the collection of taxes it would involve the taxman collecting revolver in hand (Ibid: 23-24). The utilitarian mechanism focuses on a trade in which compliance is rewarded by receiving goods or services from the ruler. Applying this to the model of taxes, the trade here is taxes in return for the ruler providing something that taxpayers want (Ibid). The third and most efficient mechanism (from the perspective of the ruler) is the normative, under which people accept the idea that compliance is what they *should* do (Ibid: 23).

is seen as legitimate then people accept the idea that compliance is what they *should* do. As Lustick describes, “what separates a legitimate from an illegitimate state is the presence of beliefs in the minds of those within the purview of that state that they should, for reasons of right and duty, comply with its orders” (2002: 23). Appeals to a shared identity provide an important means through which political elites attain legitimacy (Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1983). It is therefore in the interest of modern states to construct identity repertoires, to promote a set of identities to the larger population.

Identities also play an important role in the context of conflict and chaos that may emerge after the state retreats. Just as states use identities to attain legitimacy, armed groups behave in a similar manner. Being forced to attain necessary support and material can be extremely costly in terms of manpower and material. Mampilly argues that rebels, like state institutions, can employ symbols in an effort to decrease the need to actually employ threats or the threat of violence in order to attain compliance (2015: 76). Symbols may even aid armed groups in an effort to further climb the scale and attain legitimacy. According to Mampilly, symbol usage is a key component in efforts by rebels to establish a sense of shared identity between ruler and ruled, between rebel government and civilians. It is this shared “identification” that gives the ruler legitimacy (2015: 76). The development of shared “norms and values” can also promote consistency in the arrangement that arises between rebels and civilians who find themselves in areas under rebel rule (Förster 2015: 207). It is this intentional effort to communicate and development a shared set of norms that states conduct and rebels (and, I would add, civilian leaders) attempt to mimic (Mampilly 2015: 80). Other authors argue that embracing a particular identity can also help armed groups organize and influence how they operate. According to Posen, “A group identity helps the individual members cooperate to achieve their purposes. When humans can readily cooperate, the whole exceeds the sum of the parts, creating a

unit stronger relative to those groups with a weaker identity. Thus, the ‘groupness’ of the ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic collectivities that emerge from collapsed empires gives each of them an inherent offensive military power” (1993: 30).

In addition to giving groups a defensive advantage, sharing the same identity may be the basis for social networks that may yield improved or more efficient communication (Gubler and Selway 2012: 210). While Posner as well as Gubler and Selway assume this to be the case for ethnic identities, other kinds of identities facilitate the formation of armed groups (Weinstein 2007).

There is also literature which suggests that identities change as a result of wartime experiences. According to Wood, the process of acclimating to military involvement for fighters, the involvement of citizens in political movements, as well as the experience of violent conflict may change identities (2008: 547). As conflicts persist identity groups often divide themselves spatially and there may be “increasing polarization of public loyalties- and, to varying degrees, of private identities” (Wood 2008: 549). While some pre-conflict norms or identities may reassert themselves, the impacts of the conflict may persist (Wood 2008: 555-556). The lasting impacts of conflict on identities, the incentives which actors have in promoting identities, and the key role which identities play in the construction of political order all drive this project’s focus on identities.

Defining Identities and Exploring their Origins

In order to discuss the impact of state retreat on identities it is important to first be clear about what I mean by identity. Here I refer to identities as the consistent pattern of ideas and sentiments which are based upon a feeling of shared similarities between an individual and a bounded set of other individuals (Volkan 1999, Lustick and Miodownik 2002: 25). A social identity refers to the part of an individual’s sense of self that is tied to their membership in larger social groups. According to Volkan, “...the large-group aspect

of an individual's *internal* identity depends on objects in the *external* world" (1999: 39). This is not dissimilar from the stance adopted by Hogg et al, that being a part of one or several of these groups comprises an important part of individuals' identities (1995: 259). In these arguments it is a sense of shared belonging, membership in a group that defines a social identity. Social identity is inherently connected to individual self-awareness and an understanding, whether or not it is at the forefront of our minds, about our relationship to the wider world (Wilmer 2002: 72). Wimmer's definition of *ethnic* identity similarly emphasizes the individual's feeling of membership in a larger social group, in this case one that is grounded on "shared culture and common ancestry" (2008: 973). It is this sense of a collective that matters in this work, as institutions often promote particular identities.⁹

On the other hand, Chandra and Wilkinson's definition of identity is not about membership in a group but rests upon categories (2008: 520). In this articulation, identities are not determined by the existence of an actual social grouping but instead with a belief in such a system, the construction of societal divisions. Social identities in this definition are like containers into which people may be organized and categorized. As with any decent organizational scheme, there should be common characteristics that apply to all the individuals organized into a particular identity category. Chandra and Wilkinson describe an ethnic identity "...as a *category* in which descent-based *attributes* are necessary for membership" (2008: 517)¹⁰. In the case of ethnicity, some of these characteristics are often inherited characteristics. Just as Wilmer (2002) argues that individuals are containers for

⁹ Social identities are not, therefore, a given, but develop over time and an individual may (and usually does) possess multiple social identities simultaneously. The work here is interested in the ways in which identities held by or available to individuals prior to state retreat become more salient. It also assumes that identities may change somewhat as a result of conflict but does not expect entirely new identities to emerge in the time frame considered here.

¹⁰ Chandra and Wilkinson use "ethnic structure" which they define as "the distribution of attributes in {the} population and is typically multidimensional" (2008: 517)

identities, identities themselves can be considered containers into which individuals can be grouped.

However, the definition given to us by Chandra and Wilkinson, in comparison to that provided by Volkan and others, gives us a somewhat simple understanding of what identities are and, by extension, how they behave and shape our world. By thinking of identities as categories, simple social constructs, we ignore the complicated process through which these categories emerge- instead, they are simply taken as social facts. It ignores the important fact that these schemas can not only be changed by people but also shape the ways in which people view themselves and society. In addition, it does little to explain to us the deep levels of attachment that we often have for particular identities. If we think of them solely as categories to which we belong rather than beliefs rooted in shared experience or the connections between ourselves and others, the attachment individuals have to particular social identities and the emotional distress they experience when those identities are challenged becomes difficult to explain.

This project employs a modified understanding of social identity theory. The process of identity formation that that is described as taking place in childhood does not necessarily end alongside the end of childhood. While the multiple steps of identity formation discussed above may accurately describe the initial process through which we develop social identities, once the tent is erected it will not necessarily stay the same. Our understanding of the traditions that make up the loose covering may change, which could have an impact on the shape of the tent and who is included within its boundaries. Thus, while this work will largely take Volkan's understanding of social identity as its baseline,

it does so with the above amendments in mind. The environment in which individuals live can alter the warp and weft of the canvas tent and can even burn the whole thing down.¹¹

In either self-categorization theory or social identity theory, the individual is not able to acquire an infinite range of social identities. There are limits to the number of social identities or *which* identities an individual can have because of how identities are grouped or the relations between them (Wilmer 2002: 68). For example, some identities may be mutually exclusive thanks to the characteristics that define them.¹² In other instances, identities may have significant overlap, which most members of a social group possessing both identities. However, the assumption that two identities overlap completely is frequently made, much to the frustration of Christian Palestinians and other minority communities. It is this understanding of the multiple identities possessed by individuals which informs the emphasis on different kinds of social identity in this project.

This project focuses on four kinds of social identities: ethnic, religious, national, and local identities. In order to understand the differences between these social identities, it is important to distinguish between the different types of social groups that function as

¹¹ There is a difference between possessing or potentially sharing a social identity and acting on the basis of that identity. Posner (2005) distinguishes between the process of *identity construction* and *identity choice*. The former is determined by an individual's "repertoire," meaning each individual has a bounded list of identities from which to associate with (i.e. most white people in the United States cannot pass for black and vice versa). While there are instances in which the barriers between social categories may be blurred, many individuals may be prevented from "passing" for members of two, mutually exclusive identity categories based on phenotypic or other characteristics. But the latter is determined instrumentally by the usefulness of the political orientations that various identities define. Chandra and Wilkinson come up with a similar system of identities, in which they distinguish between "nominal" identities and "activated" ones. While one may qualify for a "nominal" identity based on their sharing in a particular social category, an "activated" identity is one which others use to describe an individual or which an individual claims as part of their identity (Chandra and Wilkinson 2008: 520).

¹² There are some critiques and amendments that must be made to Volkan's theory. Volkan is developing "a picture of boundedness, of inside-out perceptions..." when he describes how children develop ingroups grounded in shared traditions (Kinnvall 2004: 752-753). Self-categorization theory also seems to assume a degree of multiple personality disorder in which individuals switch between essentially distinct personal and group selves, requiring an ability to switch from our personal close-fitting identity and our looser social identity as the context dictates. In this model one can only act according to one identity at a time when in fact multiple identities may be at play simultaneously.

the basis of these identities. An ethnic group is a group which shares a sense of membership and that is characterized by shared “language, history, culture, race, or religion (or some combination of these)” (Varshney 2007: 277) and a belief in a shared ancestry or kinship (Horowitz 1985:17; Chandra 2012: 9). In this study Arabs and Kurds both fit the definitions of ethnic groups. This work defines a religious community as a social group that shares the same faith and faith traditions, a decision based upon definitions of religious groups and conflicts used in the literature on conflict (Toft 2007). A nation is a social group, membership in which is defined by a belief in shared membership and a belief that the group should possess its own sovereign state (Anderson 1983: 6; Gellner 1983: 1; Zimmer 2003: 173-174; Bell 2003: 69). Finally, I use a local identity here to refer to shared membership in groups that may once have been referred to as parochial. Such groups are defined by shared membership in entities like a local community (town, city, or neighborhood), a specific geographic area (such as the Damascus countryside), a tribe, or a clan. In different contexts the significant local groups will vary, and no local community possesses the same social endowments. What kinds of identities are available and the degree to which different identities overlap will also vary from context to context.

Some social groups possess the characteristics of multiple identity types. In some instances, religious practice and tradition can reinforce ethnic boundaries (Stroup 2017). This is true for ethnoreligious groups, such as the Druze and Alawites, both minority communities in Syria. Both groups possess their own religious beliefs and practices while also sharing a culture and belief in a myth of common ancestry. Those born outside of the community cannot convert to either faith tradition, emphasizing the importance of perceptions of kinship in defining membership in the group. In addition, we can think of many instances in which membership in an ethnic group may be considered a requirement

for membership in the nation, but this is not true for all nations. Indeed, some ethnic groups are the majority of multiple states' populations (as is true for Arabs). As a general rule, we should be careful before conflating different kinds of identities and sensitive to the ways in which these different and sometimes overlapping identities are discursively constructed.

Having accepted that identities can be acquired, changed, or shift in their importance to an individual, it is important to understand where identities come from and how identities shape our behavior at a basic level. The broad consensus is that it is our interactions with the world that yield group identities, although perspectives vary on how this occurs, and which aspects of our social environment are most important. Self-categorization theory argues that we do not always think of ourselves as individuals but sometimes think and act purely as our social identities dictate, and that switching between these versions of our selves can take place quickly. Thinking with a social identity is expected to take place when the differences that may exist between the individual and others within the same grouping are diminished (Kinnvall 2004: 749-750). Social identity theory, however, attempts to create a clearer demarcation between individual and social identity (Ibid. 752-753). In this theory, identity formation begins at the level of the individual child and expands to incorporate group-wide tendencies. The formation of large-group identity begins with the individual externalizing positive feelings and tying these sentiments to the larger group. Individuals then share their identity with other children who observe the same "cultural traditions" (Volkan 1999: 37). This group identity can be described as "a loose covering" that helps to guard the individual. It is in fact so loose that it can accommodate many individuals, not just the one, making the group identity more like a single "canvas tent" than clothing intended for only one wearer (Kinnvall 2004: 752).

Identity Narratives (Identity Content)

Another recurring theme in the identity literature is one of narratives. Language is an important part of the process through which we come to understand our Self and Others (Wilmer 2002: 70-71). We can see this reflected in the steps of identity formation that Volkan argues take place at an aggregate level. Groups are subjected to externalization by other groups; “chosen glories” are (through an unspecified process) selected, as are “chosen traumas”; and symbols may also develop an autonomous influence on the identity of the group. While these “chosen glories” or “chosen traumas” may be dismissed as myth, they still have a powerful role to play in shaping our social identities and personal identities (Volkan 1999: 37). This process gives a narrative to the members of the group that is clear and often transmitted through legitimated, authoritative channels (Kinnvall 2004: 760).¹³ Wilmer goes to a next degree, taking as an assumption for his own argument that “...the self is both the basis for and the sum of identity narratives” (2002: 68). Here narratives are not simply a product of identities but are a constitutive component of them. Thus, while they are accorded varying levels of significance, narratives play an important role in our understanding of social identities.

Narratives of violence play a particularly important role in constituting and shaping social identities. This can be seen in a number of cases studies in the comparative literature. For example, during the latter years of the Ottoman empire, the salience of identities in the Balkans shifted. Violent acts that had been done by people who were primarily identified

¹³The concept of narrative is similar to the “logics” of identity discussed by Campbell. If all the players involved are working on the basis of a particular identity as the most salient they are functioning according to the same “logic” (Campbell 1998: 8). In this work logics function like narratives, providing a common script for those involved with which they make sense of the world. It is our understanding of the social world that guides our actions, or adoption of certain narratives or logics not only shaped identities but the behaviors guided by them.

as Muslims came to be identified as ethnic in nature. This took place largely as a result of the depiction of these acts by the Serbian education system and consuls (Frantz 2009: 461). In this case, acts of violence were later incorporated into a narrative that emphasized an ethnic identity. This leads us to consider under which conditions narratives of violence are able to shape identities. Bowman argues that narratives recounting violent acts have the ability to influence identities when they present “an ‘antagonism.’” An antagonism is created when something that should be impossible takes place or, it is claimed, will take place. One example is a peasant, who, when the owner of the land threatens to toss them out, has his identity as a poor farmer threatened (Bowman 2014: 156). In Yugoslavia violence was used to create narratives that described an existential threat to different communities (Ibid. 160). Bergholz (2016) argues that discrete events are often tied together into one continuous narrative to promote particular identities. The ingredient of violence, or the threat of violence, gives these narratives a level of potency that makes them a more likely basis for the development of social identities (Bowman 2014).

This section has discussed both the definition of social identities that will be used in this project as well as theories on the origins of identities. By interacting with social groups and learning the narratives which surround these groups, the “chosen traumas” and “chosen glories,” individuals acquire identities. This emphasis on the power of narratives informs the decision to focus on the ways in which identities are constructed in discourse. Under conventional circumstances when the state is in control, we encounter the symbols and language employed by the state in our everyday lives (Billig 1995, Penrose 2011, Phillips 2013, Butz 2009, Jones and Merriman 2009). There is a significant degree of agency in the articulation of these narratives and the decision to commemorate particular events (Zerubavel 1995: 5-6). States often refer to national identities in official statements,

such as a statement made by Bashar al-Asad in 2002 about the thousands of years of “Syrian history” (Zisser 2007: 182). National symbols appear on our money and national flags regularly appear in public spaces. Under the Syrian state prior to 2011, the Ba’th regime built a cult of personality around the president, “...by producing a system of signification that exemplifies simultaneously both state dominance and national community” (Wedeen 1999: 15). This is reflected in Phillips’ interpretation of the images and symbols employed by the Syrian state who argued that visual representations of peasant classes, the Syrian family, and the military served to reify the Syrian state in a way that had not been done before the rise of the Asads (Phillips 2013: 52). These quotidian expressions of identity, according to Billig (1995) are a primary avenue through which states promote the salience of national identities.

However, as discussed earlier, it is not only the state which shapes discourse and employs symbols to promote identities. Competing elites will articulate different identities using words, making references to national, local, ethnic, and religious identities. They do this in official statements, which in the Syrian context have often been shared online. Syrian actors designed logos incorporating visual elements like national flags to connect themselves to particular identities in the eyes of consumers, which they placed on equipment, uniforms, and share online. Elites are not the only ones who express identities. Public protests often incorporate the use of symbols, such as national flags. Many protests of the 2011 uprising used national flags in an effort to legitimate their claims (Chivers and Henderson 2011, el-Naggat and Slackman 2011, Larbi 2011, Ismail 2011). In a time marked by contentious politics, public references to different identities using visual elements as well as language. As conflict continued ordinary Syrians continued to engage in public protests, expressing identities through chants, songs, banners, and flags. In the

absence of the state, the use of symbols and discursive construction of identities by non-state actors plays a central role in shaping identities.

The State and State Retreat

The State

A discussion of state retreat or state failure must begin with a definition of the state. Definitions of the state, such as Weber's, often combine functional and institutional components. The institutional component focuses on the state's spatial limits and the concentration of various institutions in a particular location. The functional component emphasizes the state's role as the creator and enforcer of laws (Mann 1984: 188). These characteristics can be seen in Tilly's definition of states as, "organizations that controlled the principal concentrated means of coercion within delimited territories, and exercised priority in some respects over all other organizations acting within the territories." (1990: 5).¹⁴ The modern state has made itself the supreme authority in its territory and has the capacity to enforce its laws within its territory.

Different ideas about how states develop and function place varying degrees of emphasis on different functions of the state. Tilly labels the light, small, and fierce state common in the pre-modern period is described in his work as a "wasp" state. These states have only three functions: to respond to anyone who challenges their control over their specified territory, to fight wars against external opponents, and to deal with any threats to

¹⁴ These definitions reflect the modern state and its characteristics. Braddick, in an effort to construct a definition which could be sufficiently flexible to include the pre-modern state, defines the state as a "coordinated and territorially bounded network of agents exercising political power" (2000: 6). While the state is as Braddick describes at a de facto level, definitions of the modern state should fit modern expectations of what a state does. In particular, the modern state needs to have crushed potential interior rivals before being considered a true state- even if this idea often does not match the reality of many entities casually referred to as states. Braddick alone is a bit too flexible and broad when we are discussing modern states and would give state status to organizations that we would be wary of labeling as such in the modern day.

external and internal allies. In order to carry out these three functions, it is imperative that the state be capable of extracting resources from its population (Tilly 1990: 96). In earlier works Tilly emphasizes that the state needs to have monopolized “the concentrated means of coercion” in order to carry out these essential functions (1985). While coercion can refer to armed units, this category may also include “incarceration, expropriation, humiliation, and publication of threats” (Tilly 1990: 19).¹⁵ Essentially laws and the ability to enforce these laws are vital to the formation of order and state-like structures.

Laws and the enforcement of laws are essential aspects of a state’s function, of the actions that make a state a state. According to North et al, “In larger groups, no individual has personal knowledge of all the members of the group or society, and so personal relationships alone cannot be used to control violence. Some form of social institution must arise to control violence if societies are to develop larger groups” (2009: 14). Rules are essential to the functioning of any society and states generally have the responsibility for enforcing those rules that, at a minimum, pertain to violence and the enforcement of

¹⁵ Tilly’s is but one of the many theories on state formation. Levi (1988) takes a different perspective, focusing predominantly on the extractive function of the state. She argues that rather than focusing on the state as a single entity, the interests of rulers play an important role. Rulers strive to maximize their revenue but must deal with several constraints. The first of these is the degree of control over coercive, economic and political resources possessed by the state as these determine the relative bargaining power of the state. The second is the cost of negotiating an agreement on policy and the costs of implementing policy. The third factor is the time horizon of the decision maker. The more value the ruler places on the future relative to the present the lower the discount rate will be and high levels of extraction at the present will appear less appealing (Levi 1988). Adams (1999) places a heavy emphasis on the role of identity in early state formation. The behaviors of principals (a role often assumed by rulers) can be shaped not only by rational choice constraints, as described by Levi (1988), but also by shared identities. The cultural and family-oriented perspectives of early political leaders led to the central role of patrimonialism in the development of early states. The behaviors of these early leaders, according to Adams, could not be understood without an understanding of the value they placed upon ensuring their lineages as well as their identification with their predecessors and other rulers connected through family. In Breen’s account of early modern France, identity also played an important role, particularly locally, as those occupying state roles were “caught up [in] a process of constantly defining and contesting the identity of legitimate participants...” (2007: 25). However, in situations often characterized by internal conflict, Tilly’s model is arguably a more useful parallel and shapes our understanding of what minimal functions a state must do in order to be considered a state.

property rights (Mann 1984: 195).¹⁶ In addition to laying out different key narratives of state development, these perspectives help us to refine the functional part of the definition of a state as an entity with coercive capacity (and the legitimacy to wield it), that establishes and enforces laws, and must attain resources from its population and territory to do so.

While the definitions and essential functions of the state listed here focus on the authority of the state, the character of its leadership, and its coercive capacity, one should not assume that the development of these capacities is a centralized or directed process. When discussing state formation, it is not uncommon for scholars to discuss “state building,” (ie. State “construction” might be more apt) a term which indicates a degree of intentionality and direction to the process that does not necessarily exist. This perspective also neglects the existence of competition and conflict between societal groups that could both put a hold on state-building as well as limit the center’s ability to exert control over society (Wheeler 2011). Braddick makes a similar argument in his own work on early modern England, in which he affirms that his work, “... does not presume that innovation derived only from the centre and at the expense of the locality, that there was a single pressure for change, or that a single interest or will lay behind it” (2000: 7). In his story of the development of the English state, institutions were added in an ad hoc way and there was no single mastermind or plan behind the development of the modern state (Braddick 2000: 7). Even for modern states, the development and function of the state is not the straightforward and centralized process we often assume. While states may attempt to impose a single method of social control throughout a territory, this is generally not how things actually work (Migdal 1988: 28). As will be discussed later in the chapter, the ad

¹⁶ In the pre-modern or early modern state, multiple institutions were concerned with carrying out the same task. In modernization theory, primitive societies are characterized as “fused” while the institutions of more sophisticated societies display “functional specificity” (Masters 1964: 597).

hoc process of institution building detailed in the literature on the pre-modern and early modern state, mirrors efforts to construct order when the modern state retreats or fails. In the wake of the state people organize, adding new institutions as the need for them arises. This is particularly true in those areas where there was not a robust non-state organization that had the capacity to step in once the state was absent. The more of these institutions emerge the greater will civilians interactions with institution builders be.

This project employs an understanding of the state as an institution which serves particular functions: the elimination of internal and external rivals and the ability to write and enforce laws. These tasks all require that the state possess the ability to coerce those who do not abide by the state's laws or threaten its integrity. It is these functions or "processes" which produce the state (Mitchell 1991: 95). A focus on the state as a product of particular functions makes it possible to identify when and where the state is and is not. The emphasis on the state as an institution does not mean that the state, although it is a social construct, should not be dismissed as unreal, just as it should not be treated as being entirely distinct from society (Ibid.).

State Retreat

The term state retreat is used to describe conditions in which the state's physical presence diminishes, in which a state's institutional reach has retracted. Limited retraction may occur when a state is weakened, and it is no longer able to operate institutions in all of the territories previously under the state's control. The loss of control by the central state over some of its territory may come about for a variety of reasons, including challenges by secessionists and the weakening of the central state (O'Leary 2001). An extreme example of state retraction would be state collapse, in which all state institutions cease to function across an entire state (Milliken and Krause 2002: 753). The focus here is on situations in

which the state had maintained an institutional presence until recently, not areas in which the state was never effectively present. One can look to Yemen after 2011 to illustrate the difference between the state's retraction from particular places (such as the capital Sana'a in 2014 and 2015) and the state's longstanding absence from other parts of the country, particularly east of the capital.

It is also important to distinguish state retreat from the processes which sometimes (but not always) cause it. While state retreat may originate in civil war, the two terms are not necessarily synonymous. Gubler and Selway define civil war as "...episodes of violent conflict between governments and either politically organized groups (revolutionary wars) or national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic wars)" (2012: 207-208). Civil wars may bring about state retreat but there are instances in which the state may actually be strengthened by civil war, such as the American civil war or the Vietnam war of the 1960s. In both of these instances, Bates argues that civil war took place in instances in which the state was strong and, if anything, strengthened over the course of the conflict (2008: 2). Thus, while civil war may result from or lead to the collapse of the state, this is not necessarily always the case and thus, the two should not be seen as the same. State retreat is also not the same as revolution. For Bates, revolution results in the formation of new institutions and "in new ways of organizing the economy and polity" (2008: 2). It is an instance of new institutional formation on a national scale, whereas the state's retreat involves the retraction or dissolution of state institutions. This transition from one order to another also limits the proliferation of organization by non-state actors, further distinguishing the process of state retreat from revolution. State retreat should also be distinguished from state death. Fazal defines state death "as the formal loss of foreign policymaking power to another state" (2004: 312). Fazal further argues that this process

should be best understood as an “outside-in” process and can be attributed to international political dynamics (Ibid. 313). This loss of autonomy to an external actor differs from the “implosion” of state collapse and the dissolution of its institutions or the retraction of state institutions as a result of state weakening. Thus, state retreat can and should be considered a distinct process from civil wars, state death, or revolution.

The effect of state retreat is generally understudied, with most work focusing on explaining why states weaken or fail and what means can be used to prevent the decay of capacity. Little work considers the impact of state retreat, its aftermath, and how the process of retreat itself determines possible future outcomes. It is this gap that this project hopes to, at least partially, fill. In order to understand the relationship between the state and identity, as well as non-state actors and identities, it is important to discuss how political elites influence the identities of the wider population.

Institutions & Identity Promotion

There is ample literature to suggest that state institutions can have an important role to play in shaping identities and making identities salient for members of the population. For North et al institutions can be formal laws and the means to enforce them, but they can also be norms, beliefs held by the group in question, or formalized social rules (2009: 15). Numerous books and articles have been written attesting to the influence of academic institutions, legal systems, national censuses, national military, and other state institutions on identities (Byman 2000, Lieberman and Singh 2009, Weber 1976, Laitin 1986). Byman argues that through institutions, particularly the legal system and the national education system, institutions can shape identities and, in his argument, mold ethnic identities to end ethnic conflict (2000: 150). Weber (1976) also points to the importance of national institutions, such as the military and public education, as key to transforming parochial

speakers of colloquial dialects into a French nation. For Byman and Weber it is iterated interaction and gradual indoctrination which shapes identity, which is a distinct mechanism from that proposed by scholars who believe institutions' identity-shaping capacity is driven by its ability to provide material benefits (Posner 2005, Laitin 1986). While material benefits may drive reiterated interactions with institutions in states and in conflict zones, this work does not assume that it is purely a desire for material gains that allows institutions to shape identities.

States also have the ability to employ institutions to exclude certain groups. Another example discussed by Lieberman and Singh are state rules regarding the use of public space and public facilities from which particular groups within society may be excluded (2009: 32). This could be seen as a means through which the state contributes to what Volkan considers step 3: a process through which groups absorb the nasty sentiments projected onto them by other groups (37). In this case the state projects certain characteristics onto the group whose access to certain public spaces is limited: the minority is told that they are in some way unworthy of the privilege of mixing with other ethnic or racial groups in certain public spaces. By placing certain groups into an "other" category, the state justifies and normalizes their exclusion from the rights and privileges enjoyed by "us."

A rational choice perspective would argue that material gains play a central role in shaping identities. From Posner's perspective, from an individuals' repertoire of potential identities they may make an instrumental decision to associate primarily with one, and this choice depends entirely on context. However, there are other factors which may influence the salience of one available identity over others. Some authors focus on the role of elites and argue that it is elites who employ symbols and stories shared by the members of a social identity to promote particular identities to serve their own political goals

(Majstorovic 1997). Engaging in “symbolic acts” in general can often be interpreted as efforts by elites to give their choices legitimacy (Brown 1994: 863). These fit with the expectations of social identity theory as Volkan also concedes that notable leaders can also have an important influence on the large group identity (1999: 37). Circumstance and context may also drive the salience of particular identities in what Wimmer (2008) describes as the ‘situationalist’ view, although this assumes that all identities have similar levels of value and importance (977). Another view considers the importance of economic variation as the means through which identities are made more salient, although this does not consider who can be deemed, “a legitimate competitor [in the economy] and who is not” (Ibid. 978). For Wimmer, it is the most visually obvious distinction between groups which influences the salience of particular identities over others (2008: 978). However, this assumes not only a degree of visual dissimilarity but that these differences are always given greater political weight than other identities, which is not necessarily the case. For example, visual differences were only considered important (and are debatable in their very existence) after imperialist institutions gave weight to the distinctions between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda. Thus, profit-maximization is not enough alone to explain the selection of identities by elites nor the acceptance of promoted identities by the larger population.

The Enduring Legacies of Institutions

There is evidence to suggest that institutions may have enduring legacies, perhaps even after the institutions themselves are gone. For example, Dumitru and Johnson (2011) argue that in Communist-held areas of Romania, norms and institutions shaped national identity, making it more inclusive of minorities. This in turn influenced local attitudes toward the Jewish population even after the entire country’s occupation by Germany during WWII, leading to a lower rate of reporting of Jewish community members to German

officials in formerly Communist parts of Romania. In the areas which were controlled by the USSR between the world wars individuals were more likely to help Jewish friends and neighbors hide and were less likely to cooperate with German efforts to locate members of Romania's Jewish community.

Institutions constructed after conflict can also strengthen or weaken particular identities. For example, changes to Nigeria's federal system in the 1960s and 1970s created incentives for parties and presidential candidates to appeal to a wide swath of Nigerians rather than members of specific ethnic community and made mobilizing along ethnic lines politically unviable (Horowitz 2008). On the other hand, the formation of institutions based upon cleavages made salient during wartime ensure the continued salience of these divisions (Simonsen 2005). Thus, institutions may have an important impact on the salience and content of identities that outlast the existence of the institutions themselves. In addition, identity changes which take place during conflict may be reified in post-conflict institution building.

State institutions play an important role in selecting the symbols, glories, and traumas which are officially shared by "the people." While in a conventional setting, the state writes the narratives and disseminates it, once the state has retreated new actors can step in to fulfil these functions. While much of the existing work on the ability of institutions to shape identities focuses on state institutions, when state collapse or intrastate conflict remove state institutions from the equation, we see other institutions taking on identity-shaping roles similar to those played by state institutions. Mampilly (2015) describes the efforts by rebel groups to use symbols as being drawn upon the state model. Whoever attempts to rule, whether they are rebels or the state, their need for compliance will lead them to engage in the use of symbols (Ibid: 80-81). The process of the breaking

of old institutions and the development of new ones may also promote the transformation of identities or shifts in the salience of identities as a result of rebel activity (Arjona 2014). According to Wood, fighters' acclimation to a martial life, the involvement of citizens in political movements, as well as the experience of violent conflict may have an impact on identities (2008: 547). Thus, while much work has focused on the role of state institutions in shaping identities, in the absence of state institutions we can and should turn to other institutions to understand the salience of identities.

Institutions & Identity Promotion in the State's Wake *The State's Contested Identity*

As was earlier discussed, political elites have an incentive to promote identities in an effort to attain legitimacy (Brown 1994, Lustick 2002). For many modern states this has led to efforts to promote identification with the state space through the promotion of national identities (Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1983). As has just been discussed, states often engage in these identity promotion efforts through citizens' interactions with state institutions. This raises the question of what impact the failure or retreat of these institutions has on the identity promoted through these institutions.¹⁷

The construction and promotion of a shared identity by the state creates a sense of shared membership by all or some of its citizens. Yet the process of establishing an identity also sets boundaries, excluding some people as "others." Wilmer argues that this is a central part of identity, that identity "... exists only in reference to something other than itself, an

¹⁷ It is not expected that everyone will give up their state-based identity in the state's absence, but the state's absence and the emergence of new actors may create pressures to adopt other identities or for non-state identities to become more salient than state-based identities as time passes. While someone may still possess a Syrian national identity, being relatively limited to a local context and interacting with institutions that promote a local identity may lead to this identity being more salient in political life than a national identity. While Chandra (2006) and others argue that those identities which are "descent-based," such as ethnic identities are more sticky than others, this does not mean that non-ethnic identities will be abandoned as soon as the institutions which support them are gone.

order, an Other, or multiple orders and Others, orders *of* others” (2002: 68), which means that societies are inherently divided into us, the ingroup, and them, the outgroup.¹⁸ Making the them into a foe is a natural outcome of circumstances in which the future is unclear and safety is not assured. According to Kinnvall, “Within this process, self and other are both seen as essentialized bodies, which means reducing self and other to a number of cultural characteristics. These characteristics, although constructed and fabricated, come to be seen as natural, unified features for describing the group” (2004: 755). In this process the other is described as being, in some way, less than human and is cast aside as if they were human waste (Ibid. 754). This process can be seen in Albania, where a return to *kanun*, traditions of local self-rule also established a societal order in which certain individuals or groups were considered part of a traditionally-rooted “us” while others were deemed an antagonistic “them” (Schwandner-Sievers 2001: 110). Not only can the state’s efforts to articulate an identity foment the formation of ingroups and outgroups in society, but the experience of violence that may accompany or cause state retreat can also produce clear dichotomies.

This understanding of the divisions constructed between a state and those who contest its legitimacy has potential ramifications for our expectations regarding changes in identity. If the state retreats, if it retains control over some but not all of its territory, then the identity promoted by the state will remain salient for many residents of the state-controlled core. If this retraction is accompanied by violence, I expect that stark

¹⁸ The other also plays an important role in social identity theory, as Volkan describes the important role which externalization by other groups plays in the development of social identities (1999: 37). This is not surprising since social identity theory is related to earlier work on the “minimal group paradigm” that claims that individuals will consistently prefer those who are considered part of the same group as themselves to those outside their group. This thinking is based on the theory that people seek to improve the standing of their own groups at the expense of others as this improves the degree of “self-esteem” that they acquire as members of their group (Kinnvall 2004: 749).

dichotomies between the state “other” and a nebulous and potentially varied “opposition” will emerge. Conflict and the deaths, forced migration, and bodily injury that result will help to produce identities that are seen as being mutually exclusive. Violence creates the perception of a victimized “us,” while those who remain committed to the same identity as the regime will be seen as the victimizing “other” (Wilmer 2002: 109). In this scenario the groups that continue to embrace the identity espoused by the regime may find that this affiliation has dangerous consequences. As described by Posen, pockets inhabited by those deemed part of “the other” will be treated as a threat by the surrounding population (1993: 32). While communities may continue to identify with the state, if they are physically detached from the retreating state then these communities may either have to shift their identities or their people will have to move if they prove indefensible. With this logic in place, pockets which retain the regime identity as salient will be considered a threat by the surrounding communities. In the Syrian case this is exemplified by the villages of Kefraya and Foua, which remained pro-regime and were predominantly populated by Alawites.¹⁹ The villages were surrounded and attacked by members of the *mu'arida*, the opposition, and a state of siege continued until the villages were evacuated as part of the agreement which ended the battle over Aleppo. While individuals may find it possible to hide their aversion for the dominant identity (a behavior Wedeen (1999) describes as acting “as if”), a large group known to share a particular identity cannot dissemble as individuals can. Thus, if the regime survives and conflict ensues between the vestigial state and groups outside the control of that state, regime and anti-regime identities will develop.

¹⁹ The Alawites are an ethnoreligious minority in Syria. Syria’s President during the uprising, Bashar al-Asad, as well as many members of the Ba’th regime’s upper echelons, were part of this sect.

The events which surround the collapse or retreat of the state also involve challenges to or rejection of the identity project pursued by the state. In the Syrian context we have seen the development of a state “them” in the eyes of opposition groups, placing the regime and its supporters into an othered group that is distinct from the nebulous “us” of *al-mu’arada*, the opposition. Members of the opposition rejected *Suriyya al-Asad*, Asad’s Syria, an understanding of the nation which tied it to Ba’thist leaders Hafez al-Asad and his son, Bashar (Ismail 2011). The political opposition and then the occurrence of violence between the regime and opposition meant that the identity associated with the regime was not available to the civilian organizations and armed groups of the opposition. The regime’s chosen identities became the identities of the other, and therefore not available to those groups who consider themselves members of *al-mu’arida*, those who have claimed power outside of the regime’s control.

However, simply being a member of the opposition is not an identity that brings with it a clear content. Within *al-mu’arida* we find groups that have embraced a variety of types of identity. Thus, while violence gives us an explanation for why certain identities become unavailable and establish an opportunity for building certain dichotomies, the conflict itself does not explain the emergence of different identities within the opposition. It does not explain which out of a field of possible identities a group will choose to incorporate into its identity repertoire. In order to understand the types of identities which have emerged within the opposition we must consider who establishes political order in the wake of the state and what the factors are which shape their identity repertoires.

The Development of New Institutions by Non-state Actors

With the collapse of state institutions in parts of Syria starting in 2012, we saw the appearance of zones of statelessness in which new actors emerged and developed, some of

whom attempted to govern in the state's absence. In many ways, this political environment bears a striking similarity to the political environment described in the state formation literature, despite the significantly shorter time frame. New institutions have developed, although not in the straightforward model implied by Tilly (1990) and instead in the haphazard way described by Braddick (2000).

In this array of institutional arrangements with numerous actors, drawing on the literature on rebel governance can help us make sense of the kinds of institutional arrangements we see. Arjona uses the term *rebelocracy* to describe circumstances in which armed rebels govern, although civil actors may play limited roles in maintaining order or providing services to civilians²⁰ (Arjona 2014: 1375). Again, this seems to fit with literature on the formation of early European states where different actors may be involved in filling the same function. In this period the existence of competition and conflict between societal groups could both put a hold on state-building as well as limit the center's ability to exert control over society (Wheeler 2011). Thus, for *rebelocracies* and early states, the process of asserting dominance and building institutions is a gradual and often rather ad hoc one. The presence of rebels does not by any means guarantee the existence of *rebelocracy* just as the existence of armed bands does not guarantee the emergence of a state. Small armed groups in particular, such as those dedicated to defending a neighborhood or village, will generally not possess the capacity required to build governing institutions. In addition, while armed actors may come to assert a dominant role in these circumstances, this does not mean that absolutely no role is played by civilians, only that it is limited.

²⁰ At an empirical level, it can often be difficult to distinguish between civilians and the members of armed groups, particularly since civilians often fill a variety of supporting roles for armed actors. International law focuses on civilians as essentially noncombatants (Hultman 2008: 16-17) and that is the position used here.

When civilians rule, rebels maintain their role as the only armed actors in town and obtain some material support from the population, but all other matters are left to alternative actors (Arjona 2014:1375). In this institutional arrangement the role played by rebels is “indirect” and “...an underlying agreement between the armed group and the community – or its ruler – leads the group not to interfere in civilians’ affairs, as far as locals meet a set of obligations” (Ibid: 1376). Thus, under civilian rule the vast majority of the power to build institutions and influence the lives of citizens is held by civilian actors.²¹

However, this typology does not quite give us a fine enough brush with which to paint some of the variety we see in real civilian-rebel interactions. I here propose the addition of a hybrid type to bring further nuance to the many situations which seem like they could be covered under the somewhat broad definition Arjona provides of *rebelocracy*. Under this institutional arrangement the armed group, instead of acting as “de facto ruler in [a] broad sense” (Arjona 2014: 1375) plays a role in a small number of institutions. This may mean focusing on building one institution or by influencing existing civilian institutions without taking them over or destroying them utterly. In this hybrid model the provision of most services are left up to other, civilian actors, but the rebel actors also play a limited role in governing the local population.²² In these arrangements the ability of armed groups to employ coercion to attain compliance from non-members is limited. Without the strength to control or establish all institutions and assert itself as an actor having close to a monopoly on force, armed groups in hybrid arrangements are unable

²¹ In some respects, these areas of civilian rule seems similar to the chartered towns of medieval England, towns which were given rights and privileges to operate as they pleased so long as they paid the king. However, civilian rulers to ensure their position not through bribes paid to rebel groups but using a currency of legitimacy or by placating local rebels by avoiding engaging in identity promotion that could be interpreted as a direct challenge to the armed groups.

²² This relationship is not necessarily a harmonious one. Indeed, the hybrid type may be characterized by competition between armed and civilian actors with neither winning out as the dominant provider of governance.

to use force or threats of force to attain compliance with impunity.²³ By considering the institutional arrangement (civilian rule, *rebelocracy*, or hybrid rule) as well as the objectives of armed groups in *rebelocracies*, we can create a number of hypotheses regarding the identities which will likely be successful.

Using Institutional Arrangement and Group Goals to Explain Identity Outcomes

Just as states have the capacity to use their institutions to influence the salience of identities among their citizens, I argue that the institutions that emerge in contexts of statelessness also have an impact on the *salience* of identities in the communities in which they operate. While other scholars, such as Mampilly, have argued that non-state actors strive to imitate the symbolic behaviors of states, I am taking this connection a step further. If we wish to understand the salience of identities after the state's retreat we can draw on the various actors who build institutions and promote identities in the state's absence. In addition, the type of institutional configuration will be more conducive to certain types of identities than others. Mampilly (2011) argues that the decision by rebel groups on whether or not to develop governing institutions is predicated in part upon the objectives of rebel groups, with secessionist groups being more likely to establish institutions than groups dedicated to national revolution.²⁴ Building on this idea, I claim that the objectives of the

²³ Several historical parallels can be found in medieval and early modern Europe. In France, for example, there were multiple courts, some rooted in the authority of the crown while others were not. In addition, certain issues were under the jurisdiction of the king while others were not. Unlike in a medieval charter town where the boundary over who controlled what was physical (the king's power was limited within the town), in the early modern France these boundaries were sometimes issue-oriented.

²⁴ It is worth noting that while Mampilly expects nationally ambitious armed groups to eschew institution building as their resources are focused on fighting the central government. This does not fit with some of the armed groups from the Syrian conflict. For example, the armed group formerly known as Jabhat a-Nusra shifted in 2014 to focusing on institution building and taking over local institutions in the areas under its control. It should also be noted that, as Mampilly (2011) illustrates, not all armed groups engage in institution building – not all will construct *rebelocracies* or foster the formation of hybrid institutional arrangements. I argue here that this institution building is essential for armed groups to influence the identities of local institution building. As such, those armed groups which do not build institutions are not expected to successfully alter the salience of those outside their own group.

armed groups at the heart of a *rebelocracy* will influence the kind of identity that the institutions of the *rebelocracy* promote.

If the armed group's objectives are subnational or separatist then the primary identities promoted by the *rebelocracy* will be subnational in nature. This could mean appealing to a regional identity, or appealing to an ethnic identity or religious identity if these are held by a minority of the state's population. Subnational identities are often already socially if not also politically salient and there are often organizations or institutions for members of the social group. Armed groups that are built upon pre-existing social organizations have an incentive to draw on the identities related to these social networks and use them to recruit members (Weinstein 2007: 52). In essence, the cultural and organizational context in which armed groups emerge may lead them to focus on subnational objectives.²⁵ If they do so, we expect them to promote an identity already promoted by pre-conflict organizations.

If the objectives of the armed group are national, the promotion of a national identity is likely to be a component of a *rebelocracy's* identity promotion efforts. This does not mean that a *rebelocracy* will not also appeal to another identity that is not local *and* appeals to the majority of individuals residing within the state's boundaries (such as a religious identity, or perhaps a class identity). A third and unusual objective for *rebelocracies* is an international objective, in which the goal is the formation of a political entity that extends beyond the territory of a single state. This has certainly been the case of

²⁵ For particularly local armed groups, those that emerge out of neighborhood organizations or city-level organizations, they may promote a local identity as their foundational and most important part of their identity repertoire. However, the small scale and limited access to resources of such local groups makes it highly unlikely that they will engage in governance, in building governing institutions. As such, extremely local identities are not expected to form the basis of identity repertoires for armed groups who govern in *rebelocracies* or hybrid areas. Without the capacity to build institutions and interact with the wider population, they lack a means for influencing the salience of identities in the areas in which they operate.

the self-proclaimed *ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-'Iraq wa a-Sham*,²⁶ also known as the Islamic State. The group has international ambitions, aiming to establish a political entity that encompasses the entire *umma*, or Muslim community. For a period of time it successfully controlled territory in Iraq and Syria and developed numerous institutions in the areas under its control, including a postal service and taxation system. Here the promotion of a supra-national identity is inherently connected to the supranational goals of the armed group. The identities included in the repertoires of armed groups include identities associated with abstract spaces, with “imagined communities” of varying sizes.²⁷

There are several additional points which should be made about the identity repertoires of armed actors. Some scholars have assumed that armed groups can “adapt their message to local beliefs” (Kasfir 2005: 281). Other works assume a more moderate model in which both armed groups and civilians modify their ideational commitments in order to reach a level of agreement (Mampilly 2015: 88; Förster 2015: 207). Yet this assumes that armed groups are always free to make new commitments that are tailored to the local context. Armed groups which operate nationally may already have commitments in other parts of the country (or to external actors) that constrain their ability to alter their identity program. In a modern context, even one as tumultuous as the Syrian conflict, attempting to develop a segmented identity program is a risky prospect. If an armed group were to modify their identity program in one location word of those choices may spread and damage the group’s credibility elsewhere in the country or abroad. Thus, constructing different identity repertoires for different locations simultaneously may damage a group’s

²⁶ *Sham* is a term that was historically used to refer to Damascus and the larger area around it. The selection of *Sham* rather than *Suriyya* connects IS to a term used before the drawing of modern borders.

²⁷ While Benedict Anderson refers to nations as imagined communities, other social groups are also large enough that no single member can know all others. This is true for imagined communities based upon religion or ethnicity as well as nation.

legitimacy rather than enhance it. This does not mean that the identity repertoire of an armed actor is inflexible. Should an armed group's ambitions change, if they expand or contract, it may attempt to shift the content of its identity repertoire.²⁸ Finally, regardless of objectives, we should expect *rebelocracies*, like proto states, to have the capacity to be innovative in their identity promotion. Since they combine both armed institutions as well as other governing institutions, *rebelocracies* have the capacity to promote and use force to support their promotion of key identities.

Objectives are also an important key to understanding the identities embraced by civilian actors who provide governance.²⁹ The available reach and aspirations of civilian groups, like armed groups, may be international, national, or local in scope. However, in the localized and atomized physical space of failed states, effective organization along international or national lines can be insurmountably difficult. For civilian groups which seek to establish governance, such a reach is often impossible. The limit of the institutional reach of civilian institutions, and the inability of these civilian institutions to alter their geographic reach through the strength of arms, leads me to expect that these groups are more likely to embrace local, geographically specific identities as their foundational identity. In addition, the lack of access to weapons means that civilians cannot coerce the local population into accepting the identity that civilian rulers have embraced, which limits

²⁸ If an armed group's capacity should change, it may no longer be able to hold onto its position as a *rebelocracy*. This is not expected to necessarily alter the identity embraced by the group, but it is expected to damage its ability to promote its identity. For example, an armed group which promoted a religious identity and has the capacity to build institutions is more likely to effectively promote that identity. If it should weaken, then the group will not abandon its religious identity, but may find that it lacks the capacity to build institutions and effectively promote this identity.

²⁹ Civilian organizations that govern are not the only civilian actors involved in social life in the state's absence. For example, many civil society organizations have emerged in Syria that are dedicated purely to aid provision. Since they are not involved in governance, it is not expected that they will be interested in acquiring legitimacy in the way that governing organizations do. As such, they are not expected to build identity repertoires and investing resources in identity promotion in the way that rebel and civilian governing actors do.

how innovative civilians may be with their identity repertoire. In addition, these groups emerge from the local context in which they operate, often upon the basis of preexisting civilian institutions, whether formal or informal. These pre-collapse origins, I argue, will also lead civilian groups to embrace identities that were already relatively salient to the local population, particularly in the years immediately after the state's departure. They are more likely to promote identities that relate to specific places rather than abstract spaces. Many groups will incorporate a range of identities in their identity repertoires. However, as will be shown in the chapters to come, many actors have an identity that they appeal to more than others, which forms the backbone of their identity repertoire. Thus, while armed groups may promote identities which are new in their boundaries or their content, civilian actors are not able to be so innovative and are limited to promoting existing identities.

The hybrid institutional configuration, one in which armed and civilian actors play an active role, is less likely to produce a successful campaign to promote a kind of identity or select number of identities. The division of institutional control between armed groups and civilians makes the development of a single message conveyed by all a community's key institutions less likely. Armed groups will find their identity promotion efforts shaped by the same factors that drive the selection of identities in *rebelocracies*, as objectives, competitive pressures, and the need for consistency across locations shape the identity repertoires of armed groups. Civilians may not only find themselves responding to locally salient identities but may find themselves pressured by the armed group or groups who operate in their neighborhood. Armed groups may push for the inclusion of individuals in local councils or courts who will promote the identity the armed group has embraced, for example. It is this accommodation imposed upon civilian rulers and the varied interests of armed group and civilians which will lead to less coherence in the identity promotion

taking place in hybrid institutional arrangements. In a competition for legitimacy these actors will be more likely to appeal to a wider set of identities rather than focus their attention on promoting one or two. This means that we should expect appeals made to a variety of kinds of identities and we are most likely to see mixed appeals to local, national, and supranational identities in these contexts.

The Role of External Actors in Identity Promotion

In a modern context, when discussing situations of state failure, we must consider the variety of roles played by external actors. To portray civil conflicts of any kind as self-contained ignores key elements in how these conflicts develop, are carried out, and end. In this project external actors, state actors or organizations based abroad, function primarily as an intervening variable which influences the ability of local actors to build institutions through which they promote identities. If natural resources are not locally available or if local tax collection is insufficient or impractical, then the support of external actors may play a critical role in the ability of domestic actors to build institutions. The support of external actors may also play a critical role in determining the number of institutions which locals may be able to establish, which would influence their ability to promote identities. This is true for both armed and unarmed actors during and following the collapse of the state.

In addition to improving the capacity of institution building on the ground, external actors may also be able to use their resources to influence the identity promotion of local actors. The literature on the impact external funding has on rebel groups covers a wide range of potential effects. Testerman (2014) finds that conflicts in which rebels receive external support extend for longer periods of time than conflicts in which actors do not receive external support. Research also indicates that the relationship of rebel

groups with the non-combatants living in the areas in which the rebel group operates is also shaped by the existence of external funding. Beardsley and McQuinn (2009) argue that the availability of external support (particularly remittances) led the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka to be less dependent on the local population for support. This frees armed groups to engage in activities that are in the best interest of the group rather than the local population. Salehyan et al. (2014) consider the funding of rebel groups by states and the impact which funding by different countries with different regime types may have on the behavior of rebel groups. They find that while rebel groups are more likely to attack civilians if they have the support of other countries, the likelihood of such attacks drops when the backer is democratic and has many organizations which put pressure on the state to protect human rights (Salehyan et al 2014).

While an armed group's plans for the post-conflict outcome may play an important role, these are not the only features of a rebel group that matter to donor states. According to Salehyan et al., "Ethnic or religious ties to the rebel organization are likely to reduce concern with preference divergence since a common world-view and shared cultural understandings often indicate similar preferences (or are at least perceived to)" (2011: 715). While this may be true in some cases, it ignores the potential value that a rebel group's ideology may have for the supporting state. As Keister points out, the supporting states have their own political and ideological perspectives and she argues that these views shape states' preference for groups that share a degree of ideological congruence (2011: 70). Byman et al. (2001: 36) argue that ideological commitments, particularly commitment to a particular faith, can play an important role in explaining the decision by some states to support particular insurgencies. This may in part be driven by the fact that a government may be able to attain a degree of legitimacy or credibility by

supporting rebels with a particular ideology. For example, the Pakistani government's support for insurgents in Kashmir as an example, describing this support as a means through which Pakistan acquires "prestige derived from championing Islam." Similarly, Arab states supported the Palestinian Liberation Organization in an effort to boost "their Arab national credentials" (Byman et al. 2001: 36). In these cases, a shared identity between recipient and giver allowed the donor to strengthen its legitimacy in the eyes of a public which shared that group identity.

Private donors also have an important role to play but have a different set of goals and preferences from state principals. As I have already discussed, states may seek to support rebels for ideological reasons (such as Iran's efforts to export its revolution by supporting religious groups throughout the region (Byman et al. 2001)). Private donors may also be motivated by ideological considerations. However, I would expect these ideological or normative commitments to play a more important role for private sponsors than state sponsors as the latter have other motivations, such as strategic interests, which may play an important role in tempering ideological considerations. Private donors may also be seeking to acquire legitimacy in the arena of domestic politics. Just as states may support groups in order to improve their own legitimacy (Byman et al. 2001), private donors may support rebel groups with the same goals in mind. Providing funding for Syrian rebel groups is a tactic that has been used to rally support for Kuwaiti members of parliament, for example (Westall and Harby 2013). The private donors which will be of interest in this study will be those that are able to make a sustained contribution to rebel groups as the result of the immense wealth of a single individual or through organizations that form to pool the donations from a number of donors.

The preference of external donors who favor local actors that emphasize particular identities has two effects. First, as discussed earlier, those local actors who promote the chosen identity will be more likely to receive the resources that make institution building and identity promotion possible. This will improve the chances of some groups as they compete against others. In some cases, the availability of funding may even lead to groups changing their identity repertoires. For example, the availability of funding for groups that promote a religious identity may lead some groups to alter their repertoires to place a greater influence on religious rather than other identities.

External actors may also influence the success of the promotion of identities by targeting the civilian actors or armed groups who promote specific identities. Works on state building and state capacity have drawn on the direct involvement of external actors who may use their military strength to limit the growth of potential emerging powers (Lustick 1997). While such decisions are generally presumed to be purely strategic in their motivations, they may have an impact on the success of particular identities. For example, in the Syrian case, external actors played a role in attacking those actors who espouse a particular identity considered distasteful by the external actor for strategic reasons. The United States targeted the Islamic State as well as the group known as Jabhat a-Nusra, both groups known for their adherence to a strict understanding of Muslim identity. Russia, on the other hand, targeted moderate members of the armed opposition who have generally promoted a national identity, although sometimes in conjunction with a religious identity. In these circumstances those actors who espouse particular identities may find their ability to build institutions limited by the interference of armed external actors.

Previous works have rested upon the assumption that should the agent behave in a way which the principal considers sufficiently detrimental to its own interests, that the

principal will cease supporting the agent. It is this threatened loss of support that limits the autonomy of the agent and keeps the agents' behaviors in line. They argue that the sponsoring government may limit the rebels' freedom to act, a cost which could outweigh the benefits of outsider sponsorship and lead the rebel group to reject sponsorship in favor of maintaining its autonomy (Salehyan et al. 2011). For this to be the case, external sponsors would need to have perfect or near perfect information about a sponsored rebel group's behavior. Given the chaos and the difficulty of confirming reports, a rebel group may assume that they can get away with a certain amount of behavior that would displease the sponsor without the sponsor knowing about it. Just as information problems often arise between external funders and NGOs (Bush 2015), so too do these problems plague the relationship between rebel groups and their external funders. Thus, this project does not assume that principals possess perfect information and therefore may have a limited capacity for punishing agents for engaging in behavior that does not fit with the principal's ideology.

While external sponsorship may influence armed groups and civilian institution builders, I argue that sponsorship is more likely to influence the identity repertoires of armed actors. The pressures that armed groups face, such as ongoing competition with other armed groups, while simultaneously striving to build institutions and provide a degree of local governance provide possibly greater incentives for the armed groups of *rebelocracies* and hybrid institutional arrangements to pursue external support. This strong motivation to obtain external support could lead rebel groups to alter their ideology in an effort to make them more appealing to potential donors (Bob 2005). It certainly makes it more likely that those groups which share the identity of external donors will be more likely to survive and have the capacity to build institutions.

I argue that the ability of an external actor to directly influence the identity program of an internal actor also depends on the number of external donors the internal actor possesses. While the quantity of money provided by an external actor may be a relevant factor to an internal actor's institutional development, the number of donors involved will alter the level of influence any one may be able to exert on the internal actor. For example, a Syrian armed group that was entirely dependent upon support from Kuwaiti preachers was more likely to espouse a religious identity. A local actor who obtains support from numerous NGOs or state donors can promote an identity that comes into conflict with any single donor without doing significant damage to their financial health. In addition, actors may alter their identity promotion to court a particular significant external donor or group of donors that want to support groups that promote a particular identity. Thus, external actors can play a particularly influential role on identity promotion in those contexts in which they are the sole major contributor or one of the sole contributors for the internal actor.

Conclusion

In order to understand which identities become salient in the wake of the state, we must look to who promotes identities on the ground, which actors civilians engage with. Drawing upon literature on the promotion of identities by states and rebel groups, I argue that identity promotion takes place through local institutions as these provide a point of contact between civilians and local civilian and armed actors. I argue that civilians and armed groups have distinct interests and pressures which will lead them to promote different kinds of identities. When civilians rule they are more likely to promote a local, place-based identity as the central focus of their identity repertoire. The next chapter will discuss an area in which civilians ruled for several years, the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man in

Idlib governorate. There a civic, local identity was the primary identity promoted through local institutions.

Armed groups are more likely to promote identities that are connected to larger, imagined communities. In those areas where armed groups rule (*rebelocracy*) they will promote these more abstract identities. The second case study which describes identity promotion efforts by the Kurdish PYD and the Islamic State discusses how these actors used the array of institutions they built to promote their identities to the populations they governed. Not all areas neatly fall under civilian rule or *rebelocracy*. In some areas both civilians and armed groups build institutions and endeavor to provide governance. Under these circumstances, armed groups are expected to be subjected to the same pressures which shape their identity repertoires under *rebelocracy*. Civilians, however, may modify their identity repertoires, tempering their promotion of the local in order to avoid raising the ire of armed groups. This will lead to a mixed array of identities promoted across local institutions, which I expect to mitigate the efficacy of identity promotion efforts. The third case study, the city of Douma in the Eastern Ghouta, serves as an example of this hybrid institutional arrangement.

This chapter has also discussed the ways in which external actors influence the capacity of local institution builders. Resources are required to build institutions and influence the salience of identities. The support of outside actors can make institution building possible, while being attacked by external actors may damage this capacity. The need for resources may lead local actors to modify their identity repertoires to become more appealing to potential sponsors.

These arguments will be applied to three subnational cases within Syria between 2012 and 2016, which look at cases in which civilian actors, armed actors, or both strive to build local institutions and attain legitimacy.

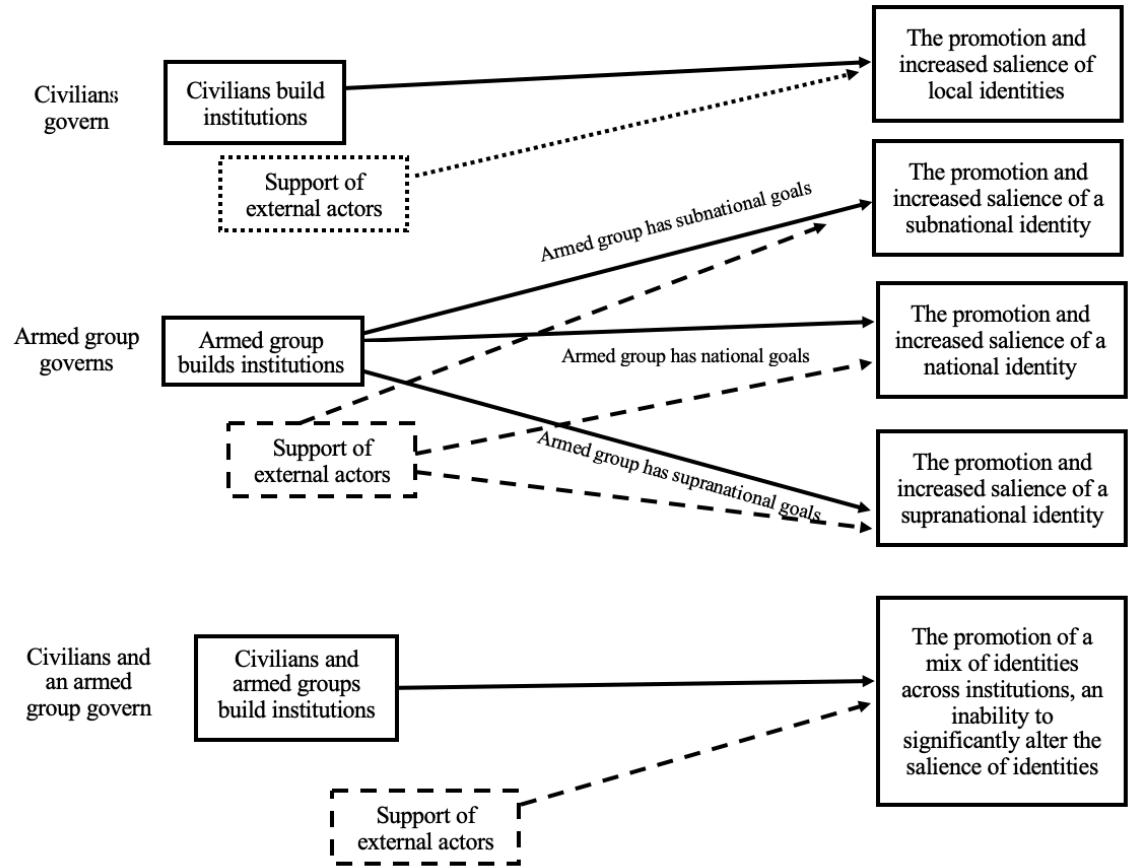


Figure 4 Diagram of the Argument

Chapter 3:

Civilian Institutions & Identities in Northwestern Syria: Idlib Province and the City of Ma'arat a-Nu'man

Introduction

This chapter analyzes whether and how citizens' identities change as the power of the Syrian state recedes. Do individuals continue to identify with the central government as the state weakens? What role do new institutions have in the process of identity shift following the state's withdrawal? In this chapter I consider a political arena in which civilian institutions are largely responsible for providing governance and public goods. Parts of the Syrian province of Idlib began to break away from the control of the Ba'thist regime in 2012, including the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man. The city is an example of civilian rule, an institutional arrangement in which civilian actors play the central role in institution building following the state's departure. Under civilian rule, armed actors are extremely limited in their influence and their engagement with civilians, the antithesis of *rebelocracy*. While not all parts of Idlib province fit this civilian-centric type, Ma'arat a-Nu'man and a few other cities have resisted efforts by armed groups to assert greater influence and become more involved in governance. This chapter focuses on the identities promoted by civilian institutions, the factors which may alter the effectiveness of these promotion efforts, and provides a measure for evaluating the salience of identities among the population of the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man.

This chapter begins by providing some essential information about Idlib province and the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man specifically. The second section provides greater detail of the institution building undertaken by civilian and armed actors, asserting that the greater presence and success of civilian institution building makes the city of Ma'arat a-

Nu'man an example of civilian rule. Section three focuses on the research design, detailing the methods used to evaluate the identities civilian institutions use to legitimate their roles and to evaluate the salience of identities among the wider civilian population. The fourth section explores the identities referred to by governing institutions in the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man. Consistent with my theoretical argument, I find that the local institutions in Ma'arat a-Nu'man referred primarily to a local identity and otherwise referred to identities which were already salient among the city's population. They did not attempt to inculcate a new identity into the population. The subsequent section considers the influence of outside actors, and the ways in which the support or attacks by these actors help and hinder local institutions' abilities to provide public goods and strengthen their legitimacy in the eyes of the population. The final section evaluates the efficacy of these identity references by looking at the identities used by protesters in public demonstrations to legitimate their own claims and by considering responses locals have had to statements by the city's local council. The analysis of protest materials indicates that, as expected, a local identity did become increasingly salient in Ma'arat a-Nu'man over time. References to a religious or ethnic identity remained relatively consistent and appeals to a national identity saw several reversals between 2014 and 2016.

Background

Before delving into a discussion on institutions and identity in Idlib province in general and the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man in particular, it is imperative to provide some essential background information on the area and how the Syrian conflict has run its course in this particular region. A primarily agricultural area in the northwestern part of the country, Idlib governorate shares a limited northern border with Turkey. Estimates for

the population size of the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man vary widely. Estimations of the city's peace-time population immediately before the onset of conflict hover around 125,000 ("An Unflinching Account"). Several years into the conflict, estimates of the population were about 80,000, a number which included many displaced individuals from other parts of the country (Mahmoud 2016).

Prior to 2011, local formal and informal institutions were constrained. Idlib, as one of Syria's fourteen governorates, was led by a governor selected by national authorities in Damascus. Each governorate was divided into districts and subdistricts, with each subdistrict led by a *mudir*. However, under the Ba'athist regime such local officials had little power and decisions were made in Damascus. While each governorate also had an elected council, as was the case in other elections in Syria, such elections were by no means free and fair ("Syria: Local Government" 2018). In Idlib province, civil society prior to the 2011 uprising was constrained, as was true in much of the country. Despite these limitations and the regime's cooptation of preexisting civil society organizations, Idlib province does have some experience with opposing Ba'athist rule prior to the 2011 uprisings. The city of Jisr a-Shughur in Idlib province was the location of an uprising in 1980 that, like the later and larger uprising in the city of Hama, was met with violence by the Ba'thist regime.

Idlib governorate was the site of protests against the Ba'athist regime early on and records exist of protests in the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man from Spring 2011. As was the case elsewhere, the protesters faced an armed response by the regime with troops being sent to the city in May 2011 ("Protests Erupt", Shadid 2011). At a protest in the city attended by thousands, demonstrators set fire to a police station and the city courthouse. Regime forces responded strongly, with helicopters firing on protesters. After

demonstrators had dispersed the regime's military fired on the city with tank shells ("Dozens Killed"). While this was not to be the area's last protest, this marked the initiation of armed conflict in the region.

This was the beginning of a general trend of regime attacks on civilian targets, attacks which did not appear to be discriminatory in any way ("Syria army shells Homs"). The western part of the city fell to rebels early in the conflict, with the regime concentrating its efforts on maintaining its hold over that part of the city which lay directly on the main highway connecting the capital, Damascus to Syria's second city, Aleppo ("An Unflinching Account"). Early gains by armed groups in the city are attributed in the international press to "the local military council" without reference to specific groups or factions ("An Unflinching Account"). In October 2012, the rest of the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man was taken by a coalition of armed groups (Ibid). Subsequently, efforts were made by the Syrian regime to retake the city. Helicopters and fighter jets continued to attack the city. Cluster bombs made by Russia were employed by the regime in its attacks on the city immediately following its departure from regime control (Blomfield 2012). Over time local military actors would not be the only actors on the scene.

In time, an extremely varied array of armed actors would become involved in Idlib province and eventually in efforts to take the entirety of the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man from regime forces (Masi 2014, Abouzeid 2013). These actors went through periods of cooperation and conflict. For example, in the winter of 2013 armed groups predicated upon various identities and ideologies worked together in an effort to coordinate province-wide attacks on regime forces. The objective was to hit some of the smaller regime holdings, such as Wadi Deif, before moving on to the province's capital and then the city of Jisr a-Shughour (Ibid). The latter held particular strategic importance for its location on a key

highway leading to the home province of the al-Asad family, Lattakia. A religious court formed by the armed group formerly known as Jabhat a-Nusra was given a key organizational role in this larger offensive. Their role was to ensure that no participating armed group defected and that anything seized over the course of the fighting would be shared by all participating groups (Abouzeid 2013). This ambitious plan to seize the entire province did not succeed.

While this effort at provincial level coordination serves as an example of armed group cooperation, there were also been numerous examples of conflict between nonstate armed groups in Idlib province. Many of these conflicts arose between the more ardently religious armed groups and more moderate actors who placed a greater emphasis on a civil or local identity. One example of this is the conflict between Jabhat a-Nusra and the Syria Revolutionaries' Front. After three days of fighting a-Nusra and its ally, Jund al-Aqsa, took control over villages that had been in the hands of the Syrian Revolutionaries' Front (Perry and al-Khalidi 2014). Jabhat a-Nusra and its allies also engaged in fighting with Division 13, a local armed group that was based in the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man. That conflict and the public outcry that resulted will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

While armed groups removed parts of Idlib province from the control of the central government, the departure of a regime presence also led to the cessation of the provision of public goods. In response, local institutions were established to take on roles previously filled by the state, such as the provision of water, food, and medical care (Angelova 2014). In large part these took the form of local councils, which, while varied in their size and composition, undertook efforts to provide basic necessities such as the

removal of garbage and the provision of water (al-Shami and Yassin-Kassab 2016: 69).³⁰ These institutions acquired resources from a combination of foreign organizations, Syrians living abroad, and taxes on the local population (Ibid. 72).

In the next section I discuss the institutional makeup of Ma'arat a-Nu'man to illustrate why the city is an example of civilian rule. As I will show, civilian institutions played an important role coordinating regional activity and in providing essential goods, service, and governance to the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man. While armed groups made some efforts to build institutions, these were limited and not successful in the city. The governance by civilians rather than rebels in the city persisted through 2016.

Meeting the Criteria for Civilian Rule

Civilian Institutions

Parts of Idlib province, particularly the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man, were under civilian rule between 2012 and 2016. To prove this, I discuss the institutions which emerged in the area and their functions. As was the case in other areas in Syria, there were institutions which operated at the level of a province or smaller region as well as institutions that governed at a city or town level. The Idlib governorate council provided governance at the regional level, although there were other institutions that also appeared to function and coordinate service provision, such as the provincial police, education office, and relief office. Initially, the area council was intended to have representatives from each of six sub-regions within the province. Each of these six areas would receive a portion of seats on the governorate council based on the population of that area (Executive council city of Idlib Facebook 12/18/2012).³¹

³⁰ Local councils were often formed by individuals or groups who participated in the organization of protests during the early stages of the uprising (al-Shami and Yassin-Kassab 2016: 70).

³¹ This early plan for the formation of the area council also intended for the guaranteed allocation of 15-20% of seats for female representatives (Executive council city of Idlib Facebook 12/18/2012). It is unclear if this part of the plan ever came to fruition.

The Idlib Governorate Council's responsibilities largely revolved around coordinating efforts by the governorate's local councils. The council played a role in providing support to local area councils and providing services to the area's residents. Part of this role involved evaluating the needs of citizens. A photo posted on August 19, 2016 shows members of the area council taking a questionnaire to Ma'arat a-Nu'man's city council to assess local needs. Videos posted by the area council show members asking citizens in various parts of the governorate about their needs. The governorate council's Facebook pages also emphasize the entity's cooperative relationship with local councils throughout Idlib province. For example, a post on 4/16/16 describes a trip by the president of the area council to the countryside around Jisr a-Shughour and efforts to affirm cooperation between the area council and the local councils of the area. In some posts we see this coordination being dedicated to specific projects. For example, a post on the area council's Facebook page from July 22, 2016 discusses cooperation between the regional council and the local council of the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man to deal with the city's issues regarding sewage and sanitation. The area council also played a role in the restructuring of several local councils in different cities and towns in Idlib province (Idlib Governorate Council Facebook page 10/4/15).

Cities and villages throughout rebel-held Idlib province also had their own local councils, each with their own trends in identity promotion. This study focuses on the example of Ma'arat a-Nu'man in which civilian institutions governed and provided public goods. The influence of the Ba'athist regime ended with the departure of troops in October 2012 (Mahmoud 2016), and it was after the regime's departure that a democratically elected local council was established (Ma'arat a-Nu'man correspondence interview with the author, April 10, 2017). Elections took place annually, although there have been times

when crisis has led to the postponement of elections (Ma'arat a-Nu'man resident correspondence with the author, April 10, 2017). The local council functioned as the city's chief executive and the primary source of governance in the city (Ibid, Ma'arat a-Nu'man local council Facebook 11/16/15). In a Facebook post from November 2015, the local council claimed that civil society organizations and revolutionary activists in the city recognized the local council's position as the city's "one civil executive" (Facebook 11/16/15). The local council also oversaw affiliated offices. These included the education office of the local council in Ma'arat a-Nu'man (مكتب التربية والتعليم في المجلس المحلي في معرة) (النعمان) and the service office of the local council in Ma'arat a-Nu'man (المكتب الخدمي في) (المجلس المحلي في معرة النعمان). In addition, the local council made claims regarding its authority to regulate the development of new organizations within the city. In August 2015, the local council announced that any new organizations that intended to operate in the city were required to register with the local council before opening (local council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man Facebook 8/16/15). A resident of the city confirmed in communications with the author that that any organization or offices which were created in the city had to have some affiliation with the local council or with the legal court . This reaffirms the assessment that civilian institutions played the central role in the governance of the city.

The local council was not the only civilian institution of note, as there was also an independent civilian court that functioned at the city level. The court was established directly after the departure of regime forces from the city (Ma'arat a-Nu'man resident correspondence with the author, April 10, 2017). According to a Facebook post by the local council in July 2015, the court recognized the primacy of the local council as the main executive and as being the prime actor when it comes to civil matters within the city. The court also adjudicated between the council and citizens in the case of any citizen complaints

against the council (local council Ma'arat a-Nu'man 7/14/15). There were also indications of a degree of cooperation between the court and the local council. On a couple of occasions, including on August 25, 2015, the local council thanked the court for a donation, in this case of 1,000,000 Syrian pounds (local council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man Facebook). This understanding of the court's function was confirmed in my correspondence via WhatsApp with a resident of the city in Spring 2017. However, that individual did add that the court's form depended upon the dominant faction in the area and that the number of courts multiplied with the increase in factions present in the area (Ma'arat a-Nu'man resident correspondence with the author, April 10, 2017).³²

Thus, civilian institutions in Ma'arat a-Nu'man played a central role in providing governance and public goods. Armed groups, on the other hand, found it difficult to build institutions in the city in the period of time studied here, as will be discussed in the next section. Thus, Ma'arat a-Nu'man serves as an example of civilian rule in an area outside the government's control.

Institutions Established by Armed Groups

As has been discussed, under civilian rule it is not assumed that armed groups make no attempt whatsoever to build institutions. In Idlib province armed groups made some efforts to establish institutions, although these were not always successful. Some of these institutions were formed by and comprised of members of the armed groups, while in other instances armed groups attempted to exert increasing levels of influence or control over existing organizations. Prior to 2014, Jabhat a-Nusra³³ had prioritized the formation of alliances with other Syrian rebel groups and had avoided irking residents by

³² This shifting affiliation and the development of factions within the courts may explain the lack of consistency when it comes to the social media presence of the city's courts. In addition to not posting on a consistent basis, there have been multiple pages for this institutions over time.

³³ While the group is commonly referred to by this name it has officially changed its name.

imposing a conservative interpretation of Islamic law. After a-Nusra removed the Syrian Revolutionaries Front from the regional equation, the Islamist group began to get involved in governance in some of the areas under its control. At this point a-Nusra attempted to become a stronger presence in civilian life and governance, creating special police units that focused on enforcing strict moral guidelines, forming courts, and generally trying to limit the influence and authority of local council. At the same time, a-Nusra began to challenge other local armed groups that they deemed corrupt or too close to particular foreign governments (Heller 2016).³⁴

As one may expect in a context in which civilian institutions are at the fore, these efforts by armed groups were not uniformly successful. Civilians challenged the legitimacy of armed groups' institution building efforts in several ways. The social media accounts of local institutions also provide some hints as to the ambiguous and sometimes hostile stance civilians adopted vis-à-vis armed groups. For example, a post on the Facebook page of the executive council of the city of Idlib from June 30, 2015 states, "The executive of Jaish al-Fath prevents the local council for the city of Idlib from working and demands they turn over the executive of the country to people who are fighters but are blind to the destruction and devastation in the country and the hunger and poverty of the people – Mustafa Hadithi." This post is an example of the struggle over control and legitimacy, and debates over whether the rebels should claim authority in the city or whether only locals could be entrusted with these responsibilities. An Idlib governorate council post echoes this

³⁴ The shifts in the capacity of local armed groups compared to civilian institution looks different in two of the cases discussed here. In Ma'arat a-Nu'man armed groups did not initially play a strong role and it was only in the last couple of years covered in the case study here that the group known as Jabhat a-Nusra made efforts to do so. This was the opposite from the city of Douma, where armed groups played a prominent role in the first few years but decreases in capacity damaged their influence. The capacity of the armed groups to build institutions plays a significant role in shaping which kind of institutional arrangement exists and the shifts from one type of local institutional arrangement to another. While civilian institution building took place early in the state's absence in many parts of Syria, not all of these areas became examples of civilian rule.

sentiment in a post that discusses a meeting held with local councils from the area of the city of Ariha. In addition to discussing practical matters such as electricity provision, the post mentions the councils' objectives of working in the future without any interference in the work of the area council from any group or faction. The local council of the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man also has a post which is critical of the efforts by armed groups to involve themselves in civilian affairs. On January 30, 2016 the city council's Facebook account posts, "What they build militarily is being destroyed by some of their interventions in civilian matters." In these examples we see civilians asserting their own authority and questioning the legitimacy of the armed groups to get involved in governance, as one would expect in an under civilian rule.

In Ma'arat a-Nu'man in particular, civilians also expressed a desire to limit the role of armed groups in a series of protests against Jabhat a-Nusra and its allies. In the Spring of 2016 conflicts emerged between Jaish al-Fateh, an umbrella group of which Jabhat a-Nusra is a prominent member, and Ma'arat a-Nu'man's public. On March 11th Jaish al-Fateh responded with violence to protests going on in the city - despite the fact that these initial protests were targeted at the Syrian Ba'athist regime, not at the Islamist armed groups of Jaish al-Fath. One fact that is noted in press coverage is that these armed groups not only attacked protesters, but they burned the flag associated with the Syrian uprising, the flag of Syria's pre-Baathist republic. Following this initial clash, Jaish al-Fateh also decreed the use of any flag except that used by a-Nusra to be illegal (Mahmoud 2016). While later protest footage indicates that this proved unenforceable, the announcement was apparently taken seriously as civilian protests followed this event. Locals from the town felt that part of this response was driven by the inability of Jaish al-Fateh to "accept pro-revolution slogans." Demonstrators called for a-Nusra and other members of Jaish al-Fateh

to depart, with some explicitly rejecting the “intolerance” and “sectarianism” they associated with a-Nusra (Ibid). In this case, the larger population resisted attempts by armed actors to take on a larger role in local governance. It was not only those in established positions of authority that made efforts to uphold the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’man’s civilian rule, but a larger community of citizens who also limited the involvement of armed groups in the running of the city.

This is not to say that perceptions of armed actors were entirely negative. While posts by local institutions may protest efforts by armed groups to be involved in governance, their successes on the battlefield against the regime were regularly lauded. The executive council of the city of Idlib posted a note of praise for a group known as the Martyrs’ Brigade which had successfully defeated regime forces in the area (12/24/2012). The governorate council for the city of Idlib also commended Jaish al-Fateh for its success in freeing the city of Ariha (Facebook area council Idlib 5/28/2015). This is from the same account which expressed concerns regarding the interference of armed groups in local councils in the vicinity of the same city. This affirms the assertion by the civilian authorities that the legitimate field of action for armed groups was only the battlefield.³⁵ There also appear to be other, limited zones in which civilians and armed groups were willing and able to cooperate. The governorate council of Idlib post from May 24, 2015 discusses cooperation with a representative of the group Ahrar a-Sham over bread prices. Thus, while perceptions of armed groups by elites in Idlib province were not uniformly negative, positive comments about armed groups were limited to actions taken in what civilians

³⁵ It is certainly in the interest of civilian leaders to undercut the legitimacy of challengers (in this case, armed groups that wish to exert greater control or authority). However, this does not mean that efforts to limit the legitimate behavior of armed groups to the battlefield is entirely self-interested. This is both the model in many established democracies and the antithesis of the arrangement under the Ba’ath regime in Syria.

deemed legitimate fields. While armed groups may be involved in the provision of particular kinds of aid (hence their cooperation regarding bread prices) and may have been commended for their involvement in armed opposition to the regime, efforts by armed groups to involve themselves in civilian governance were challenged by civilians in Idlib governorate and challenged successfully in the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man.

Source Material

In order to evaluate the promotion of identities by actors within the Syrian context, this work engages with text and images from the Facebook accounts of several local institutions in Idlib province to evaluate references to and the salience of four types of identities: national, ethnic, religious, and local. Facebook was selected over other forms of social media, such as Twitter, due to its popularity in Syria (Wall and Zahed 2015: 724). In addition, due to the lower levels of technological skill required to create Facebook pages, many local institutions have Facebook pages rather than official websites. If organizations created both, the Facebook pages usually preceded the creation of an official website. Facebook pages for local institutions were generally found by searching for the name of the city or region on Facebook.

The text from these Facebook accounts were subjected to two stages of analysis. First, a list of identity related terms related to the four types of identity was compiled. Words that were coded as being associated with a religious identity included the Arabic words for “God” and “prayer,” ethnic identity included “Arab” and “Kurd,” local included the name of the city or region, and national included words such as “Syria” or “nation.” The full list of terms can be found in appendix 1. In this process the same post may be coded for multiple identities. A single post may be coded as making a reference to a local, national, ethnic, and religious identity simultaneously. This list was not intended to serve

as an exhaustive evaluation of the appearance of references to particular kinds of identities. Instead, this method is a systematic means of evaluating the corpus and comparing the materials produced by different institutions. More importantly, this step was taken to limit the corpus of material to a set of potentially identity-related posts. One of the three Facebook pages created for the Idlib area council had 615 posts while the two Facebook pages created by the Local Council of Ma'arat A-Nu'man had 500 posts in total, many of which focus on mundane procedural matters. Additional steps to limit the sample temporally were also taken, with all posts after 2016 removed.³⁶ Any mention of one of the search terms was sufficient to allow for a post's inclusion in the corpus.³⁷ The second step of the textual analysis was to look at the content of the included posts and to evaluate qualitatively the ways in which these key identity terms were used. The number of times a word is included does not tell us about how it is used. There is a marked difference between the use of God in a quotidian phrase like "thanks be to God" and a reference to religious text. A qualitative approach was also adopted in the analysis of important symbols and logos which appear repeatedly on the social media accounts of these institutions.

The second part of the research design involves evaluating the salience of identities among the civilian population. Clearly, in the context of an ongoing conflict there are significant impediments to evaluating how salient various identities have become for an area's residents. However, there are ways in which we can get some sense of which identities may be salient. Drawing on the social movement literature, the symbols

³⁶ Establishing an endpoint was necessary for two reasons. First, the conflict is ongoing and attempting to continuously update the information on the cases and to code additional posts would have made the project untenable. The research for the three case studies was also conducted at different times, so establishing a common endpoint for all three cases allowed for greater degrees of consistency in terms of relevant national and international changes. Finally, this also places the endpoint prior to significant acquisitions of territory made by the regime which led to some of the areas in this case study changing hands.

³⁷ This decision was based on work in the nationalism literature which claims that even the unnoticed appearance of identity-related symbols can influence attitudes and identities (Billig 1995, Penrose 2011, Phillips 2013, Butz 2009, Jones and Merriman 2009).

employed in a movement's repertoire are generally defined by the cultural and social context in which the movement operates as actions only have power if they resonate with a target audience (Tilly and Wood 2013: 51). The goal of these displays is to communicate the "worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment" possessed by the movement, and therefore, many social movements use symbols that are familiar to the society in which they operate, such as national flags (Ibid., 5, 47). This work therefore assumes that the symbols used during protests will be those that the demonstrators identify with and that they think will reinforce the worthiness of their cause in the eyes of their fellow citizens. The analysis of images of public demonstrations has been implemented as a means for evaluating the "salience" of political matters and identities (Bell 2001: 14). Analyzing images may also remove concerns regarding the willingness of individuals to openly discuss certain matters with outsiders (Oleinik 2015: 2215). Thus, while it may not be possible to conduct surveys or use other methods to evaluate the salience of identity, looking at the reported causes of protests and the identities used to support claims-making gives us some insight into which identities are salient among the population at large, rather than only elites.

To evaluate the apparent salience of available identities in the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man, a collection of images and videos of demonstrations in the city was conducted. Four sources of images and videos were included in the corpus: one from a Syrian news source (*The Syrian Revolution Network*, started in 2011) that covers events throughout Syria, two from city news organizations, and one from an organization called The Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution which collects photos of protest signs, videos, and artwork. For the news sources, the Facebook page of each source was scraped using a computer program. For the local news sources, those posts which mentioned the term

muthahara, protest, were included and any photos or videos that accompanied the post were saved. A similar search of the *Syrian Revolution Network*'s Facebook page was conducted, with posts selected that mentioned both *muthahara* and the name of the city of Ma'rat a-Nu'man. This search resulted in five posts from *al-Ma'ara Today*, three from *al-Ma'ara Now*, and 174 posts from the *Syrian Revolution Network*.³⁸ In order to compare these to images from other sources and because of an interest in the representation of identities in protest events, demonstrations are the most appropriate unit of analysis.

The next step was to take the posts and to group them, noting posts which appear to provide photos and videos covering the same demonstration based on matching date of publication. The next step was to assign event numbers to posts from the same date, remove posts that may have contained key words but did not document protests in the city of Ma'rat a-Nu'man, and to remove posts which contained broken links. This reduced the number of protest events in Ma'arat a-Nu'man that appeared on the Syrian Revolution Network to 39. The final collection of photos and videos, the collection assembled by the Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution, was found by searching their online collection for the name of the city, Ma'arat a-Nu'man, in Arabic. Any photo or video which appeared to show a demonstration or protest was then included in the corpus. This came to 44 posts published between March 2014 and the end of 2016. Based on the dates of publication, these posts seem to relate to 39 protest events for which photos and videos were provided. This yielded photos and/or videos from 2 protests that took place in 2013, 10 in 2014, 20 in 2015, and 47 in 2016, 79 protest events in total.

³⁸ While the Syrian Revolution Network has an early start date, the Facebook account for *al-Ma'ara Today* was created on November 23, 2015 and the Facebook page for *Ma'ara Now* was created on October 16, 2016. Just as was the case for the identity promotion materials, only protests which took place by the end of 2016 were included in the sample.

This corpus was then subjected to a systematic analysis of the visual materials. A coding scheme like that applied to the social media accounts was applied to the texts of protest banners and the chants and songs recorded in video records. In addition, a note was made regarding the number of people included in each photo or video, the number and type of flags present (coded into the four identity categories; ethnic, national, local, religious), and visual aspects of the posters. The full details of the coding scheme as well as the expanded results can be found in the Appendix.

Identity Promotion by Civilian Actors

As was stated earlier, Idlib governorate and the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man specifically function here as an example of civilian rule, an institutional arrangement in which civilian actors play the central role in institution building and armed actors are extremely limited in their influence and their engagement with civilians. Under civilian rule, I expect that these governing institutions will be more likely to refer to identities that are already relatively salient to the local population. This is at least in part thanks to their basis in preexisting civilian institutions. In this case, given the limited space for independent civilian organization during the Ba'athist period, I expect these organizational roots to be informal social structures or organizations that formed when political space emerged during the 2011 uprisings, such as local coordinating committees (LCCs), which planned public demonstrations against the Ba'athist regime. In addition, the inability of civilian organizations to extend their reach and expand their sphere of control will also make them more likely to make reference local, geographically limited identities.

Available Identities

Before we go into a consideration of the identities being promoted by regional and city-level institutions, it is important to lay out the identity possibilities available to citizens

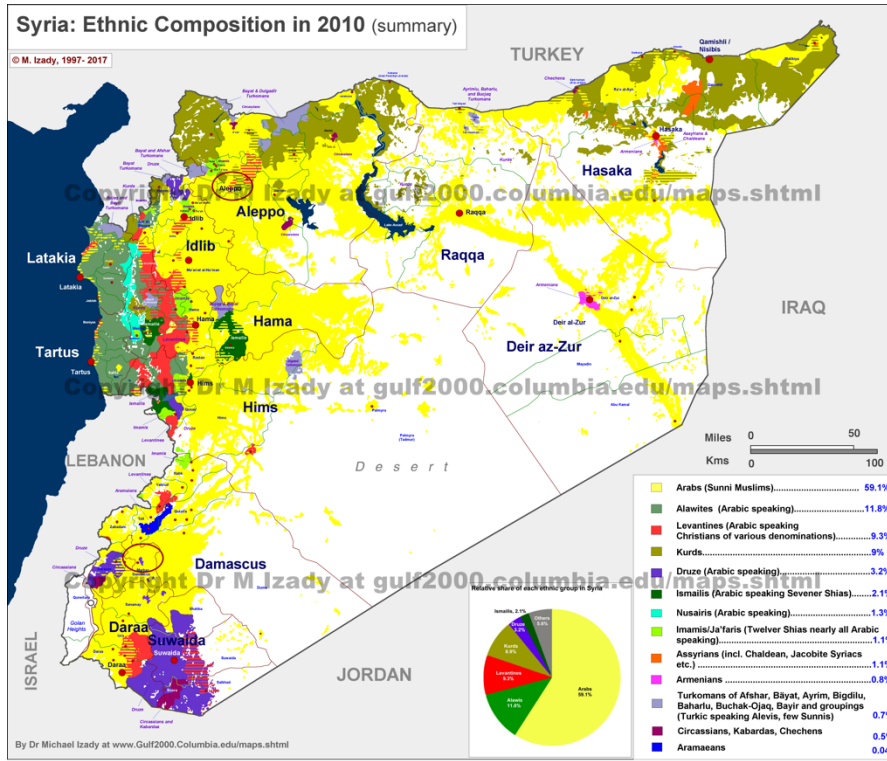


Figure 5 Map of Ethnic Composition of Syria in 2010 (Izady 2010)

living in Idlib province. First, it is the assumption of this work that there are multiple, geographically based identities available to any individual. For example, this work assumes that for any individual

living in Syria a Syrian national identity is an available identity that could become salient.³⁹ In addition, a more local identity, one based upon one's home town or home region is also available to any individual. A second kind of identity is religious. In Idlib province as a whole, pre-conflict data indicates that numerous religious communities were represented in the area. In addition to Sunni Muslims, the significant majority in the province, there were Alawites, a variety of Christian denominations, Druze, Shiites, Alawis, and Alevis (Izady 2010). In addition, there were different ethnic identities available to different members of Idlib's population. While Arabs were the most dominant ethnic group, the area

³⁹ This does exclude foreign fighters who are largely excluded from this analysis.

was also home to Assyrians, Kurds, and other, smaller ethnic groups. Thus, we can consider an individual whose set of identities may include Syrian, from Jisr a-Shughour, Sunni Muslim, and ethnically Arab.⁴⁰ It is their social environment which shapes the relative salience of these identities, or may, over time, even lead to the construction of entirely new identities. The city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man, based on the pre-conflict data, was relatively ethnically and religiously homogeneous as it lies in an area in which the population was predominantly Arab and Sunni Muslim.

We should not assume that the distribution of ethnic and religious populations remained consistent. Massive population shifts took place over the course of the conflict as millions were displaced internally and others left Syria. Thus, while the 2010 data gives us some indication of the array of religious and ethnic identities that were available to individuals living in Idlib during the conflict, we should not assume that these maps remained entirely accurate after several years of violent conflict. While in such a short period of time it seems unlikely that the set of identities available to a specific individual have changed, which individuals live in Idlib governorate has altered dramatically.

Identity Promotion by The Idlib Area Council

In total there have been three distinct Facebook pages that could be found for the Idlib area council. The first Facebook page posted rarely for only a few months in 2014 and therefore has few posts to analyze. The second Facebook page published posts between April 2015 and June 2015 and the third Facebook account began posting in August 2015. The two more recent pages primarily promote a local identity. As is true for many of the civilian institutions, the Facebook page for the Idlib area council focuses predominantly on

⁴⁰ By and large, tribal affiliations decreased in importance in Syrian in the decades under Ba'thist rule. While in some parts of the country tribes have taken on a more prominent role in the state's absence, Idlib province is not one of them. However, clan affiliations reportedly have played a part in Idlib's local politics (Hussein 2018).

local service provision, with a heavy emphasis on providing electricity, conducting construction projects, and the operation of bread ovens. In addition, many posts on this third Facebook account are pleas for applicants to fill a variety of positions in the area's administration and affiliated offices.

The Idlib governorate council's Facebook page has a limited number of references to a national identity. For example, in the post which expressed condolences for those killed in Russian air raids, the post was ended with a wish for "victory for our revolution" (Idlib Governorate council Facebook January 12, 2016). This is a sentiment which connects the current trials and tribulations experienced at a local level to the larger, national-level struggle. The use of *thoura*, revolution, to refer to the current conflict invokes a connection to the 2011 uprising and its goals. In this example, the Syrian "we" is implied, while in others it is more explicit and references to Syria or the Syrian people are made. For example, a post on the area council's official press page emphasizes the importance of political unity within a future Syria and again repeats the phrase "revolution until victory" (12/14/15). In this way, the governorate council reflects some of its organizational roots in

the protest movement against the Ba'athist regime. However, these references to a Syrian national identity are still limited and do not approach the level of frequency and consistency with which we see the promotion of a local identity.

The logo of the governorate council also blends local and national elements.



Figure 6 The Logo for the Idlib Governorate Council

The top arc is a representation of the flag adopted by the opposition to the al-Asad regime. This flag harkens back to Syria's pre-Ba'athist republic. It continues to be associated with the political opposition and is used by armed groups that have not adopted more religious banners, particularly the black banners associated with Islamist groups. The two phrases at the bottom say, "We are liberated together" and "we build together." While the "we" here could potentially be considered a national "we," the fact that the top section of the logo is the name of the Idlib area council seems to indicate that the "we" refers to the people of Idlib. The olive branches that form the lower boundaries of the logo are done in a green which matches the national flag, although this could be claimed to be an effort to make the logo visually appealing rather than an effort to continue to tie in the national symbol of the flag. The olive branches do have a connection to Idlib province. Their incorporation serves as a tribute to the area's agriculture as Idlib province is one of the provinces of Syria in which olives are primarily produced (Bacchi 2015).

Perhaps one of the most interesting elements of the Idlib governorate council's logo is the incorporation of an ancient tablet. The tablet, which is today part of the collection at the British museum, is dated to around 2500 B.C.E. The tablet is covered in Sumerian text written in cuneiform and was reportedly found in southern Iraq in the late 1800s (British Museum). Idlib province is home to numerous archaeological sites, so while this specific artifact itself does not come from the province, the inclusion of an archaeological artifact from the bronze age can be considered an additional means through which the logo emphasizes a local identity. Interestingly, the inclusion of this artifact emphasizes a

connection to the area's pre-Islamic past, opting to promote a local historical tradition over religious considerations.⁴¹

There are intriguing differences between the two most recent Facebook accounts for the governorate council, particularly when it comes to the degree of religiosity, with the second Facebook account proving more religious than the third. This shift matches local political changes taking place in the city of Idlib. On March 3, 2015 it was the Islamist armed coalition, Jaish al-Fateh that succeeded in ousting the last regime troops from Idlib's provincial capital. This began a period in which armed actors attempted to assert institutional control within the city itself, which included the establishment of a *shura* council to rule. A coalition of local organizations was able to push back against some of the religious laws the armed actor's institutions attempted to put into place. In August 2016 civilians were also able to establish a new local council (Taleb 2017). These events and contestation over control within the city of Idlib itself explains the timing of the second Facebook page's start (April 2015, only weeks after the Islamists became the dominant military actors in the city) as well as its higher degree of religiosity. Here the strengthening of the armed group, the shift away from civilian rule, explains changes to the identities referenced by the Idlib Governorate Council. Here we see the ways in which political transformations on the ground were responded to in the discourse produced by local civilian institutions.⁴²

⁴¹ The tablet discusses trade issues, which is common among tablets from the period (personal correspondence, Penn Museum Near East Researcher). It is unclear whether this may or may not have been a consideration by the producers of the logo, particularly as images of the artifact are widely available on public sites including Wikipedia commons. This seems to reaffirm the idea that the tablet was selected as a representation of the kind of artifacts found in the area and that this had greater importance to the creators than the content and provenance of this artifact.

⁴² As was discussed in the second chapter, armed groups can influence the identity repertoires of civilian actors in several ways. They may exert pressure, putting up their own chosen candidates to be elected by local councils. They may also assert their influence in more subtle ways, encouraging longstanding members of local councils to shift their identity promotion to avoid raising the ire of the armed group. The

This variation in religiosity manifests in several ways. For example, a post by the area council page on April 22, 2015 calls on readers to pray for the *mujahideen*. The post's call for a religious action by the reader as well as the use of the term *mujahideen*, a term for fighters which has a religious connotation, are both telling. Another post from May 12, 2015 incorporates a direct quotation from the Qur'an as part of a post expressing condolences for a particular individual. Another post from the same month begins with the common phrase, "In the name of God the compassionate and merciful" and ends with "God is the arbiter of success" (Facebook Governorate Council Idlib May 31, 2015). While these are not phrases that denote a particularly high level of religiosity, they do indicate a degree of religiosity that we do not find in the more recent Facebook page for the region's council.

Compared to the second Facebook page for the council, the use of quotidian religious phrases, such as the beginning of a post with "In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful" or the use of "Thanks be to God" are still present but more infrequent for the third Facebook page of the area council.⁴³ The only displays of more in-depth degrees of religiosity appear in expressions of condolences, such as an expression of sympathy with the victims of Russian airstrikes (January 12, 2016) and another note commemorating the death of Zahran Alloush, the leader of the rebel group Jaish al-Islam (12/26/2015). The latter is 9:111, "Lo! Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs: they shall fight in the way of Allah and shall slay and be slain. It is a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. Who fulfilleth His covenant better than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain

creation of a new Facebook page does not necessarily indicate that the membership of the council has changed as elections are often noted without the creation of new social media pages.

⁴³ For example, this post from August 27, 2015 begins with the phrase "In the name of God the compassionate and the merciful" and also uses the phrase, "with the help of God." بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ تَمَّ بَعُونَ
الله تعالى استكمال استجراار الدقيق المقدم من الحكومة التركية من قبل الأستاذ غسان حمو رئيس المكتب المالي بمجلس محافظة ادلب الحرة

that ye have made, for that is the supreme triumph” (Abbas and Atwell). Again, the timing of the creation of the new Facebook page and the shift in the identities referred to seems to match political changes taking place on the ground, as armed actors took control of the governorate’s capital.

The Local Council of the City of Ma’arat a-Nu’man

Like the council for the Idlib area, the local council of the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’man produced two Facebook accounts since the apparent initiation of the council’s social media presence in June 2015. Unlike the governorate council, the city council’s two Facebook pages have been consistent in the identities that they promote and the first Facebook page announced the transition to the new Facebook page, which immediately picked up where the old Facebook page had left off. The results of the initial content analysis to limit the corpus can be found in figure 7.

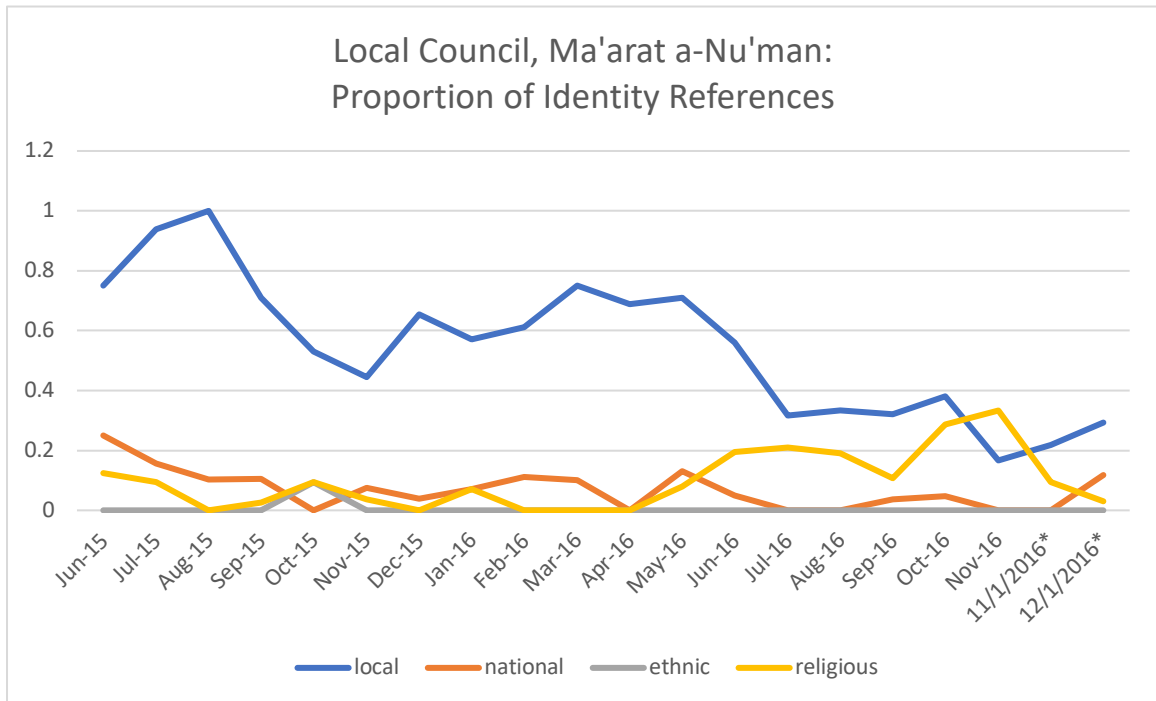


Figure 7 Identity References by the Local Council of the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’man

**These results are from the Local Council's new Facebook page, but there seems to be little or no difference between the new Facebook page and the last few months of the old.*

The terms which are related to a local identity are consistently the most common to appear, particularly through June 2016. National and religious identity references are generally a distant second. Again, this fits with the expectations we would have for a civilian institution whose reach is inherently limited.

By far the most consistent identity promoted by the local council of the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man's Facebook page is a local identity. These references to the city and its immediate surroundings take several forms. Many are simply referencing the city, which is common as the court frequently refers to itself before describing an action taken, decision made, or announcement pronounced. The vast majority of the photos on the social media account for the local council depict municipal service provision; garbage collection, handling waste, water provision, cleaning up and repairing roads and municipal buildings after bombings, working on school buildings or providing school materials, etc. In addition to these basic day-to-day methods for emphasizing their local nature, connections to the community are emphasized through both the images and texts regarding local service provision as well as occasionally more light-hearted activities. For example, a post from November 11, 2015 describes a football match played between the local council's team and the team of the local high school.

The local council's social media accounts also address the people of the city directly. While in some contexts the phrase "Our people" could be considered ambiguous, there are numerous occasions in which the context indicates that the post is intended for locals only. A post on May 17, 2016 is titled "An important announcement to our people in Ma'arat a-Nu'man" and is accompanied by a photograph of the announcement, which

has to do with water provision. Water is also the subject of another post which refers to “our kind people” on November 15, 2016. In these examples and elsewhere, the local council of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān makes its focus on its local constituency alone apparent and establishes itself as part of “our people in Ma’arat a-Nu’mān.”

Another way in which the local council promotes a local identity is through its participation in protests within the city. On numerous occasions, a photo of the official sign carried by representatives of the local council will be taken and posted. On October 16, 2015, the local council apparently participated in a protest with a very local objective – to convince armed actors to unite in their efforts or to depart the city. The sign itself states, “The successes are small, and because the challenges are great, we all must cooperate to solve the problem.” Essentially, the poster claims that all must work together in order to achieve successes against the larger challenges, in this case faced by armed groups opposing the regime. In this instance, the local council shares a photograph of a group holding the sign, placing their involvement in their local context in which calls are being made for armed groups in the city to change their behaviors.

Another way in which the local council emphasized its local character is through references to the council’s cooperation with other local actors, such as Division 13, Ma’arat a-Nu’mān’s local armed group. For example, there are several posts that refer to efforts to clean up the city. One such post about the clean-up campaign, posted on June 30, 2015, thanks numerous local groups for their involvement, including the association of young intellectuals, the revolutionary police, the civil defense (also known as the white helmets), Division 13, and relief societies. In another instance, Division 13 aided the local council in its efforts to pave roads (Facebook 9/1/15), and in another case to assist in clearing roads (Facebook 12/3/15). Cooperation does not only take the form of working together on civil

projects but also donations of supplies and money from local actors. On August 8, 2015 the local council in Ma'arat a-Nu'man thanked Division 13 for the donation of boxes of medical supplies. Several days later the local council again thanked Division 13, in this instance for a gift of 600,000 Syrian pounds to support the local council. By making regular references to other local civil and armed groups, the local council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man reaffirms its position in the local context. These references also imply an acknowledgement by these various local actors that the local council is the legitimate governing body in the city.

It is important to note that under normal conditions, when the state continues to function, we might expect local institutions to make more references to local places and events and thereby promote a local identity. However, we would also expect references to national or regional identities, particularly in a state like Syria where a consistent emphasis was made on the construction of a cult of personality around the president (Wedeen 1999). At an empirical level, an emphasis on the local does not consistently match the results.⁴⁴ Indeed, after June 2016 the proportion of posts that referred to a local identity dropped while religious appeals increased. This matches political shifts on the ground and the efforts by armed groups like Jabhat a-Nusra to exert more influence on local life.

In addition to the text of the local council's posts, we can also look to the local council's logo for some indications of the identities it promoted. First, it is worth noting the numerous ways in which the logo of the local council has appeared. In addition to serving as the profile picture and cover photo for the social media accounts there are numerous photos that attest to the use of the local council's logo outside of the internet.

⁴⁴ This lack of focus only on the local is also true when we look at the civilian institutions built in other areas. For example, the Local Council of the City of Douma had many posts in early 2013 that discussed national events.

Photos of official announcements by the local council show the logo being used as part of the council's official letterhead. In certain announcements, the logo even appears twice, once as a sort of watermark in the background and again in bolder color in the heading. In addition, there are photos that indicated that municipal services vehicles also sport the logo, such as this photo from June 7, 2016:



Figure 8 Photo posted by the Local Council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man on June 7, 2016 of men doing repairs

The logo for the local council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man, like the logo for Idlib governorate's council, incorporates elements of the initial uprising's iconography but with a distinctly local twist. The city council's logo incorporates the pre-Ba'athist Syrian flag that has become associated with the opposition to the al-Asad regime. This fits with the organizational origins of the local council and other city institutions in the organizations which emerged across the country to oppose the Ba'athist regime. The incorporation of the national flag connects the area council to its initial revolutionary roots. The flag in a banner shape extends out from the top of the tower at the logo's center and wraps behind and



Figure 9 Logo for the Local Council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man

below. Over the tower are three arced stripes which echo the green and black stripes of the flag and its red stars. At the center of the logo is a distinct local landmark, the minaret of the city's grand mosque (Gagnon 2010). Unlike the incorporation of an ancient tablet as was the case with the area council for Idlib, the use of a medieval minaret makes a religious interpretation of Ma'arat a-Nu'man's council's logo a possibility.⁴⁵ The use of an architectural feature that is also unique to the city emphasizes a local identity a visual level. Thus, the logo for the local council

visually connects to the initial uprising against the Ba'athist regime as well as a local historical monument that could be understood as local or religious.

The local council does not use religious appeals to legitimate its position for most of the months in the sample, as religious references are not frequent and are generally brief. For example, there is the very occasional use of the phrase *bismillah a-rahman a-rahim*, in the name of God the compassionate and the merciful. One of these instances is on June 17,

⁴⁵ The initial version of the logo which appeared on the initial Facebook account for a little under a month had the name of the local council only in Arabic, rather than in English and Arabic as the next version of the logo did. This shift indicates that there was an interest in making the logo intelligible to non-Arabic speakers, perhaps international donors. In addition, the font of the initial logo mimics that found in medieval calligraphy, a choice that was abandoned in favor of a simpler typeface employed in the new logo. This could be considered an attempt to look more like a government institution as the font is similar to that used in official seals and logos for state institutions across the Arab world. However, we should not assume that this change in logo indicates that the Facebook page is primarily oriented toward an outside audience. Unlike other Facebook pages, such as those by local aid groups, the local council for the city almost exclusively posts in Arabic, which suggests that the focus of the page remains Arabic speakers. The page also focuses on alerting citizens to actions that the local council has taken or events which directly impact the lives of the city's citizens, such as repairs being done on a particular road after a bombing making a route impassable. The use of the Facebook page as a means of alerting citizens about local events and matters suggests that this page's audience is primarily, although not exclusively, local.

2015 when the local council announces the formation of a new council. Other phrases that are common and casual in their usage but do incorporate the use of religious elements, such as *insha'allah*, God willing, also occasionally appear. This is the case on a post from October 23, 2016 when the local council announces that the next morning at about 8:00 o'clock there would be bread from the first oven, God willing. This phrase is extremely commonly used for very mundane future events. This is also true for the some of the other phrases which were marked as "Religious" under the preliminary coding scheme. The use of *al-hamdu li'allah*, thanks be to God, is also an extremely common phrase that is by Arabic speakers of various religions and degrees of religiosity.

Posts using religious language also are largely limited to two topics, one of which is the provision of water. Quotidian religious phrases seem to be used most frequently in posts pertaining to water provision. It is not clear on why water posts in particular are often discussed in such terms. This pattern could be explained if multiple users from different offices have access to the local council's Facebook account, and may reflect the speaking voice of someone involved in this particular project. The consistent use of this language in regard to one aspect of service provision indicates enthusiasm for the issue rather than shifts in the religiosity of the local council as a whole.

The other context in which religious phrases are used, just as in the case of the Idlib area council, is when condolences are being expressed and in notes marking religious holidays. While religious references are found in expressions of condolences (such as October 23, 2015), condolences are not always expressed using particularly religious terms. A post on November 15, 2015 expressed loss for those killed during a Russian air raid on a school did so without the use of religious language. Other posts that incorporate religious language are those which refer to significant holidays. For example, a post on

June 6, 2016 wishes “a blessed Ramadan” to the “general Islamic *umma* and the steadfast, revolutionary people of Syria.” Here the post marking the holiest month in the Islamic calendar serves not only as an opportunity to connect the citizens of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān with the larger Islamic *umma*, the community of global believers, as well as the Syrian people. The limited contexts in which religiosity is displayed seems to affirm that while the local council recognizes religion as an important part of the lives of the citizenry, this is not the identity which they promote to enhance perceptions of their legitimacy. This understanding of the council’s perception and expression of religious sentiment is echoed in an example of the council’s involvement in education policy. In an effort to help students recover for lost learning time, Fridays are the only day off from school that students are allowed (Local council in the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān Facebook 10/28/15).

Thus, while religion is not entirely absent from the discourse produced by the local council of the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān, it is limited in its frequency and the ways in which it is used. This indicates that the local council was not actively or passively promoting a transnational religious identity. The limited use of religious language supports the hypothesis that civilian institutions will focus on local, existing identities in their efforts to garner legitimacy. Many of those posts which were initially tagged as religious were for posts that involved very casual and quotidian phrases. The use of religious language outside these common phrases are generally limited to two fields, the expression of grief and acknowledgement of significant religious holidays. Even these expressions are not uniformly religious. Nor do they emphasize a strictly religious identity as they include references to other identities available to the citizens of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān.

The Local Council of the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān also did not use ethnicity to strengthen its legitimacy. Most of those posts which initially were included in the corpus

for being potentially ethnic were selected for the use of the word *kurdi*, which proved to all be repeated references to a Kurdish school in the city. This is the only context in which an ethnic group is referred to, indicating that ethnic identities are not a consistent part of the city's discourse. The lack of ethnic language extends to any reference to Idlib's dominant ethnic group, Arabs. Any use of the term *'arab* or *'arabi* on the local council's Facebook page is in the context of a donation by citizens from the United Arab Emirates or a reference to language requirements for job postings. There are even multiple contexts in which we would otherwise expect an Arab identity to be emphasized, such as discussions of fellow Arab states, but the local council did not do so. In the aforementioned post on June 6, 2016 that wishes people a blessed Ramadan, special mention of blessings for Yemen are made. This post by the local council includes no description of Yemen as a fellow Arab state. Here the explicit connection is their shared Muslim faith and the implied point of commonality is the suffering sustained by the populations of Syria and Yemen. Thus, ethnicity seems to have almost no role in the identity promotion practices of the local council of the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man.

References to a national identity are also limited, indicating that this identity also does not play a role in the local council's efforts to legitimate their position. In the initial coding scheme used to limit the corpus, references of one kind or another to the nation are generally about as frequent as religious references. As is the case for religious appeals, the appearance of "Syria" is often in mundane contexts. Several of the posts which the limited coding scheme labelled as national were marked as such thanks to a mentioning of a Syrian regional program. There are also opportunities advertised that were available to Syrian citizens, such as a scholarship program available to citizens residing in the country (Facebook 6/22/16). These mundane or banal references to the nation make up the majority,

but not all references to the nation. In the earlier post from June 6, 2016 the “steadfast, revolutionary people of Syria” are wished a blessed Ramadan as well as the larger Islamic *umma*. The incorporation of a reference to the larger national identity, and a definition of the national community defined by the national conflict and opposition to the regime, indicates that the council’s focus and emphasis on the local has not led it to entirely disregard the national.

Some of the posters which the local council of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān displayed at protests in the city can also be considered indicative of a combination of local and civic national identities. The first from December 18, 2015 says, “We may differ in the way, but our goal is one. Service to our country (*biladna*) and our people (*ahlna*)”⁴⁶ (Facebook Page Local council in Ma’arat a-Nu’mān). This first poster seeks to emphasize a shared identity with individuals of varied political perspectives as all members of “our country” and “our people” who are dedicated to a single purpose, albeit a vague objective. This assertion of unity, potentially across ethnic and sectarian lines, indicates an effort to promote a civic brand of nationalism. This emphasis on service also fits with the potential over-arching mission of the Facebook page, which is to emphasize the work that the local council is doing for residents. The “our people” could be interpreted as the local people, as it is set apart from “our country.” The construction can also be interpreted as an attempt to reaffirm national unity through two references to the national population. The second post of interest is from December 25, 2015 and calls “Ma’arat a-Nu’mān the nucleus of the future state” (Ibid). Here there is a clear level of local pride which proposes Ma’arat a-Nu’mān as the

⁴⁶ While this may be an assertion of national unity and a connection between local efforts and national endeavors, it may also be an effort to not get involved in the conflict between Jabhat a-Nusra and locals protesting against them. A focus on the council’s local nature and works can be seen as both an effort to attain greater levels of legitimacy within the population while simultaneously avoiding conflict with the varied armed groups operating in the governorate.

model for a post-Ba'athist future in Syria. It connects local efforts to a larger, albeit vague, vision for the national level. While other banners generally seem to emphasize the local identity that most obviously binds the civilian institutions of Ma'arat a-Nu'man to its constituency, these two appear to be something of an anomaly, yet one that reinforces an emphasis on the largely secular identity promoted by the local council.

The Role of External Involvement in Identity Promotion

As was discussed in an earlier chapter, external actors often interfere during periods of internal strife. There are two means through which external influence can have an impact on the identity promotion efforts of domestic actors. The first is by providing material support to those actors who promote a particular identity, improving the likelihood that groups which espouse particular identities will survive and be capable of providing public goods to civilians. The second path to influence is through direct intervention, attacking those groups who promote particular identities. In the context of the Syrian conflict, many believe that Russia has targeted members of the moderate opposition, rather than the entity known as Da'esh or the Islamic State. There are indications that Idlib province as a whole and Ma'arat a-Nu'man in particular have experienced both types of external interference, which influenced the capacity of civilian groups to provide public goods and influence the salience of identities.

Ma'arat a-Nu'man's local council thanked a number of external donors for support. There seems to have been a possible preference for gifts from Syrian entities, but the council also thanked several foreign donors. The local council's Facebook page discusses efforts to set up a health center to be run by the Qatari Red Crescent with the cooperation of Turkey. In July 2015 there are several posts about the formation of the center and then about hiring opportunities. December 2, 2015 there is a post which mentions donors from

the United Arab Emirates. This post refers to unnamed private donors as no organization is mentioned and only a country of origin for the supporters is given. A Polish humanitarian organization was thanked on four occasions between July 2016 and January 2016, the Syrian regional program (which appears to be a part of USAID) is also thanked on four occasions between September 2015 and September 2016, and finally a British organization called Syria relief was thanked twice in December 2016. It is impossible to make confident assertions about the relative influence any of these donors may have had on the local council without having some sense of the amount of support any of these groups have granted. However, the fact that the local council obtained resources from a range of sources indicates that the influence of any one source of support was limited by the availability of resources from others.⁴⁷

Where the influence of external actors on the operations of civilian institutions could be most immediately and keenly felt was the destruction wrought upon Idlib province by the Russian air force. In opposition-held Syria, the influence of armed external actors has only varied temporally; every province and many provincial cities experienced bombing by Russia after became more directly involved in the conflict in September 2015. These airstrikes often targeted centers that successfully provided public goods, like hospitals. There have been several efforts to map airstrikes in Syria, including those by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and a Live U Map which draws primarily on social media sources to track events in Syria (<https://syria.liveuamap.com>). The maps, which are available on the ISW's website, make it clear that Idlib province as a whole was a regular target of Russian airstrikes, but these maps are not sufficiently fine-grained to provide

⁴⁷ It is likely that civilian actors have a wider set of potential sponsors than armed groups. A larger number of organizations are likely to support civilian institutions rather than armed actors due to the kinds of activities that they engage in and the relative ease of providing support to local civilian groups.

information on which cities and towns were hit or which institutions within these areas sustained damage. The Live U Map includes posts that mention airstrikes in Ma'arat a-Nu'man only days after direct Russian involvement in Syria began, with airstrikes reported on October 3, 4, 5, and 7, 2015. Since Russian involvement began at the end of September 2015 targets in the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man have included three schools (3 children were killed during one of these attacks), a market, the city's water supply, the headquarters of Division 13, and the local council's main office. The last of these, which reportedly took place on September 5, 2016 and was documented on the local council's own Facebook page on September 9th, did temporarily disrupt the local council's operations. The strikes against the local council in particular would lead us to expect the ability of the local council to dispense public goods and influence the salience of identities within the local population to diminish as a result of these airstrikes, particularly the strike on the council's main office late in 2016.

Protest Analysis

An evaluation of the identities employed during demonstrations in the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man largely confirms the array of identities that were laid out as available to the majority of the city's citizens, although certain potentially available identities have generally not been referred to in photos and videos of protests in the city. References to religious, national, and local identities all appeared consistently in the protests, although only a few protest events included any reference to ethnic groups. This implies that while an array of identities are referred to during protests, only a few are salient.

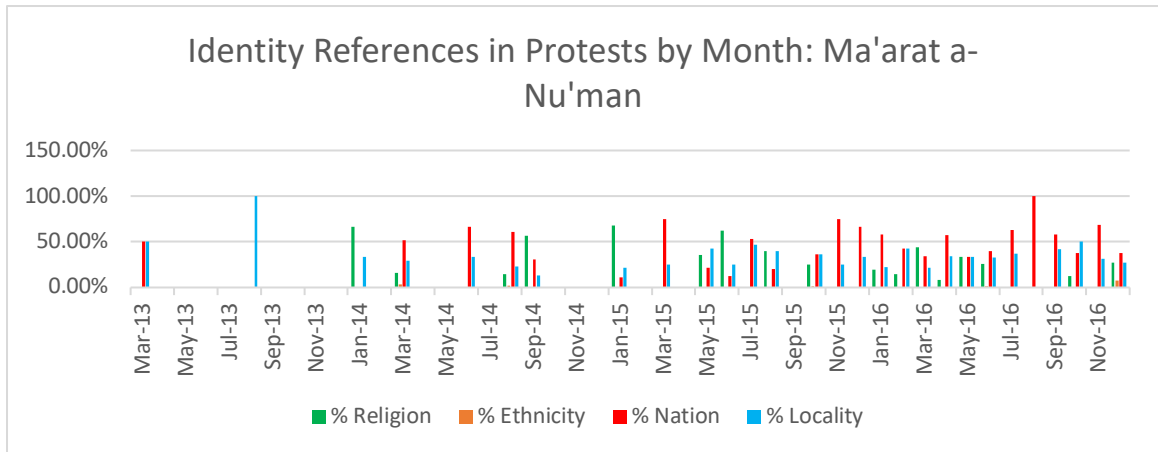


Figure 10 Identity References in Protests in Ma'arat a-Nu'man by month

Based on content analysis of photos and videos of protests, several trends are noticeable, particularly when we compare the protests of 2015 and 2016. The table below is an attempt to summarize all of the coding of protest speeches, chants, songs, and posters (both textual and visual elements). While the protest materials from 2015 incorporate references to identities at similar levels (particularly references to religious, national, and local identities) this parity was lost in 2016 when national and local identities come to the fore. It is also as part of the 2016 protests that a third type of flag appears. The section of flags marked as national/local are those national flags that have Division 13⁴⁸ written on them and the flags with the logo of Division 13, which incorporates the national flag

Identity References in Protests by Year: Ma'arat a-Nu'man				
	Religion Score	Ethnicity Score	Nation Score	Local Score
2013	0.00%	0.00%	40.00%	60.00%
2014	23.97%	1.65%	51.24%	23.14%
2015	33.93%	0.60%	31.55%	33.93%
2016	21.95%	1.36%	46.15%	30.54%

Figure 11 Identity References in Protests in Ma'arat a-Nu'man by Year

⁴⁸ Division 13 is a local armed group from Ma'arat a-Nu'man which will be discussed in detail later in the chapter. This armed group is not involved in governance provision and operates independently from local civilian rulers.

embraced by the 2011 uprising. Thus, these flags incorporate national and very local meanings.

Flags used at protests in Ma'arat a-Nu'man			
	National	Religious	Local/ National
2013	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%
2014	83.78%	16.22%	0.00%
2015	42.50%	57.50%	0.00%
2016	79.84%	4.94%	15.23%

Figure 12 Flags used in protests in Ma'arat a-Nu'man by year

Symbols that were associated with a Syrian national identity were common components of the protests held in Ma'arat a-Nu'man. For example, the flag associated with the national uprising was a consistent feature of demonstrations. Footage from a protest on April 1, 2016 includes the display of an exceptionally long flag banner, as does footage from a protest two weeks later (alMarra Today 2016). In some protest footage children wear versions of the flag as tunics, or, as in the case of a photo from a protest on March 26, 2016, the child at the center has flag face paint and wears a shawl with a representation of the flag (Syrian Revolution Network 3/26/2016). 2016 in particular features a number of large demonstrations in which national flags are seemingly everywhere, a shift from 2015 where the national flag was not nearly so prominent.

Another element which regularly emerges in records of demonstrations are expressions of continuing support for the larger revolution⁴⁹ as well as the free Syrian army. On January 1, 2016 a protest in the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man includes the chant "God is with you, Free Army." (alMarra Today January 15, 2016). A protest commemorating the anniversary of the Syrian uprising and to demonstrate the continuation of the revolution

⁴⁹ The term "revolution" is being used in this context to reflect the language used by participants in the civilian movement and armed opposition to the Syrian Ba'athist regime.

had a large turn out on March 4, 2016 (Syrian Revolution Network: March 4, 2016). A video of a protest held on April 15, 2016 also repeatedly refers to the “Syrian revolution”

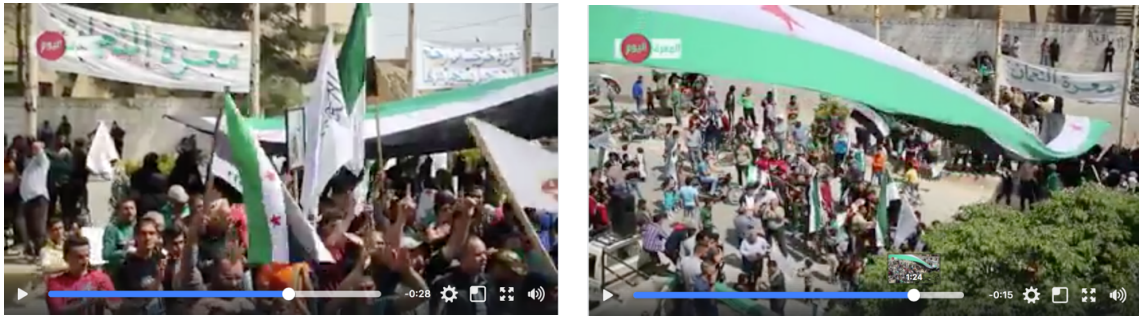


Figure 13 Still shots from video of protest held in Ma'arat a-Nu'man on April 15, 2016

in chants repeated by the crowd (AlMarra Today April 15, 2016).

In addition to appeals to a Syrian national identity, many of the protest recordings include the incorporation of religious language. This is particularly true of the chants, songs, and speeches at protests. A common chant that is heard at numerous protests is the chant of “No one is with us but you, oh God” as well as “Muhammad is above us.” One older gentleman who appears in a number of videos often calls on the audience to *takbir*, to proclaim that God is greatest, which is then followed by loud chants of “God is greatest.” While such chants continued as part of the protests in 2016, other kinds of religious reference, such as flags featuring the *shuhada*⁵⁰ and banners that include Qur’anic references, diminished in their frequency.

References to identities often do not occur in isolation, and thus many references to religion were combined with other identity references. For example, several recordings of demonstrations show the majority of flag-holders waving the national flag but with some participants waving religious banners or the banners of specific Islamist armed groups or coalitions. In footage from a demonstration on March 11, 2016 one individual in the crowd waves a black flag while surrounded by individuals bearing the black, white, and green

⁵⁰ There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Prophet of God

flag of the national uprising (Baladi News Network). In footage from August 3, 2015 a single demonstrator bears the flag of the Islamist armed coalition, Jaish al-Fath (Syrian Revolution Network, August 3, 2015). Footage from a protest on May 2, 2015 also shows a Jaish al-Fath flag and another Islamist flag in addition to a larger number of national flags, as is also the case for a demonstration on May 1, 2015 (Syrian Revolution Network May 2, 2015, Syrian Revolution Network May 1, 2015). These visual representations indicate that many participants favor a national identity in their efforts to visually legitimize their protests, although some participants favor bearing religious symbols. It also indicates that participants may bring what they wish to express themselves, that the organizers of the protests do not or cannot impose a uniformity of symbol usage.

A third, consistent component of the demonstrations was an emphasis on their local context. Many protests include a banner that bears the city's name. A large banner with the name of the city is shown behind the crowd in recordings from numerous protests, including those held on April 22, 2016, March 4, 2016, a photo from a protest held on January 15, 2016, at the end of a video on February 26, 2016, and in footage from a protests March 11, 2016 (AlMarra Today April 22, 2016, Syrian Revolution March 4, 2016, Syria Revolution Network January 2016, AlMarra Today February 2016, Baladi News-Network March 2016). These large banners ensure that any records of the demonstration will be associated with the city and display a level of local pride as a city in which the spirit of protest is carried on. In addition to the large banners which bear the city's name, it is common for the smaller posters held by individuals or small groups of demonstrators to also have the city's name. For example, a poster from December 24, 2016 has the name of the city on the bottom of the poster. This is a move that is seen on posters produced in other parts of the country, although the consistent appearance of an enormous banner with the

city's name, especially in later protests, is distinct from other protest footage analyzed in this project and may indicate an emphasis on place that is not present in all parts of Syria.

The text of the protests also refer to the local community. For example, one poster refers to a “we” which could be interpreted as national or local as the poster refers to the “united revolution” on the bottom of the poster as well as the city's name (Syrian Revolution Network December 24, 2016). While such vague uses of “we” were not coded due to the possibility of varying interpretation, there are a number of instances in which we was used in way that was potentially local. In addition, 2016 saw several explicit references to the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man in protest chants and songs. On June 3, 2016 a protest included a chant directed at the leader of Jabhat a-Nusra, “al-Golani... put away your weapons, the life of Ma'ara cannot be extinguished, your house of war will not take away this city of hope” (Syrian Revolution Network).

Another way in which demonstrators employed a local identity to legitimate their efforts was through visual appeals to local groups, such as the local armed group, Division 13. A couple of recordings from protests in April (2016) show individuals waving modified



Figure 14 Still shot from video of protest in Ma'arat a-Nu'man April 15, 2016

versions of the national flag. These flags have an additional white bar at the bottom on which is written “ferqa 13,” Division 13. Other flags in the footage show a white field with a logo at the center which

incorporates the national flag embraced by the opposition. The circular logo also says Division 13 in Arabic. The demonstration on April 15, while not a particularly large one based on the wider shots, does incorporate a number of the flags of the local armed group.

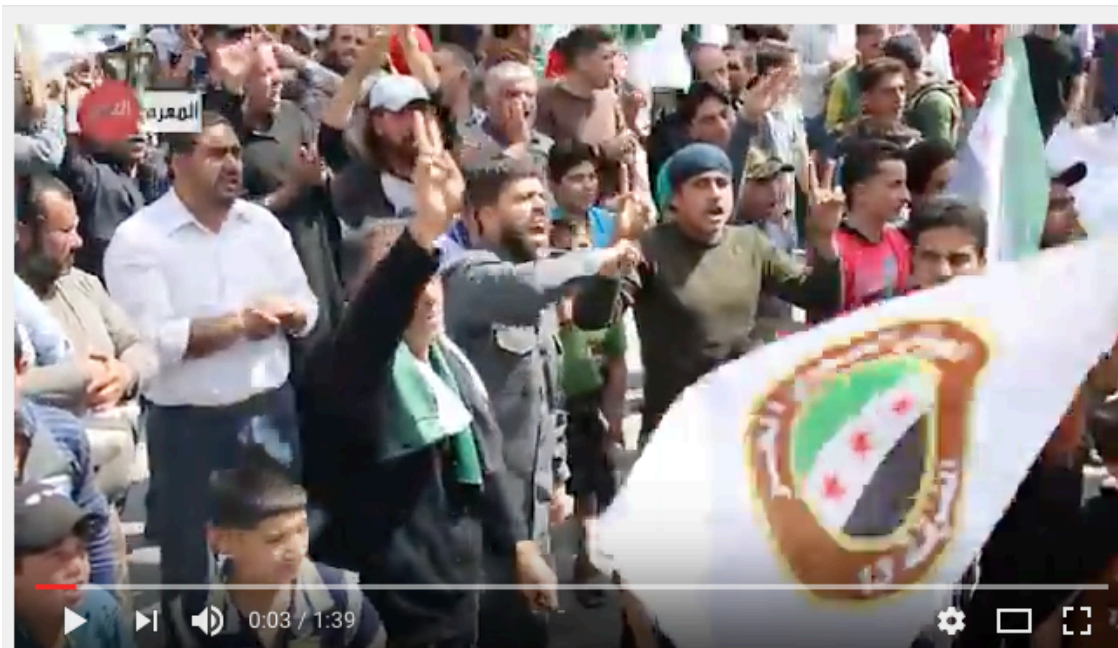


Figure 15 Still shot from video of protest in Ma'arat a-Nu'man April 15, 2016

Embracing the Local in the Opposition to Jabhat a-Nusra

The popular response in the city to actions taken by the Islamist armed group, formerly known as Jabhat a-Nusra, indicate that the local identity promoted by the local council is an identity that is also salient among members of the city's public. A significant objection locals had to the actions taken by Jaish al-Fatah's members had to do with Jaish al-Fatah's treatment of Division 13. Division 13 was a local armed group, supported by the Syrian National Council (Mahmoud 2016). By March 13, only two days after the protests previously discussed, it was reported that Division 13 had been driven from Ma'arat a-Nu'man (Wilkinson 2016). It was Jabhat a-Nusra and Jund al-Aqsa which worked together to capture members of Division 13 and seize control of bases held before the conflict between the groups began (Heller 2016). One civilian claimed that, "[Nusra] tried to come

up with some lie that the 13th Division attacked their bases and homes..._It's like claiming that Somalia invaded the United States" (Heller 2016).

Coverage of the protests indicate that it is in part the shared local identity possessed by Division 13 and city residents that made the dismissal of the local armed group an important point to protesters. A local participant in the demonstrations explained to a reporter the close sense of connection felt by citizens toward Division 13, "It's important to understand that the 13th Division is not like any rebel group in Idlib. It originated from Maarat al-Numan and its fighters are natives of the town. That's why any assault on them is an assault on the locals" (Mahmoud 2016). Demonstrators' calls included the disarmament of the Islamist groups and a transfer of all weapons to a local armed group, Division 13 (Mahmoud 2016). Others claim that in addition to Division 13's local character it was seen as a legitimate armed group, as an organization that was above-board and did not engage in the corruption that many combatants in the region have been accused of (Cambanis 2016). This coverage lends additional credence to the analysis of protest coverage, which suggests that local identity is salient among the population, although it is not the only identity which matters.

Responses to the Local Council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man's Facebook Posts

Another way of evaluating whether or not the efforts by the local council to promote a local identity have been successful is to look at the ways in which individuals have responded to the council's efforts via social media. This provides a tentative measure of whether or not the local council is deemed legitimate by those commenting and we can see if those who oppose the council do so by asserting an alternative identity. In particular, looking at an example of a post that asks the people of the city to contribute monetarily to service provision allows for an observance of the degree to which the local council is

considered legitimate, which is the objective of promoting an identity. The post is clear about the costs of providing garbage removal and the factors, including monthly wages, behind this calculation, and asks citizens to pay 200 Syrian pounds per house to assist in covering the cost (It also asks that citizens assist with city hygiene by throwing their trash into the designated bins). Responses to this post indicate varying attitudes toward the local council. While some responses indicate that the council and its actions are considered legitimate and as directives which should be followed, others indicate a more utilitarian attitude by the city's citizens. The first response which says "Let us see the garbage man first" indicates a utilitarian level of compliance. Some point to earlier difficulties with water access and are skeptical that paying the fee will yield the services promised. In these posts it is clear that the local council is not seen by all as an entity that should automatically be obeyed but should only be obeyed when services promised are provided. Here the challenges to the local council are not couched in identity terms but focus strictly on the delivery of services. The commenter does not question the council's identity promotion, questioning instead the council's ability to deliver the promised goods.

In order to evaluate popular perceptions of other local groups, the comments in response to a post by the local council about the local armed group, Division 13, is also considered. This post was selected because it involved two local organizations, the local armed group as well as the thankful local council. The post by the local council, which is an image of text, thanks Division 13 for providing generators during Ramadan (June 7, 2016). A quick perusal seems to indicate that most of those who commented on the post are locals, although some are from other areas in Syria. About half of the posts are brief expressions of agreement with the local council's statement, posting comments such as "God bless them [Division 13]." While many of the comments from local individuals are

positive, this is not uniform. For example, one comment says “*Haaj* liar,” although it is not entirely clear if this is directed toward the poster or the subject.⁵¹ Another individual who posted was critical of the lack of transparency through which generators were distributed and the emergence of conflicts between the owners of the generators and users. In this case, the local identity associated with Division 13 does not put the group entirely above reproach. As was the case with criticisms directed toward the local council, the focus is primarily procedural. Division 13 is not having its identity questioned. Instead, it is the way in which it tried to contribute to the provision of public goods that is criticized, with no national or supra-national identity incorporated in the critique.⁵²

Conclusion

This case has focused on an area in which civilian institutions played an essential role in service provision and governance for a city, and at specific times, for a larger area. The Idlib governorate council as well as the local council in the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān both primarily promoted a local, apparently civil identity. While there were sometimes appeals to a religious or national identity, for the most part the civilian institutions placed references to a local identity first. It is difficult to make confident assertions about the impact of this focus on a local identity on the population, but in looking at footage and photos of protests we do see increasing numbers of references to the city, the province, and locations within the province. Thus, it appears that the salience of a local identity increased during the period in question among the population of the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān.

⁵¹ *Haaj* is a title which is traditionally given to those who have undertaken the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca.

⁵² Interestingly, the same comment finishes with a remark that the individual only trusts the local council. This suggests that the support for civilian rule, in this case with a democratically elected council, is relatively consistent. Whether or not it is an Islamist or local armed group that is trying to increase its role in governance or goods provision, there appears to be a preference for local civil institutions.

The next chapter will explore a case in which armed groups have control, a *rebelocracy*. The greater influence of armed actors through a variety of institutions leads to a consistent promotion of identities across institutions. In addition, the identities promoted by armed groups are more revolutionary and present a stronger departure from the identities which were already generally salient in terms of their type or content. This will lend further strength to the claim that the strength of armed groups and their capacity to govern plays an important role in their ability to promote particular identities via institutions.

Chapter 4:

Rebelocracies: Identities and Institutions Under the Democratic Union Party and Islamic State

Introduction

This chapter continues to explore why various kinds of identities become salient following the failure or retreat of the state. Unlike the previous chapter, which looked at a case in which civilian actors built local institutions, this chapter looks at what takes place when armed groups govern. In the Syrian context, two organizations with armed wings emerged that successfully controlled territory and built an array of institutions: the group known as the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Islamic State (IS). These two groups fought each other on the battlefield and adopted apparently opposing positions in terms of ideology and identity and possessed significantly different objectives. While IS became known for its exclusionary embrace of a Salafist identity, the PYD stressed a pan-ethnic identity in which various ethnic were described as different components of a democratic and decentralized society. The groups overlapped geographically for a time, exchanging control over territory in northern and eastern Syria.⁵³ Both also engaged in an elaborate degree of institution building, resembling early states.

This chapter will begin with a brief discussion of the origin of these two groups before discussing the characteristics which make the institutional arrangements established by both groups *rebelocracies*. The third section will discuss the sources used for the content analysis conducted on materials produced by the PYD and several

⁵³ The geographical similarity affirms that armed groups cannot simply alter the identities they promote to appeal to different local populations. If armed groups simply adapted to the identities already salient among locals, then we would expect IS and the PYD to promote the same identities in the same area. However, this was very much not the case.

affiliated institutions. The fourth section discusses the identities promoted by IS and the PYD. Consistent with my theoretical argument, I find that in both *rebelocracies*, armed groups were able to promote an innovative identity, a departure from the norm in the areas in which they operated. In addition, they were able to promote their chosen identities consistently via numerous institutions. The fifth section discusses how the involvement of external actors helped and hindered both groups in their efforts to govern and promote the identities they espoused. The final section probes the possible efficacy of these identity appeals. Such evidence must be treated with particular caution in areas under rebel rule, to the ability of armed groups to limit public discourse through coercion.

Background

Although this chapter will focus on the Democratic Union Party (PYD), an organization established by Syria's Kurdish population, the group's origins lie across the border in Turkey. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was formed in 1984 and began a lengthy guerilla conflict against the Turkish state in pursuit of an independent Kurdish state (Spyer 2013). The PYD was established in Syria in 2003 after a diplomatic row led to Syria's expulsion of the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and the creation of a Syrian law which forbade the PKK from operating on Syrian soil. Like the PKK, the PYD is "secular, leftist, and quasi-Marxist" (Spyer 2013). Thus, the PYD (and, as will be discussed later, its armed wing) had roots that significantly predated the 2011 Syrian uprising.

During the Syrian uprising, control of the predominantly Kurdish areas of Syria was ceded with relatively little violence. Syrian security forces withdrew from northeastern Syria in July 2012 as regime forces were redeployed to fight rebel advances on the capital, Damascus, as well as Aleppo (Glioti 2013, Allsopp 2014: 213). However,

while the Syrian state gave up the majority of its control in the region it still maintained a limited institutional presence, unlike in other parts of the country from which the state was forced to retreat. The *mukhaberat*, or internal security agency, continued to operate in some cities that were largely controlled by Kurdish authorities (Allsopp 2014: 415). About 20% of the region's largest city, Qamishli, was controlled by the Syrian regime. While residents of the city largely avoided regime-controlled offices and institutions they did go to these offices to obtain services which Kurdish institutions could not initially provide, such as passport provision (Dettmer 2013). This relatively congenial relationship between the Syrian regime and Kurdish authorities as well as the relatively peaceful departure of regime forces led to a significantly lower level of damage to the existing infrastructure, which allowed people to build off of the existing infrastructure rather than starting completely from scratch (Leigh 2014). It was in the wake of the state's significant retreat that the PYD emerged as the dominant player in predominantly Kurdish parts of northern Syria (Allsopp 2014: 213).

Like the Democratic Union Party, the Islamic State's formation also predated the onset of Syria's conflict in 2011. Following the invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003, insurgency and civil strife became pervasive. The structure and function of the temporary central authority established by the U.S. politicized religious identities by making religiously-based patronage networks the means through which benefits were distributed (Kfir 2015: 239). It was in this context that al-Qaeda in Iraq was established by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and began to fight against both American forces as well as Iraq's Shiite community (Hanna 2016). In 2006 the group, known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), absorbed a smaller armed group, Jamaat Jaysh Ahl a-Sunnah wa-l-Jammah, run by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He would become ISI's leader in 2010 (Kfir 2015: 240-

241). Thus, like the PYD, the Islamic State's institutional origins preceded the retraction of the Syrian state. The group rejected nationalism, like the PYD, but unlike the PYD it embraced an exclusionary religious identity and used violence to dispatch those who did not abide by the group's interpretation of Sunni Islam (Kfir 2015: 240-241). This rejection of national borders and its ambitions to establish a Sunni Islamic political entity helped to place IS in a position to take advantage of the conflict which emerged across the border in Syria.

Meeting the Criteria for *Rebelocracies*

In order to be considered a *rebelocracy*, an armed group must govern, building the institutions which establish and enforce order. While civilians may still be active, their roles are limited (Arjona 2014). In many respects this institutional arrangement bears a similarity to early European states, in which competition with various societal actors constrained the power of emerging central governments (Wheeler 2011). In order to establish that the systems established by the PYD belong in this category I will discuss the development of the organization's armed wing as well as the other institutions established to provide governance. I will also outline the state building efforts by the armed group known as the Islamic State, which also bears similarities to early state building.

The Rebels of Rebelocracy

As was noted in the background section, the Democratic Union Party can trace its roots to the Kurdistan Workers' Party's armed opposition to the Turkish government. The Syrian political organization also possessed two armed components: The People's Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Protection Units (YPJ). According to the YPG's own website, the origins of the organization's armed wing go back to 2004. After protests

by Kurds in northern Syria were violently put down, armed groups were formed with the objective of protecting civilians against such attacks in the future (People's Defense Units). This would make the unofficial formation of the YPG almost contemporaneous with the establishment of the PYD (formed in 2004 and 2003 respectively). Officially, the YPG was created in 2011 and it seems to be at this point that it began to coalesce into a significant and unified force (Lund 2013, People's Defense Units). It was soon followed by the formation of the YPJ. These groups functioned essentially as the armed wing of the PYD (Drott 2014).⁵⁴

In its effort to include all "components" of society, the PYD also established or partnered with non-Kurdish armed groups. For example, in 2016 it was announced that the YPJ would be expanding its trainee pool to include Arab and Yazidi women. By the end of 2016 two units comprised entirely of Arab women were in the field (McKernan 2017). In addition to establishing units of Arab women, the PYD cooperated with the Syriacs, a Christian ethnic minority. Pro-PYD Syriac Christians established the Syriac Military Council, a group that was allied with the PYD (Drott 2014). The formation of Arab units in the YPJ and collaboration with Syriac units fits with the PYD's efforts to emphasize a pan-ethnic identity, one in which all ethnic and religious communities were officially considered equally important aspects of society. In 2015 this effort to collaborate with non-Kurdish armed actors was expanded. In October of that year the Syrian Democratic Forces, an umbrella group, was established with encouragement from the United States. This entity was intended to bring the YPG and YPJ together with other, smaller Christian and Arab armed groups operating in northern Syria (Gutman 2017,

⁵⁴ In June 2014 YPF service became compulsory for the first time (Gutman 2017) and required service was later enshrined in the constitution for the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (Darwish 2016). There have been accusations that this compulsory conscription has been coercive, and that it damaged the popularity and legitimacy of the PYD and YPG in some areas (Gutman 2017).

Khodr 2015). Thus, the existence of the YPG and YPJ and the formation and partnership with non-Kurdish armed groups indicates that the areas controlled by the PYD met the armed group criteria of *rebelocracy*.

While the PYD may have started as a political organization before adding an armed component, the Islamic State was initially an armed insurgent group. After the Iraqi national army was disbanded by the United States in 2003, many unemployed soldiers and officers went on to join insurgent groups, including IS (Hanna 2016). In many ways, IS borrowed from the experience these soldiers acquired under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, organizing a network in which there were multiple military commanders who would engage in an array of violent acts (Reuter 2015). In addition to using violence and intelligence collection to assert control over parts of Syria, IS brought in recruits from abroad. The “Security” branch of IS was in charge of establishing training camps for foreign fighters in out-of-the-way locations in Syria (Speckhard and Yayla 2017). Since these fighters lacked local ties, it was believed that they would be more reliable, and could be depended upon to act on orders without question (Ibid). Some were even recruited from Jabhat a-Nusra (Lister 2015: 134). This preference for foreign fighters was apparently abandoned as IS instituted conscription starting in early 2015 (Cockburn 2015).⁵⁵ The existence of an organized group of fighters and one which had organizations dedicated to recruitment and training, clearly puts the Islamic State into the *rebelocracy* category.

Both the PYD and IS clearly had armed wings and therefore clearly fit the rebel part of the *rebelocracy*. As was previously mentioned, not all armed groups are capable

⁵⁵ The decision by IS and the PYD to institute compulsory military service indicates the degree of coercive capacity each attained in their respective areas.

of establishing rebel governance. To do this, armed groups must develop and control a set of essential institutions. The next section will discuss the institutions which the PYD and IS established to make rules, enforce rules, and settle disputes.

The Provision of Governance

The second aspect of a *rebelocracy* is the creation of governing institutions as well as an armed wing by the same actor. The PYD's governing institutions were modeled upon the writings of the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. Ocalan was a proponent of a Kurdish nation state until his capture by the Turkish government in 1999. While in prison, his political ideas shifted significantly and he began to focus on the pursuit of Kurdish autonomy within existing state structures (Drott 2014). His works called for a rejection of a centralizing nation state and the pursuit of a decentralized, democratic system in which all peoples would have a right to make decisions for their own communities (Ibid).

Ocalan's vision was what the PYD attempted to create through the establishment of local councils and committees (Wilkofsky 2018). A key component of this has been the formation of a Mala Gel (which means "People's House" in Kurdish) in each community. Each Mala Gel had members who were democratically elected and was comprised of a number of committees, including a reconciliation committee for arbitrating disputes and committees dedicated to the provision of various public goods (Damascus Bureau 2013). While all members of the community were welcome to be involved in the Mala Gel, they remained connected to the PYD. For example, in 2012 when the town of Derik's Mala Gel opened, 20 of the 30 members of the organization were also PYD members (Morris 2012). Critics of the system argued that these institutions became a means through which the PYD promoted its ideological program,

by providing propaganda alongside public goods (Wilkofsky 2018). At least some Mala Gel did not hide their connection to the PYD. In several Mala Gel branches in Qamishli a flag that included Ocalan's face was flown (Damascus Bureau 2013). In addition, the Mala Gels received financial support for their endeavors from the larger Movement for a Democratic Society (Tev-Dem), an umbrella organization of political parties in which the PYD was the major player. Some claim that Tev-Dem possessed the real decision-making power at the community level (Wilkofsky 2018).

In addition to these local institutions, the PYD also engaged in institution building at the regional (canton) level and for the entirety of northern Syria. In January 2014 it was announced that the PYD and its allies had formed a temporary form of self-administration in the three Kurdish cantons of northern Syria (Jazira, 'Afrin, and Kobani/Ain al-'Arab) in which each canton initially ran its own affairs (Drott 2014 "Apoism"). In December 2015 the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) was created, with the PYD playing a significant role (Khodr 2015). In March 2016 it was announced that a federal system, the Democratic Federal System for Rojava-Northern Syria was going to be formed. The plan was to use the following six months to form an elected federal body and to write up a "social contract," in other words, a constitution (Arafat 2016).⁵⁶ The constitution's preamble was a clear attempt to emphasize the pan-ethnic identity which the PYD embraced, "We, the people of Rojava: Northern Syria, Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Turkmen, Armenians, Chechens, Circassians, Muslims, Christians, Yazidis and various others, are aware that the nation-state has brought our people problems, acute crises and

⁵⁶ The federal system outlined in the constitution was modeled upon Switzerland's canton system (Darwish 2016).

tragedies” (Darwish 2016).⁵⁷ The constitutional document of the Federal System and other institutions developed by the PYD reflected the party’s emphasis on ethnic identity.

Like the PYD, the Islamic State also engaged in the formation of governing institutions. While the PYD emphasized a bottom-up governance structure, the Islamic State attempted to create a clear hierarchy. Religion played an important role in its effort to legitimate this hierarchy. At the top was Abu Bakr al-Bahgdadi who claimed to of Quraysh lineage. The Quraysh was the tribe to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged and membership is largely seen as a pedigree necessary to claiming the title of Caliph (Zelin 2014). Underneath al-Bahgdadi was a *shura* council (Thompson and Shubert 2015). *Shura* means consultation in Arabic and was initially used to describe the group which elected Umar, the second caliph. The term is used in the Qur’an’s 42nd sura when the believers are told to use consultation to settle matters. Subsequently *shura* was used to describe groups which advised rulers or, in the last hundred years or so, as the name for parliamentary bodies. In addition to the *shura* council, there was also one deputy which was in charge of the group’s territory within Iraq and another deputy for Syria. These individuals were placed above further geographic subdivisions, whose leadership oversaw local councils (Thompson and Shubert 2015). Thus, the Islamic State developed an array of governing institutions designed to operate at the local, regional, and supranational levels.

The Islamic State, like the PYD also drafted a document that was essentially a constitution. In January 2016 the organization published a *watha’iq al-madina*, “documents of the city,” which outlined the subjects’ obligations to the state as well as

⁵⁷ This political vision was adopted by some of the minority communities living in northern Syria. The Syriac Union Party worked with the PYD as it strove to build governing institutions and built a number of organizations modeled upon the PYD’s, including its armed wing, the Syriac Military Council (Drott 2014).

the obligations of the Islamic State to those living under its rule. Again, the name of the document may be a reference to the early Muslim community, as the Prophet Muhammad created a document by the same name in 622 in the city of Medina (Reykin 2016: 14). The first article of the document reaffirms the Islamic State's chosen identity. It states, "We, the soldiers of the Islamic State, took our responsibility to restore the glories of the Islamic caliphate and to push injustice and fear from our people and Muslim brothers."⁵⁸ Here the provision of security and safety to those who identify as Muslims are among the group's primary responsibilities – but the contract applied only to "true" (Sunni) Muslims. Those who IS considers people of the book had to abide by different rules and were only accorded some guarantees if they sign a *jizyah* contract (Ibid: 16). Under IS's system, Christians were not allowed to possess weapons, eat pork in public, drink wine in public, repair or build churches, and could not conduct religious ceremonies outdoors (Reykin 2016: 16). Thus, like the PYD, the Islamic State also wrote a constitution and one which emphasized the identity IS strove to promote.

The Formation of Legal Order

In addition to establishing institutions for writing rules and making decisions, the PYD formed institutions designed to enforce those rules and to settle disputes. The institutions established by the PYD included several mechanisms for resolving conflicts. One of these was the peace councils, which were intended to handle relatively minor problems. These courts dealt with disputes over land ownership and divorce (Drott 2014). As mentioned previously, the Mala Gels also had committees dedicated to conflict arbitration (Damascus Bureau 2013). The Tev-Dem website described local "committees of reconciliation" that sought to resolve conflicts at the village or neighborhood level

⁵⁸ Translated by the author.

(Tev-Dem). While these bodies dealt with local and generally less severe matters, more serious offenses and crimes were handled by the People's Court, which was established on March 18, 2012 (Drott 2014, Tev-Dem). The members of the People's Court regularly met with members of local arbitration groups to ensure that everyone was kept up to date on decisions (Drott 2014). In addition, the local arbitration groups could refer cases to the People's Court if it was unable to reach a solution (Tev-Dem). Thus the PYD's institution building included entities dedicated to dispute settlement, a key component of *rebelocracies* according to Arjona (2014).

Respect for tradition and the application of ethnically-differentiated customs and traditions is one way in which institutions dedicated to justice and arbitration both reflected the PYD's promotion of ethnic identities and reified these identities in the legal sphere. The leader of the reconciliation committee for one of Qamishli's six Mala Gel branches, Shukri Abu Idris, stated, "We solve conflicts between people according to the moral laws of society, our conscience, customs, traditions, and the principles of human justice," (Damascus Bureau 2013). The Movement for a Democratic Society (Dem-Tev)'s webpage, which describes the people's court, says it was established "in order to create and enforce legislative and legal institutions⁵⁹ that rule together and is applied to all components of the people." In this phrase the use of *mukawwinat*, components, is the most telling. It clearly emphasizes the existence of different ethnic or religious communities within the area under the court's control. The phrase not only legitimates the court as the adjudicator for "the people" but also attempts to legitimate the division of

⁵⁹ The term used here is *jihad*, which can be literally translated as side but is also used as an ambiguous term for an institution, authority, representative, etc.

“the people” into constitutive parts.⁶⁰ Here the emphasis on ethnicity held by the PYD is clearly expressed in the institutions established to settle disputes.

This emphasis on ethnic identities also extended to the police forces. The *Asayish* (Kurdish Security forces) were a police force controlled by the PYD (Glioti 2013).⁶¹ Another police force was formed to police the Syriac Christian community of the PYD-controlled areas and was named *Sutoro*, a word which means “security” in Syriac just as *Asayish* means “security” in Kurmanji (Drott “Syriac-Kurdish Cooperation in northeast Syria” 2014). The Kurdish and Syriac units worked cooperatively as a single police force, wearing uniforms that only differed by a badge (Ibid.). Thus, the PYD built security forces and courts which emphasized an ethnic identity.

Like the PYD, the Islamic State built a legal system which promoted the armed group’s identity. Establishing courts was one of the first acts which IS did after taking new territory, and their efforts to settle disputes improved the group’s legitimacy in the eyes of locals (Reykin 2016: 8, 30). When the group seized the Syrian city of Raqqa, it was announced that the residents had been freed “from the rotten shackles of positive law,” those laws which were made by humans and human institutions rather than the divine (Ibid: 12). Behaviors like smoking were made illegal as they could “distract people from prayer” (Cockburn 2015). It was not within the caliph’s purview to make new laws, only to enforce the divine laws already set forth. To create rules on matters not dealt with in scripture (such as traffic regulations) IS invoked *siyaasa shar’iyya*, “religiously legitimate governance.” According to this principal, those who possess legitimate

⁶⁰ This respect for tradition even led one Syriac man to attempt to have a ruling overturned which had declared him guilty of inciting his son to kill his daughter for marrying a Sunni Kurd. The court convinced the Kurdish groom to drop charges against his bride’s father (Damascus Bureau 2013).

⁶¹ Officially, the *Asayish* was controlled by the Supreme Committee, an entity comprised of the PYD and its main Kurdish rival, the Kurdish National Council (Glioti 2013).

authority may make new rules on matters not dealt with in the Qur'an, as long as those rules are in the interest of the entire Muslim *umma* and are consistent with Islamic law (Reykin 2016: 13).

Like the PYD, the Islamic State also established institutions to enforce the laws it had written. Two police forces were created by IS. The *a-shurta al-islamiyya* dealt with the public order matters generally associated with police work. The second, *hisba*, was focused on moral infractions (Reykin 2016: 25). The members of the *hisba* would stop civilians and IS fighters to check their cellphones for forbidden content (Speckhard and Yayla 2017). Enforcement of the laws varied. In cities in which IS was able to exert high levels of control, such as Mosul, citations were handed out to anyone caught violating the law (Callimachi and Rossback 2018). In addition to having police, the Islamic State also created prisons. In 2013 Amnesty International claimed that there were at least seven prisons in the Aleppo and Raqqa governorates (Reykin 2016: 27). Religious education was used as a sort of rehabilitation plan for prisoners (Ibid). Thus, the Islamic State established a variety of institutions to write rules and enforce these rules, providing limited governance in the areas it controlled. Thus, IS created institutions for writing laws and institutions for enforcing these laws.

While in many respects these groups could not seem more different, the PYD and IS shared a number of important characteristics. Both groups had significant armed wings which allowed them to expand their geographic reach and to establish significant levels of control over some parts of their territory. Both groups engaged in significant institution building, creating governing structures and legal systems. Like early European states, these institutions did not emerge fully formed, but were added onto and changed over time. Therefore, both groups established *rebelocracies* during the Syrian conflict. These

institutions were designed in a way that is intended to promote the identity each of these armed groups has chosen to espouse. The PYD institutionalized its emphasis on ethnic identities by creating parallel institutions or organizations for the various ethnic communities that lived in the territories under its control. The Islamic state promoted a religious identity through the formation of institutions it claimed to have modeled after the early Muslim community and through its adherence to a strict version of Islamic law. The next section will discuss the ways in which these identities are reflected in the discourse produced by these actors.

In both of these cases, the same entity established armed wings as well as governing institutions. This arrangement is more coherent than a mixed case. In a mixed case, distinct armed groups and civilian actors both strove to build governing institutions, often competing against each other for control. Under the PYD and the Islamic State a single entity established both armed wings as well as governing institutions in an arrangement similar to proto states. They also bear a similarity to proto states with their formation and efforts to enforce legal codes.

Source Material

As was the case in the previous chapter, this case study also uses the analysis of social media to evaluate the promotion of various identities. In this case study I have focused my discourse analysis on institutions created by or affiliated with the Kurdish PYD. This decision was made primarily in response to the availability of information produced by local institutions. While many institutions established by the PYD created social media accounts (as was true elsewhere in Syria) such accounts are not reliably available for institutions established by the Islamic State, in large part due to the efforts by various state governments to shut down social media accounts created by the group.

However, there have been materials other than Facebook pages which provide us with a picture of what identity promotion looked like online and on the ground under the Islamic State and which have been discussed at length by a number of journalists and social scientists.

Several sources were used to systematically analyze identity promotion by the Democratic Union Party. First, four institutions were selected and the content of their Facebook accounts were subjected to content analysis, as was conducted in the previous chapter. I selected four institutions, two of which operated in the larger Rojava/Northern Syria territory and two which functioned at the level of one of the three cantons: the Jazira Canton. At the Rojava-wide level I looked at the PYD Rojava Arabic Facebook page, which was created in May 2014 and had 1788 posts by the end of 2016. The decision to look at the Arabic language version of the page was motivated chiefly by my own language skills as well as an interest in how the PYD promoted itself to an audience comprised not only of Kurdish speakers.⁶² The second institution selected was the Syrian Democratic Council, the political wing of the Syrian Democratic Forces. The Facebook page for this entity was created in November 2016 so only 76 posts were created by the end of that year. At the canton level, I analyzed the Movement for a Democratic Society (Tev-Dem)'s Public Relations Office in the Jazira Canton which started its Facebook Page in June 2016 and had 97 posts by the end of the year. The Internal Body for the Jazira Canton was the second canton-level institution. This group created their Facebook page in August 2014 and had produced 1343 posts by the end of 2016.

⁶² As a Kurdish organization I would expect that greater efforts would need to be expended to convince non-Kurds of the PYD's legitimacy. The PYD and a number of other institutions (although not all) produced distinct Arabic and Kurdish language Facebook pages. Some local institutions posted in both languages, in which case the Arabic posts were the focus.

There are a few features of these pages that are noteworthy. Some of these pages did have posts in multiple languages. For the purpose of the content analysis, I focused on Arabic language posts. Since the Jazira canton includes a significant Arab population, this did not dramatically restrict the number of posts that could be analyzed.⁶³ As was true in the other cases, the materials were subjected to several types of content analysis, including a coding scheme, automated word count analysis, and qualitative analysis which considered how terms were used as well as the logos of the institutions. The websites of some of these institutions were also consulted for supplemental information.

Identity Promotion by PYD Institutions

Before launching into a discussion on which identities the PYD promoted in its discourse, it is imperative to be clear about the repertoire of identities available to

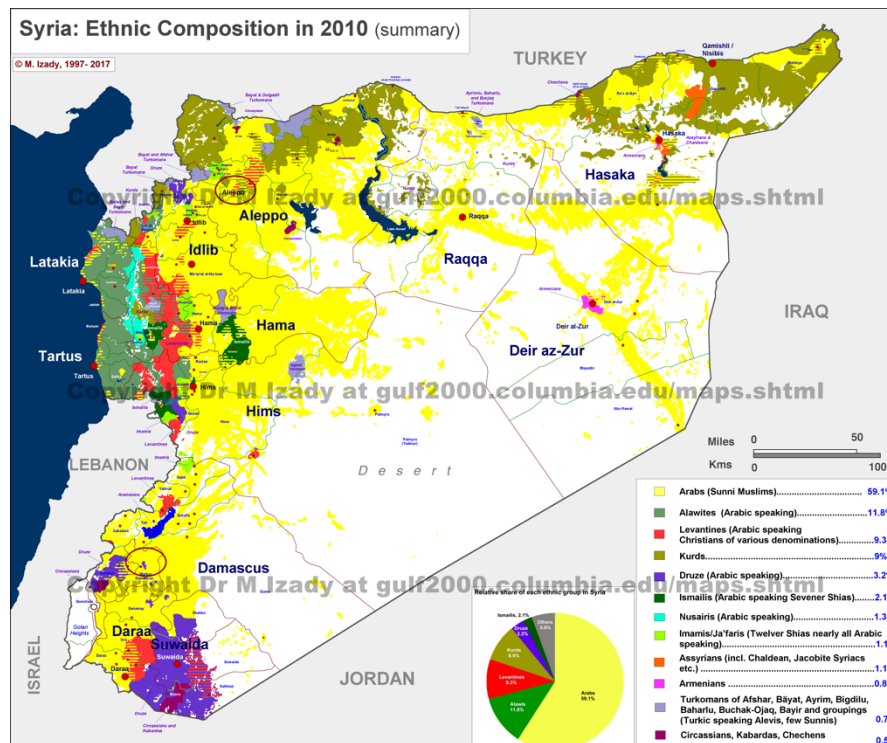


Figure 16 Map of the Ethnic Composition of Syria in 2010 (Izady 2010)

individuals living in northern Syria. Some of the identities available to individuals were related to place (the city or village in which they reside, for example) while

⁶³ The coding scheme was also somewhat adjusted to better fit the discourse used by the PYD and the identities available on the ground. For example, the word “component” was added as a term which denotes ethnicity as this word is often used to describe different ethnic groups.

others are tied to more abstract and larger understandings of space (such as Syria). While the other geographic locations studied in this project are more ethnically and religiously uniform, northern Syria is far more diverse. Ethnic groups residing in areas that the PYD controlled included not only Kurds and Arabs but also Turkmen, Circassians, and Syriacs. In terms of religious groups, residents of the area are Christian, Muslim, Alawite, Alevi, and more. The Jazira Canton was in Syria's northeast corner and included the cities of Hasakeh and Qamishli. While groups moved during the Syrian conflict, Assyrian, Arab, and Kurdish communities continued to live in this area under PYD control. Thus, a larger range of identities were available to local actors as they assembled their identity repertoires.⁶⁴

Due to the preponderance of Kurds in the area and the PYD's own origins in the Kurdish independence movement, we have to consider the possibility that different types of Kurdish identity could exist. One may think of one's Kurdish identity as an ethnic identity similar to the ethnic identities of other groups living within a larger society. Alternatively, some possess a Kurdish national identity and think of their people as a thwarted national community. These perspectives are not necessarily exclusive, and one's own understanding of Kurdishness may change. Thus, in the analysis, I attempt to parse out explicit references to Kurdish nationalism or aspirations for an independent Kurdistan from those references to Kurdishness that refer to the Kurds as an ethnic group that is part of a larger, multi-ethnic society.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ There are limits of course. A group of predominantly Syriac Christians would not incorporate a Muslim identity in its repertoire, for example. In addition, the costs of starting organizationally from scratch would make it more likely that actors would include identities in their repertoires that had been aspects of pre-conflict institutions if such entities existed (Weinstein 2007).

⁶⁵ This was not necessary in the other cases as references to Arab ethnic identity were relatively scant and appeals to an Arab national identity were non-existent. Considering the longstanding connection between Arab nationalism and Ba'thism, that this identity choice would be eschewed by those opposing the Ba'thist regime is unsurprising.

Rojava-Level Institutions: The PYD and the Syrian Democratic Council

Ethnic identities proved to be among the most prominent identities referenced on the PYD's Arabic page. On the page two terms are used to refer to ethnic and religious groups, although they do so without using "ethnicity" or "sect." One of the words which is consistently used on the PYD Facebook page is *mukawwan* or the plural *mukawwanat*. Component(s) appears on the Facebook page 144 times and often in contexts such as "all components of the society" or "the tens of components of the people," or "our Kurdish people and all the components of Rojava." The use of components implies that the myriad of ethnic and religious groups of northern Syria should each be accorded a similar level of respect that all function as parts of a social whole. The emphasis on "Our Kurdish people" as the first component and presumably the ethnicity shared with the reader emphasizes a Kurdish identity, but one that emphasizes Kurds as one ethnic group within the community, rather than as distinct groups which should have its own nation state.

Another term that appears over 70 times is *shu'ub*, peoples. While it was not incorporated as a term which relates to ethnicity in the coding scheme, it is generally used to refer to the various ethnic and religious communities living in northern Syria. A post from October 5, 2014 describes how it was, "the Kurdish people with the rest of the religious and national minorities must take quick steps to avoid the spread of sectarian war...since the building of the protection units of Kurdish, Arab, and Christian women and men they took on the task of protecting the area and all the peoples (*shu'ub*) and minorities that live in the Kurdish areas..." (PYD Rojava). While the degree to which

this communal egalitarianism is put into practice is debatable, it is clear that at a discursive level this is the vision of ethnic identity which the PYD labored to promote.⁶⁶

The page also makes numerous references to specific ethnic groups. It is not surprising that Kurds are brought up the most frequently, with permutations of Kurd (Kurd, Kurdish, etc.) appearing 954 times⁶⁷ on the PYD’s Facebook page. Among the groups brought up repeatedly in the posts is the Yezidis, a Kurmanji speaking minority group. A post on June 17, 2014 describes a protest held in Afrin and organized by the Tev-Dem. The protest was intended to express outrage regarding the massacre of Kurdish Yezidis in “southern Kurdistan” (PYD Rojava). The decision to claim the Yezidis as part

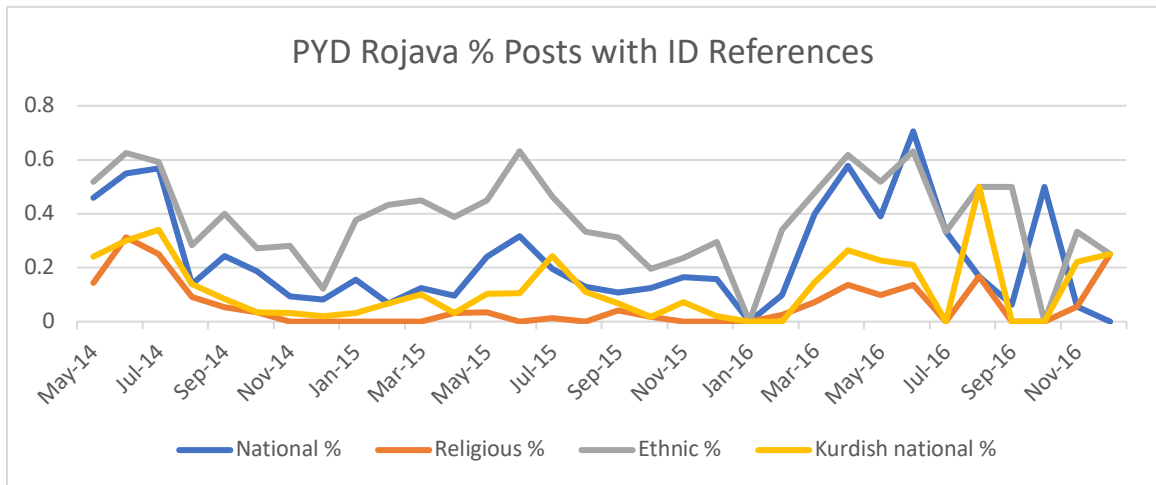


Figure 17 Identity References by the PYD Rojava Facebook Account

of the Kurdish ethnic group is a noteworthy discursive choice since whether or not the Yezidis are Kurds is an issue of much debate within the Yezidi community as well as the wider Kurdish community (UNHCR 2007: 76). Not all references to the Yazidis by the

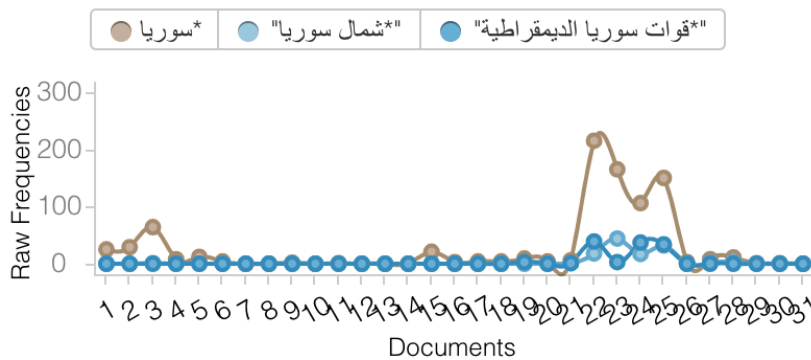
⁶⁶ While the PYD uses terms like *shu'ub* (peoples) and *mukawwinat* (components) to refer to minority groups like the Syrians which are frequently referred to as ethnic and religious groups. However, the language used by the PYD is staunchly secular. Although there are references to respecting traditions observed by different groups they are described as group norms or customs, not as religious observance. While references to ethnicity and religion sometimes follow similar trends they only do so when identity appeals in general increase. In addition, references to ethnicity are far more common than references to religion.

⁶⁷ This count does not include “Kurdistan” which appears 653 times.

PYD page refer to them explicitly as Kurds, however. A post from June 24, 2016 discusses IS's actions against a variety of Kurdish villages. Later in the post it claims that IS wished to repeat the massacres and abductions it had previously inflicted upon the Yezidi community (PYD Rojava). In this later post they are therefore possibly being treated in this instance as a distinct ethnic group.

Other minority groups are also explicitly mentioned in the PYD's posts. On June 16, 2016 the party posted a story titled, "Alawites participate in liberation campaign for Manbij." The story goes on to discuss the involvement of young Alawite men fighting to free the city of Manbij in Aleppo governorate from IS control. They even quote an Alawite fighter who reportedly says, "Now we are going to liberate the components of the city of Manbij from the Da'esh mercenaries. I am very happy because I am fighting against the mercenaries beside my Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen, and Armenian brothers" (PYD Rojava). It is impossible to verify the veracity of this quote. However, it is possible that the similarity of this soldier's language to the PYD's discourse is a result of the YPG's ideological training and may be what a soldier actually said. In this example we see the PYD's language of ethnicity which is found elsewhere in the discourse produced by the group attributed to a member of another ethnic minority. The emphasis on the speaker's position as an Alawite is clearly intended to show the acceptance of the PYD's identity promotion by a non-Kurd, increasing the message's legitimacy in the eyes of other non-Kurds.

The other identity which appeared most consistently in the coding scheme was a Syrian national identity. Forms of Syria (Syria, Syrian, Syrians, etc.) was the most popular word to appear on the PYD Rojava page, appearing 1666 times. As can be seen in figure 17, the references to Syria are not consistent. There are several potential and interesting explanations for the shift which takes place in 2016, in which references to a Syrian national identity attain greater parity with references to ethnic identities. One source of this change may be institutional. As was previously mentioned, it was in December 2015 that the political wing of the Syrian Democratic Forces, the Syrian



From left to right: Syria, North Syria, Syrian Democratic Forces
 Figure 18 Frequency of the appearance of the terms "Syria," "North Syria," and "Syrian Democratic Forces" on the PYD Rojava Facebook Page

Democratic Council, was formed. While the YPG and PYD were heavily involved in both entities, the Syrian Democratic umbrella was intended

to draw in a variety of groups, including those comprised of Arabs and Christians. This also appears to mark an important expansion in the PYD's interests beyond those areas in which Kurds were a majority of the population. Another significant institutional change was the March 2016 establishment of the Democratic Federal System for Rojava-Northern Syria. The phrase "northern Syria" as well as references to the Syrian democratic forces do account for a portion but not all of the uptick in references to Syria. Figure 18 shows the raw frequencies of references to northern Syria, the Syrian democratic forces, and Syria.

This shift may also be indicative of a change in the group’s capacity and objectives changing its identity repertoire. The clearest illustration of this shift in goals and ensuing shifts in identity repertoire can be seen in changes to the name of the Democratic Federal System for Rojava-Northern Syria. In December 2016 rojava was dropped from the name of the fledgling federal system. Rojava (“West” in Kurmanji) is used to refer to Western Kurdistan, or the western part of a potential independent Kurdish state. The use of Rojava to refer to northern Syria emphasized the area’s Kurdish character and majority Kurdish population. The decision was officially motivated by an interest in expanding the entity’s reach into the predominantly Arab governorates of Deir az-Zor and Raqqa (Arafat 2016). In this instance, the increase in the PYD’s capacity (in part thanks to external support) led to a shift in the organization’s goals, its territorial aspirations. This shift in goals apparently influenced the group’s identity repertoire, leading it to make efforts to emphasize the pan-ethnic and Syrian character of the PYD and check its emphasis on the group’s Kurdishness. This shift in territorial aspirations that led to a rebranding of the Federal System may also explain a shift in the identity repertoire displayed by other PYD-affiliated institutions.

This combination of ethnic and Syrian national identities is also reflected by the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC)’s Facebook page. With only a few months of posts to draw upon it is difficult to draw strong conclusions. We do see some parallels to the

Identity References by the Syrian Democratic Council				
	National	Religious	Ethnic	Kurdish National
total	68	8	39	4

Figure 19 Identity References by the Syrian Democratic Council

language used in the PYD page when it comes to ethnicity. For example, a post on September 17, 2016 refers to a list of principles for the Syrian Democratic

Council, first of which is “It is a national, democratic, Syrian, political project to include

all of the societal components and political entities...” (SDC Facebook). In this case, the SDC page reflects use of “societal components” found in posts produced by the PYD. In addition to the use of the word “component” specific mention is made of various ethnic groups. An update on a meeting between the President of the Syrian Democratic Council and the leaders of several political parties summarizes a statement made by the council’s president. In this paraphrased statement she asserts that it is the Council’s belief that a solution to the Syrian crisis would be, “...based upon the brotherhood of all peoples and coexistence of Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, and Turkmen...” (SDC 9/17/2016). Thus, there are significant parallels in the discourse surrounding ethnicity produced by the SDC and PYD.

There are, however, significant differences worth noting. While some form of “Kurd” was among the most frequently used terms on the PYD page, it was not among the top 15 most frequently cited words on the SDC page (the details regarding word count can be found in the appendix). In addition, as indicated by the coding scheme, references to a national identity are more common than references to ethnic identity. Forms of the word “Syria” are the most frequently used on the SDC’s Facebook page. Some posts described events at which the SDC apparently attempts to speak for “the Syrian people” sometimes to an international audience at meetings abroad. Many posts refer to meetings held between the SDC’s leadership and leaders from other countries or meetings held abroad to discuss Syria’s future and potential political resolutions to the conflict. Other statements appear to be more blatant appeals to Syrian nationalism. A post from March 3, 2016 states, “The Syrian Democratic Forces continue to liberate this Syrian land from the clutches of terrorists and extremists and their supporters” (SDC Facebook).

While the identity is more national, the political objectives remain similar to that of the PYD, as the SDC called for a decentralized democracy (SDC 3/3/2016). The SDC pushed for a “decentralized, pluralistic” democratic system as a solution for Syria at a conference in Geneva in 2016 (1/26/2016 SDC). This blend indicates that the PYD and its emphasis on an ethnic identity and desire for democratic self-rule are present in the SDC discourse. However, the SDC was the political wing of an umbrella entity dedicated to bringing together a variety of Syrian armed groups. While the PYD’s pan-ethnic identity may have appealed to some of those groups, others (such as the Army of Revolution) desired a Syrian national revolution. As the *rebelocracy* expanded its physical reach it shifted to embrace an identity that would appeal to those residing in territory that had been more recently acquired and could yet be attained. In this case, changes in the PYD’s capacity expanded its goals, which shifted its identity repertoire. The newer SDC, with less historical baggage than the PYD, was able to shift to a more national identity, although it did not depart from the PYD’s preferred identity entirely.

This combination of identities is also evinced in the logo chosen for the Syrian Democratic Council. There are two particular features that emphasized the group’s



Figure 20 Logo of the Syrian Democratic Council

connection to the PYD and its ethnic identity. The first is the colors which appear in the logo, the same colors that appear in the logo of the PYD and the Kurdish flag, which includes a tricolor of yellow, red, and green. The second significant feature is the three scripts and three languages which appear on the council’s logo: Arabic, Kurdish, and Syriac. By doing

so the logo is referring to three ethnic communities and visually portraying them as equals. The most clearly national element is the map of the Syrian state at the logo’s

center. Interestingly, this nation symbol is dramatically bifurcated. Northeastern Syria, which contains two of the three Kurdish cantons as well as much of the Deir az-Zor governorate, is visually set apart. This is done using a natural feature (the Euphrates river), but tellingly no other body of water or geographic feature is incorporated as part of the design. Thus the nation as a whole is visually present but also divided with northeastern Syria set apart, demarcating the extent of the PYD’s subnational goals.

Institutions of the Jazira Canton

The Jazira Canton refers to the predominantly Kurdish northeast corner of Syria. While finding social media accounts for town or even city level institutions proved challenging, several of the institutions operating at the canton level had social media accounts. One of the more prolific of these was the Internal Body of the Jazira Canton. This civilian entity referred to local and ethnic identities primarily, as can be seen in figure 21. There were far more posts that referred to a local and/or ethnic identity than a Syrian national, religious, or Kurdish national identity.

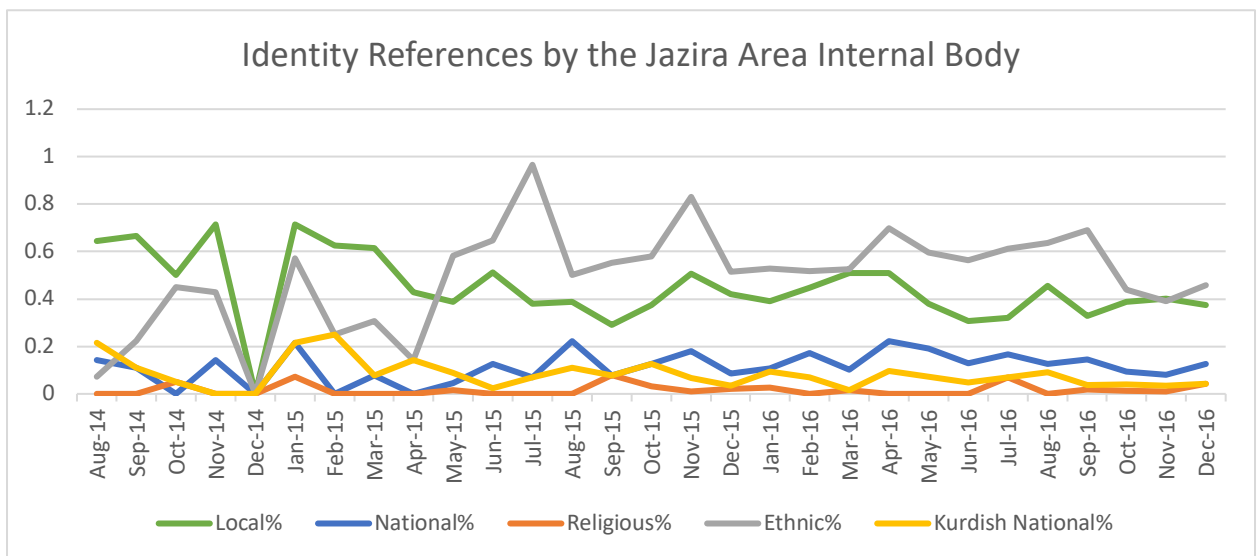


Figure 21 Identity References on the Jazira Internal Body’s Facebook Page

This analysis is backed up by a consideration of the terms which most frequently appear on the Internal Body’s social media account. The word which appears most frequently in Arabic is *al-Asayish*, the police force of Rojava whose name means “security” in Kurmanji.⁶⁸ The third most common term was Rojava, the Kurmanji name for northern Syria, followed by the city of Qamishli (written as Qamishlo, the Kurmanji version of the city’s name). There are frequent references to local places, such as the biggest cities of the canton, Qamishli and al-Hasakeh, and the Jazira Canton itself. There are references to decisions made by the body, such as a decision not to enforce a conscription law passed by the canton’s legislative council because this had led many young people to leave (Internal Body 10/13/2014). There are also regular calls for individuals to apply for positions within the canton’s administration. These local elements bear similarities to the civilian local council of the city of Ma’arat a-Nu’man discussed in the last chapter.

However, the Internal Body of the Jazira Canton uses language around ethnicity that matches the language of the PYD sources. On the group’s Facebook page ethnic groups are again regularly referred to as components. This is true in the abstract (such as

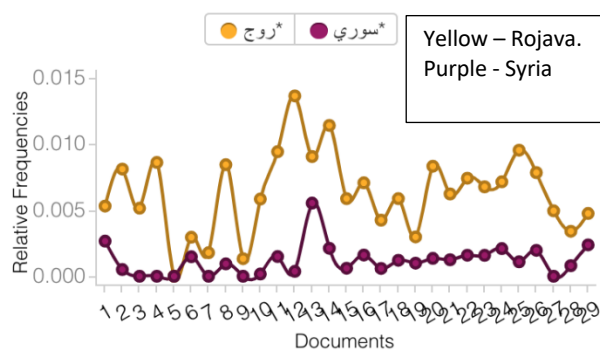


Figure 22 Relative frequency of the appearance of forms of “Syria” and “Rojava” on the Jazira Internal Body’s Facebook Page

references to “all societal components”) or when describing the ethnicity of specific individuals, like the description of a teacher as being “of the Chechen component” (11/19/2014, Internal Body). There are references to various ethnic groups, such as a reference to the

⁶⁸ The second most common term was “forces” which was often used in conjunction with *al-asayish*.

Kurdish, Arab, and Syriac populations of the city of al-Hassakeh (1/19/2015). References to Kurd or Kurdish are not as frequent as they were on the PYD page, although Kurmanji names are used for local places. The Kurmanji *Rovaja* is used instead of northern Syria, although the terms were used almost interchangeably or in tandem by the SDC. The relative frequency of the appearance of Rojava and Syria can be seen in Figure 22. The city of Qamishli is almost exclusively referred to as Qamishlo, the Kurmanji name for the city as well. Finally, the ethnic characteristic of various organizations are emphasized. In addition to being a Kurdish force with a Kurdish name, the *al-Asayish* are described as explicitly Kurdish. For example, in the aforementioned post from January 19, 2015, the presence of Kurds, Arabs, and Syriacs living in the city of al-Hassakeh provides a pretext for the Kurds to defend the city, "...many components exist in the city; Kurdish, Arab, and Syriacs have been living there for hundreds of years, and therefore our Kurdish forces⁶⁹ have the right to defend the city and protect it" (Internal Body). In this instance it is the Kurdish nature of the *Asayish* and the presence of Kurds and other ethnic groups that legitimate the presence of the *Asayish* in the city. In addition to appealing to a local identity, the Internal Body also appealed to a more abstract, pan-ethnic identity like that promoted by the PYD.

References to national identity are few and references to Rojava far exceed references to Syria on the Internal body's Facebook page. It is worth noting that among the limited references to Syria are the announcements regarding hiring. One of the stated requirements for employment by the internal body is *al-jinsiyya as-suriyya*, Syrian citizenship. The other requirements include citizenship in one of the three Syrian Kurdish cantons. The inclusion of Syrian nationality as a requirement may be an effort to reassure

⁶⁹ This post also seems to assume that the reader is Kurdish, although the Facebook page was in Arabic.

non-Kurds that the local institutions will not be run by Kurds from Turkey or Iraq, that locals will not be governed by individuals they view as foreign.

The logo of the Internal Body has only subtle references to ethnic identities. It includes the name of the institution in three languages; Kurmanji, Arabic, and Syriac.



Figure 23 Logo of the Internal Body of the Jazira Canton

Here, like the SDC logo, is evidence of references to the various ethnic groups prominent in the Jazira Canton.

However, the logo lacks any visual elements that speak to a specific, local place (as seen in the logos of civilian institutions in the last chapter). The central graphic is a globe, not a representation of the Jazira canton or Rojava. The other

elements, a book, feather pen, and olive branch, are also not

specific to the area. The colors used are also not colors associated with the PYD or other significant political parties in the area, an effort to visually separate the canton-level organization from the PYD. This effort to create a visual separation fits with the PYD's efforts to depict the development of local institutions as "organic responses to the needs of the local communities in Rojava," rather than a top-down effort orchestrated by the PYD and Tev-Dem (Sary 2016: 12). However, this visual separation from the PYD is not reflected by the language used in the body's Facebook page, so the efficacy of such visual distancing is questionable. Thus the only elements which connect to any identity are in the logo's text, in the inclusion of the Jazira canton's name and the use of three languages.

The second canton-level institution analyzed here is the Public Relations Office in Jazira Canton for Tev-Dem. The Movement for a Democratic Society (Tev-Dem) is the civilian organization dedicated to promoting democracy at a local level and which

oversees the Mala Gels, the people’s courts, and other local institutions. Since the group’s Facebook page was formed in June 2016 only 93 posts were included in the corpus.

However, based on this limited sample, the Jazira canton’s Tev-Dem office refers to a similar mix of identities as the Jazira canton’s Internal Body. According to the results of the coding process, a similar number of posts

refer to local and ethnic identities.

Again, the language around ethnicity bears a great deal of similarity to that found on the

Internal Body of the Jazira Canton Posts with Identity References					
	Local	National	Religious	Ethnic	Kurdish National
total	61	39	15	53	10

Figure 24 Identity References by the Internal Body of the Jazira Canton Facebook Account

other Facebook pages. A post from June 21, 2016 praised actions taken by the Syrian Democratic Forces, “We, as the Public Relations Office for the Movement of a Democratic Society, bless the victories achieved by these forces and that include under its banner all of the components, Kurd, Arab, Syriac, Assyrian, Turkmen, and Chechen” (Tev-Dem Facebook). Much of the page is dedicated to local events, such as a meeting that took place on December 11, 2016 between the Kurdish alliance, Hassakeh’s Tribal Council, the Kurdish Writers’ Union in Syria, and the public relations division of the Kurdish Azadi Party (12/12/2016 Tev-Dem).⁷⁰ Thus it promotes a local identity, as we would expect a civilian institution to do, as well as the ethnic identity promoted across the *rebelocracy’s* institutions.

The Institutions affiliated with and created by the PYD share an emphasis on ethnic identity. Rather than tailoring its appeals to a specific ethnic group, these institutions have emphasized ethnic identities of all kinds, treating different ethnic groups

⁷⁰ The Jazira office for Tev-Dem did not have its own logo, instead using the logo for the PR office of Tev-Dem. The logo incorporates the colors from the Kurdish national flag (Green, red, and yellow) as well as the sunburst at the center of the same flag.

as parts of the societal whole. This identity, a dramatic departure from the Arab national identity promoted by the Ba’thist regime, fits the revolutionary potential of *rebelocracies*. The identity promotion efforts of the PYD also illustrate the connection between an armed group’s objectives the identity it promotes. As the PYD’s capacity expanded and its goals changed, so too did its identity repertoire and a Syrian national identity came to take on a greater role in the group’s identity repertoire as its goals expanded to include territories not populated by ethnic minorities.

Identity Promotion by the Islamic State

Like the Democratic Union Party, the Islamic State promoted a single identity across its various institutions and which was an abrupt departure from the identities prominent in Syria. The Syrian Ba’thist regime had promoted a secular brand of Arab nationalism for much of its existence. While the regime’s leadership had made attempts to make appeals to a Muslim constituency, the Alawite sect of members of the regime’s upper echelon proved a significant barrier. While the Islamic State appealed to a Sunni Muslim identity (an identity shared by the majority of Syria’s citizens) its understanding of the content of that identity was a dramatic departure from what had been the norm in Syria prior to 2011.

Identity promotion under IS took a variety of forms. Earlier sections discussed the ways in which IS used its institutional design as a means of promoting their interpretation of Sunni Islam. The laws set forth by IS made it clear what behavior was expected and deemed acceptable. IS also produced a plethora of propaganda material. In fact, their messages varied for Muslims abroad and to those who lived in the area under their

control (Shane and Hubbard 2014).⁷¹ It used a variety of media outlets, such as Twitter, Soundcloud, and Whatsapp to transmit text, audio, images, and videos (Ibid). There was a significant decline in the group's propaganda production after the group sustained significant territorial losses. For example, while in August 2015 700 items were published online through official IS channels, in August 2016 the number had dropped to fewer than 200 (Dale 2016).⁷² While there may have been an eventual decline, for several years IS was able to effectively deliver its message and promote its chosen identity using multiple institutions and various media.

IS engaged in a number of behaviors intended to indoctrinate and inculcate civilians in the territories they controlled with the group's espoused identity. One of the first actions IS took after acquiring new territory was to replace the preachers at the local mosques. The replacements were generally outsiders from Afghanistan or other Arab states (Cockburn 2015). This allowed IS to control the message being disseminated through religious institutions. IS also used education and entertainment as means through which it conveyed its identity. IS created outdoor movie theaters which showed videos and played music intended to indoctrinate the audience (Qaddour 2018). In the area's under IS control children were schooled in propaganda (Sommerville and Dalati 2017). In the Syrian city of Raqqa, the group started by editing the educational materials left behind by the Syrian state. It was after IS took the Iraqi city of Mosul that the group possessed the resources required to develop its own textbooks and other materials. It accordingly rolled out its new curriculum for the 2015-2016 academic year (Ibid). One

⁷¹ While there are limits to promoting dramatically distinct identities in a single context (such as a single state) when audiences are segmented it is possible for a single group to promote distinct identities to these different audiences.

⁷² In addition to territorial losses, the man widely considered the chief architect of IS's propaganda was killed in an airstrike in August 2016 (De Luce et al 2016).

of the materials included a directive to teachers that said, “Our enemies aim to bury our identity and pillage our assets. We’ve tried, as much as we could, to infuse the students with a doctrine leading to the right kind of action that would preserve our identity and render us victorious in the ongoing fight” (Ibid). In this quote identity is specifically mentioned as one of the objectives of IS's education program.

To illustrate the promotion of identity through educational texts I have included one visual example. It is the cover of a history book intended for the first semester of the fourth year of primary school. The central visual element is a medieval sword boasting a

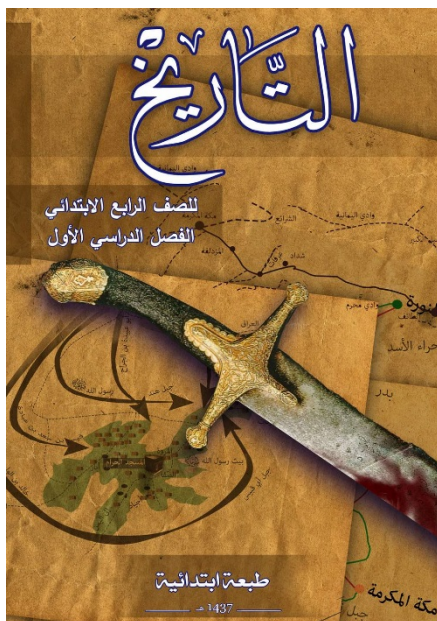


Figure 25 Cover from 4th grade history textbook produced by the Islamic State

style of hilt and pommel associated with the Islamic Empire. The sword is bloodied and behind it is a map of the holy city of Mecca with arrows representing the different Muslim forces which entered and took control of the city in 629 AD. Above one arrow it says “Messenger of God” while another arrow has “Khaled bin al-Wa-“ above it. The cut off name is presumably Khaled bin al-Walid, who not only led an army into Mecca but also played an important role in the Islamic conquest of Syria and the capture of the

city of Damascus (Encyclopedia [Britannica](#) “Khalid ibn al-Walid”). That this map should include a reference to the conqueror of Damascus seems to be a pointed reference to the Islamic State’s large territorial ambitions. A second map, which is mostly obscured, notes the city of Mecca and says “Badr” in the corner. Presumably, this is intended to be a map of the Prophet’s victory at Badr over the Meccans. The third map also appears to include locations in Saudi Arabia. The combination of maps and swords appears to be an attempt

to establish a connection between IS's modern conflict and the battles fought by the Prophet in the early days of Islam. Through conquest, IS would build a new holy land, just as the Prophet had in the 7th century. This example illustrates how the Islamic State used institutions to promote its religious identity, just as the PYD's institutions promoted its ethnic identity.

The Role of External Involvement in Identity Promotion

Events which take place in a weakened or failed state do not take place in a vacuum. External actors often play a role in local affairs in these contexts, which can have positive or negative effects for actors on the ground. Support from outside actors can assist armed groups as they compete against other armed actors. Funding from international non-governmental organizations as well as states can also assist armed actors as they seek to build local institutions. However, armed actors can also degrade the capacity of local armed groups if they target these groups or seek to limit their access to resources. These factors may influence the capacity of local armed actors to establish *rebelocracies* and promote their identities.

The Democratic Union Party acquired support from some external actors while facing significant threats from others, which had positive and negative effects on their institution building and identity promotion efforts. The United States, for example, provided significant aid and support to the PYD and YPG in 2014 as part of its effort to oppose the Islamic State (van Wilgenburg 2016). During IS's attack on the town of Kobani, the US supplied Kurdish forces by airdropping supplies, which was crucial in the Kurds' defense of the town (Letsch 2014). The United States also employed drones and aircraft to provide intelligence on northern Syria and to support the YPG and YPJ. American Special Forces also provided intelligence to the Kurdish forces and coordinated

with them to target airstrikes (Arango and Schmitt 2015). Photos of US special forces cooperating with YPG fighters showed that US soldiers were close to the front lines in the PYD's opposition to IS ("US military" 2016). The external support from the United States and others allowed the YPG to fight efforts by IS to encroach on PYD-controlled territory (van Wilgenburg 2016).⁷³ In this instance, external opposition against one armed group led to external support for another armed group - actions against one *rebelocracy* led to external support and the resources for expansion being given to another.

This support had several important effects. First, material support helped the PYD set up and maintain institutions in areas under their control in 2015 and 2016 (van Wilgenburg 2016). While this did not change the promotion of a pan-ethnic identity, which was in place before the PYD began to receive external support, it did have other effects on the group's identity repertoire. US involvement made it possible for the PYD to expand its goals beyond northern Syria, which, as discussed earlier, led to a greater emphasis on a Syrian national identity in the identity repertoire of the Syrian Democratic Council. The support of the United States did not play a role in the pan-ethnic nature of the PYD's identity repertoire but did play a role in the shift to incorporate a Syrian national identity to a greater degree.

However, the PYD did not have a uniformly positive relationship with external actors, particularly with Turkey. In 2012 Turkey's Prime Minister said in an interview that, "It is our most natural right to intervene (in northern Syria) since those terrorist

⁷³ Not all of the PYD's territorial gains were the result of US support. Russian airstrikes on other armed groups which directly opposed the Ba'athist regime weakened these opposition groups. This created opportunities for the PYD to take control of additional territory (van Wilgenburg 2016). Again, external involvement altered the playing field by eliminating rivals who could challenge the group establishing a *rebelocracy*.

formations would disturb our national peace,' (Davies 2012). Turkish officials consistently claimed that the PYD and PKK are one and the same, which made the PYD a terrorist entity in the eyes of the Turkish state ("Turkey Will Not Cooperate"). With the Islamic State in retreat the PYD resumed its place in Turkey's view as the most significant strategic threat to the state. After the PYD took control of the town of Tel Abyad a Turkish, pro-government newspaper featured the headline, "the PYD is more dangerous than ISIS" (Arango and Schmitt 2015). This opposition in some instances involved direct military action against territory held by the PYD, although this had yet to make a significant impact on the PYD's institution building projects by the end of 2016.

The involvement of Turkey, while capable of degrading the ability of the PYD to promote identities, did not have a direct effect on the group's identity repertoire. The shift away from Kurdish nationalism and in favor of a pan-ethnic identity pre-dated the conflict and appears to be based upon shifts in the ideas of the organization's political elite, particularly the writings of Abdullah Ocalan. This pan-ethnic rather than national identity promotion has not spared the Kurds from Turkish distrust and hostility. Indeed, if placating Turkey was a consistent political concern the decision to establish an autonomous federation in northern Syria was completely counter-productive. In addition, shifts in the degree and type of Turkey's involvement does not seem to be reflected in the PYD's identity repertoire. Thus, while Turkey's involvement could intervene in the PYD's ability to build institutions and promote its identity, the country's involvement has not influenced the group's identity selection in the period analyzed here.

The Islamic State, whose supranational goals and identity raised the ire of numerous states, was primarily the target of external actors. The United States, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and Turkey all engaged in

direct military action against IS (Shaheen et al 2015). This direct involvement had significant effects on IS, which at its greatest extent controlled significant territories in Syria and neighboring Iraq. Airstrikes perpetrated by the U.S. and other states were, according to actors on the ground, instrumental and crucial in reversing the group's territorial gains (Arango and Schmitt 2015). The loss of territory and degradation of institutions limited IS's ability to promote its chosen identity. It lost control over populations and consequently lost its capacity to use governing institutions to shift the salience of locals' identities. As was noted earlier, with the loss of territory, the production and dissemination of IS propaganda also declined (Dale 2016). As the space of territorial control shrank the educational texts that IS produced were used in fewer schools. Thus, the role of external actors proved detrimental to the survival of the IS *rebelocracy* and damaged its capacity to promote its identity on the ground in Syria.

Protest Analysis

The promotion of identities through numerous institutions will shift the salience of identities held by locals living under the *rebelocracy*. However, there are difficulties that emerge when attempting to evaluate the salience of identities in *rebelocracies*. Under civilian-ruled and mixed hybrid arrangements armed groups lack the coercive capacity to limit public expression. In *rebelocracies*, however, armed groups may have a monopoly on violence sufficient to limit the identities expressed. There were also allegations that the PYD limited possible outlets for dissent. Kurdish journalists told members of Human Rights Watch that certain topics were considered taboo by the PYD and, as a result, journalists did not report on them (Leigh 2014). There have been other reports of the PYD limiting media freedom, such as taking licenses away from media outlets associated with other parts of the Syrian opposition. In August 2015 Orient TV (an entity associated

with the Syrian opposition) and Rudaw (an outlet associated with the KRG, a Kurdish rival to the PYD) had their licenses taken away by the PYD and both outlets were banned in 2016 (Gutman 2017).

In *rebelocracies* it is also possible for armed groups to use force against protests or to threaten those who may wish to participate in protest. According to an article by *Smart News*, tens of civilians protested in the city of Derik in the Jazira Canton due to a decision by Hasakeh's Education body to teach each component of society in their mother tongue (Kurdish, Arabic, or Syriac) in 2015. Members of the *Asayish* security forces confiscated the phones and cameras of protesters which meant no pictures or videos of the event were circulated online (*Smart News*). In the predominantly Kurdish town of Amuda the YPG fired on demonstrators protesting the imprisonment of several Kurdish activists by the PYD (Atassi 2013). The Islamic State was notorious for limiting free expression in the territories under its control. In a collection of protest videos from the Creative Revolution database and the Syrian Revolution Network the only protests from the city of Raqqa dated from before IS consolidated its control over the city. Thus, protests which are deemed critical of or in opposition to the armed group may not transpire or receive media coverage in a *rebelocracy*.

While these concerns should be taken into consideration, there is some interest in seeing if the efforts to promote identities across institutions in *rebelocracies* are more likely to succeed than the identity promotion conducted under civilian rule. To do so a collection of videos and photos of protests from the city of Qamishli was assembled using the Syrian Revolutionary News Network, the Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution, and the Sham News Network. Videos were also acquired from the YouTube channels of two local activist organizations, the Kurdish Youth Union and the Kurdish Youth

Movement. This yielded a collection of 96 photos and videos most of which were videos from 2012 and 2013. Due to the vast disparity between the quantity of sources from 2012 and 2013 and the few materials collected from 2014 and 2016 a random sample of one source from each month was included and yielded a sample of twenty videos. Since part of Qamishli remained under regime control while other parts were governed by the PYD, another sample was compiled of demonstrations from the city of Derik which is also in the Jazira Canton and came under the control of the PYD in 2012. There were not photos or videos of protests from this location in the collections from the Syrian Revolutionary Network or the Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution. Materials were collected from the Shaam News Network YouTube page, Ugarit News, and YouTube channel for the Coordination Association of the Youth of Freedom, a locally active organization. These sources yielded 54 videos from 2012 through 2014. A random sample of one video per month was assembled which was comprised of 15 videos.⁷⁴

The visual components of these videos in both locations were subjected to analysis. While in the other case studies the chants, songs, and texts of banners were included in the analysis, this will have to be done at a later date with the aid of someone fluent in Kurmanji as these sources incorporate both Arabic and the Kurdish language. However, an analysis which considers which flags and the proportion of flags employed at protests indicates a degree of identity shift may have taken place in the areas under the control of the PYD. In the sample of protests from Derik the proportion of Kurdish

⁷⁴ The disproportionate nature of the samples has several potential explanations. There may in fact be far fewer protests after the first half of 2013. Attempts to build samples for multiple locations in the Jazira Canton all seemed to follow the same trend, which indicates that there may be a region-wide shift in the frequency of protests. It could be that the emergence of local democratic governance provided alternative means for locals to air their opinions and grievances. The decreasing salience of a Syrian national identity may also have meant that national-level events like the fall of Aleppo did not spark protests in northeastern Syria as it did in other cases. Alternatively, this may reflect a shift in the efforts to record and distribute recordings of protests. However, the fact that this was true in multiple towns and cities makes it unlikely that local variations in the production and dissemination of local news.

national flags and Syrian national flags (the national flags used by the Syrian opposition) shifted over time. Throughout the sample the Kurdish national flag with a yellow sunburst and three horizontal stripes in red, white, and green appears most frequently. While the Syrian flag embraced by the opposition often accompanied the Kurdish flag earlier in the sample, the ratio between these two types of flags shifted over time. For example, in a protest from January 6, 2012 10 Kurdish national flags appeared and 6 Syrian national flags. A march a year later included over 60 Kurdish national flags and only two Syrian flags. The Qamishli sample reflects a similar trend. In sampled protests from January and February 2012 there were more Syrian national flags than Kurdish national or other flags. For example, a protest from January 2012 included 7 Kurdish national flags, 10 Syrian national flags, and 2 Assyrian flags. The February sample included 13 Syrian national flags and 7 Kurdish national flags. By early 2013 the ratio of flags employed had shifted significantly. The January 2013 protest included 26 Kurdish national flags and 6 Syrian national flags. The February 2013 protest included 23 Kurdish national flags and 2 Syrian national flags. The Qamishli sample only included a few samples from 2014 and 2016 but most of these are also primarily covered in Kurdish flags. A protest from March 28, 2014 also includes the flags of the People's Defense Forces, the armed wings of the PYD.

The shift is not a continuous trend and there are specific examples in which the visuals do not fit this pattern. In both city's samples there was at least one demonstration in which no flags were used (one in Qamishli in June 2014 and one in Derik in May 2013). The Qamishli sample also included a photo from September 2014 which only included over 20 Syrian national flags. However, these events appear to be the exception rather

than the rule and may relate to the themes of specific protests or protests commemorating particular events.

The shift away from incorporating the Syrian national flag and toward a greater emphasis on Kurdish flags indicates the decreased salience of a Syrian national identity in the wake of the Syrian state. As self-governing institutions were created under the direction of the PYD Kurdish national flags, Rojava flags, and flags associated with Kurdish parties like the Kurdish Democratic Party came to dominate the protests. It is noteworthy that there were not any flags that could be clearly identified as PYD flags in the sample, so identification with the party does not seem to be the result of their identity promotion efforts. However, some protests included YPG flags, indicating that the PYD's armed group has acquired a degree of legitimacy. While Rojava flags, flags of Syrian or western Kurdistan are sometimes seen they are not particularly prevalent indicating that an affiliation with the space that is Rojava has not become the basis of a salient identity. However, the flags associated with Kurdishness, with an ethnic identity, came to dominate the visual aspects of the protests. Neither national flags nor religious banners (such as those featuring the *shahada*) were prominent, particularly in later protests. While this initial analysis is limited by its focus on the visual aspects of the protests, particularly the use of flags, it does suggest that the primarily ethnic identity program implemented by the PYD may have shifted the salience of identities of those living in the Jazira region. Further work on the textual and textual and auditory components of protest will hopefully further flesh out this analysis.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have continued to explore the identity promotion efforts of local actors after the state has retreated. In *rebelocaracies*, when armed groups rule, they

promote identities associated with abstract spaces, tied to imagined communities. The objectives of the armed groups shape the identities they promote, as seen by the Democratic Union Party's subnational goals and subnational (ethnic) identity and the Islamic State's supranational goals and supranational (religious) identity. Both of these actors had armed wings and also engaged in significant institution building, institutions through which they could promote the identities they embraced. These identities were not exclusively promoted – different PYD-established institutions promoted ethnic and national or ethnic and local identities. However, the ethnic identity was consistently a prominent part of the identity repertoire for the various institutions.

It appears that the efforts to promote specific identities had some influence on the local populations. Based on a preliminary evaluation of local protests it appears that the PYD's efforts to promote a particular identity influenced the salience of identities among the local population. There is also anecdotal evidence from the areas ruled by the Islamic State indicating that some civilians apparently embraced the group's identity and willingly participated in its efforts to promote that identity. The rule of these actors was not uncontested, and under the areas administered by the PYD there were reports of protests against actions taken by the PYD, such as numerous protests in August 2016 against the incarceration of leaders of a rival Kurdish political party.⁷⁵ However, flags that are connected to Kurdishness became more prominent over the course of the sample, particularly in comparison to the Syrian national flags which played a more even role in protests from early 2012 indicating that the identity promotion conducted by the PYD may have influenced the salience of identities in the Jazira Canton.

⁷⁵ Several sources also reported on protests that took place in multiple cities and towns following the PYD's arrest of a number of leaders from a rival Kurdish party, the Kurdish National Council (بعد اعتقال "قيادةات" "تقرير النشاطات" "Demonstrations against repressive practices," "قيادةات").

In the previous two cases we have seen the consistent promotion of identities across local governing institutions. In the case of civilian rule, a local identity was promoted by governing institutions as the main part of their identity repertoire. A local identity did subsequently emerge during local protests against the efforts by an armed group to play a more prominent role in local affairs. In the cases of rebel rule, armed actors promoted ethnic and religious identities and used their coercive ability to constrain dissent and the promotion of alternative identities. These identity promotion efforts seem to have met with some success, although the coercive capacities of the armed groups makes it difficult to be certain about whether those for whom different identities are more salient have simply remained home or been rendered silent through other means. The third case explores a situation in which armed groups and rebels divide governing responsibilities and both kinds of actors engage in institution building. In this case we expect to see a mix of identities being promoted across institutions and expect that this will mitigate the efficacy of these repertoires.

Chapter 5:

Civil and Uncivil Institutions & Identities in Syria: The Case of East Ghouta and the City of Douma

Introduction to the Case

This third case study continues to explore why different types of identities emerge as salient following the state's retreat or collapse. However, this chapter will explore a context in which both civilian and armed actors develop institutions in efforts to provide governance and essential public goods. The Eastern Ghouta is a part of the Rif Dimashq (Damascus countryside) Governorate and was the province's largest rebel stronghold. It sits extremely close to the capital and the city of Douma (the area's largest city) lies only six miles northeast of Damascus. Douma and other parts of East Ghouta broke away from regime control in the Fall of 2012. It was during this earlier phase of conflict that the state in all its aspects began to withdraw from the area. Initially civilian actors, and later armed actors, strove to provide essential public goods for different parts of East Ghouta. It is this mix of armed and civilian control which makes the area of East Ghouta and the city of Douma in particular an example of a hybrid institutional type. Neither civilian nor armed authorities succeeded in entirely exerting control, instead creating a situation in which aspects of governance or the provision of public goods was shared. Thus, this chapter focuses on the efforts of civilians and armed groups to promote identities through the institutions that they established independently of one another.

The chapter begins with some essential information on Eastern Ghouta and the city of Douma specifically. In section two, I provide more details about the institution building which was done by civilians and armed groups, with a particular focus on attempts to engage in the governance of the area. This section also illustrates that East

Ghouta failed to fit neatly into either the categories of civilian-ruled or rebel-ruled between 2012 and 2015, as both civilians and armed groups created parallel and competing institutions. The third section discusses the sources used to investigate identity promotion by civilian institutions as well as those established by armed groups. Section four explores the appeals to identities made by civilian institutions as well as the institutions formed by armed groups. Consistent with my theoretical argument, I find that the armed groups had a significantly clearer identity program than the civilians in this context. The civilian institutions had a less coherent, single identity appeal than we see under conditions of civilian rule. The hybrid type yields interactions between civilians and armed groups that results in accommodation, particularly by civilian actors, when it comes to identity promotion. The final section considers the impact of external actors on the ability of civilians and armed groups to engage in the provision of governance and public goods. This chapter then concludes with a discussion on identity promotion and how identity promotion in East Ghouta varied from the other two cases from the Idlib Governorate and the area controlled by the Kurdish PYD in northeastern Syria.

Background

In order to delve into the identities and institutions which emerged and became significant in East Ghouta between 2011 and 2016, it is imperative to provide some essential information on the area and its experiences during the Syrian conflict. Like Idlib province, east Ghouta is a predominantly agricultural area, albeit one which is extremely close to the Syrian capital. The area referred to as East Ghouta comprises about 22 cities, towns, and villages (Al Hilali and al Rifai 2017). The area as a whole and the city of Douma in particular played significant roles in the early phases of the uprising. The organization of early events has been attributed to the existence of political networks

grounded in Islam or Socialist Nasserist traditions (alSaafin 2015). During one of Douma's initial protests in 2011, Syrian security forces opened fire, reportedly killing ten people. This first episode had a significant effect on the area surrounding Douma, which emerged as a center for protest and attracted demonstrators from other towns and Damascus (Ibid).⁷⁶

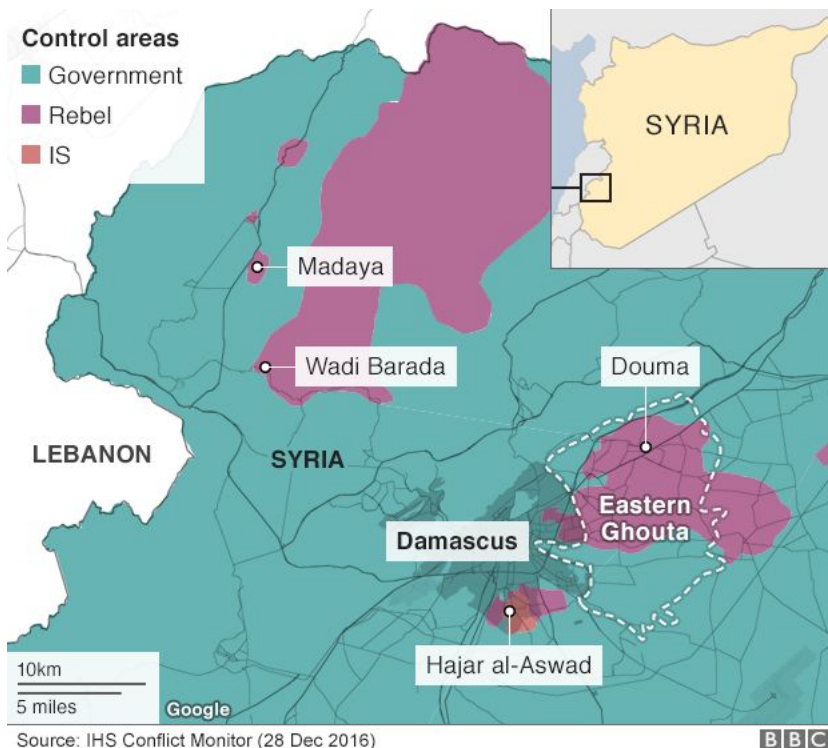
In 2012 after the uprising had transformed into an armed conflict, the city and much of the surrounding area come under the control of rebel fighters. Eastern Ghouta became the largest area of rebel-controlled territory in the governorate of Damascus (AFP May 17, 2016). Immediately after the withdrawal of the state, a significant degree of lawlessness pervaded the area, a condition that led to the emergence of several local institutions ("Eastern Ghouta: Foundation of Independent Judiciary"). These conditions inspired the formation of new institutions, including local councils and in the case of East Ghouta, the formation of a judiciary in mid 2012 (Ibid). The siege of the area by the Syrian government began in 2012, although the area was not entirely encircled until April 2013 (Alsaafin 2015, Lund 2017). Several years of extreme hardship for residents followed.

From the establishment of the siege in 2013 through the period which this work covers (the end of 2016), the area of East Ghouta was subjected to deprivation of all kinds. While in 2013 and 2014 individuals were able to grow some of their own food, this became increasingly difficult as the siege continued. For residents of Douma, accessing fields required crossing a river and passing through a checkpoint which came under the control of Ba'thist troops (Bellingeri 2017). Many basic necessities, such as medical

⁷⁶ A resident claims that the organization of early protests during the uprising can be at least partially attributed to pre-existing levels of organization in city, the pre-uprising existence of opposition actors, both religious as well as Socialist Nasserites (AlSaafin 2015).

supplies, could only make it through the government blockade in limited quantities (Lund 2017). For a time, the only means of obtaining certain goods was through tunnels dug under the lines of the siege. Medical supplies, gas, and human beings could only be transported through tunnels as they could not cross through the regime checkpoint at the Wafideen crossing (Lund 2017). A variety of actors made money from smuggling supplies through tunnels. The result was an astronomic increase in the prices of essential goods for the people of East Ghouta (Ibid). In order to pay for increasingly expensive necessities, residents of the area came to rely on friends and relations abroad for monetary support (Bellingeri 2017). In addition to the shortages and related hardships that resulted from the area's encirclement, East Ghouta was subjected to almost continual artillery and aerial bombardments (Lund 2017). The map below includes a general outline of the area, with the purple area indicating who possessed which parts of the area as of late 2016.

Figure 26 Map of Eastern Ghouta and its surroundings, December 2016.



In the area and in Douma in particular, one armed group emerged to take a prominent role: Jaish al-Islam (Alsaafin 2015). Jaish al-Islam (JAI) was initially called Liwa al-Islam when it was established in late

2011 (al-Dimashqi 2016). Its leader, Zahran Alloush, had been recently freed by the Syrian regime from Sednaya Prison where he had been imprisoned due to his Salafist activities (Ibid). Alloush’s father was a Salafi preacher trained in Saudi Arabia, and perhaps unsurprisingly, his son’s organizations was supported by Saudi Arabia (AFP May 17, 2016). As was the case for many armed groups, the ability to provide resources was essential, as a leader who could not provide the necessary materials to his fighters could not keep those fighters in his organization (al-Shami and Yassin-Kassab 2016: 86).

In September 2013 Liwa al-Islam and 50 other armed groups which embraced a similar religious ideology decided to merge into a single group which was named Jaish al-Islam (al-Dimashqi 2016). Thus, Jaish al-Islam (and other armed groups) combined appeals based upon identity and utilitarian concerns.

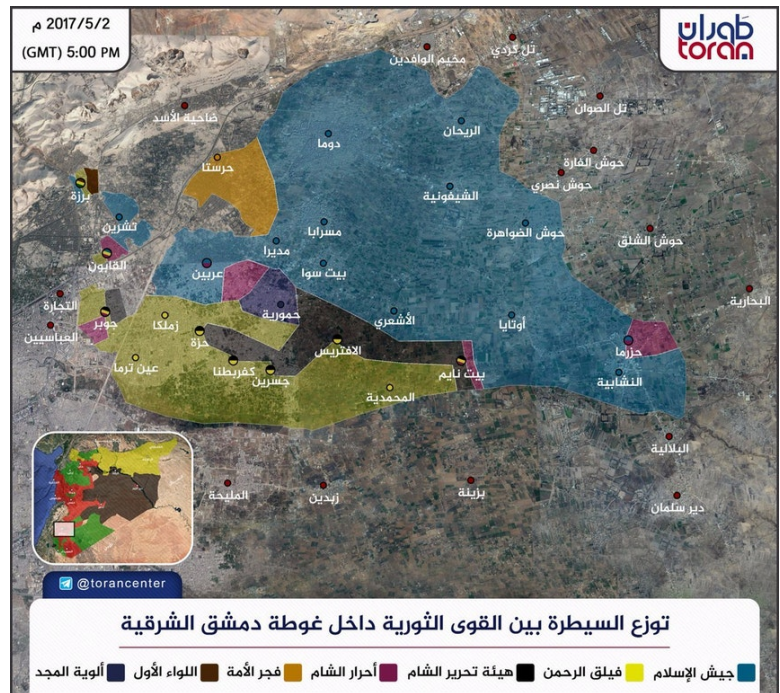


Figure 27 Map of Eastern Ghouta, indicating areas controlled by different armed actors. The blue area was held by Jaish al-Islam in May 2017

While JAI rose to become Eastern Ghouta’s most prominent armed group, this was not a position it was able to maintain. Several factors brought about the relative decline of Jaish al-Islam. Just as obtaining support from external actors played an important role in Jaish al-Islam’s rise, a decline in support weakened the group. In 2015 external support apparently diminished, possibly because the United States government

put pressure on the governments of the Gulf states to limit the actions of private donors (Lund 2017). In addition, the encirclement of Eastern Ghouta by regime forces made it increasingly difficult for Jaish al-Islam to attain the material it needed to support its dominant position in the area. It seems that the group's financial situation was sufficiently desperate that its leader left Eastern Ghouta via smuggling tunnels to court donors abroad, but to no avail (Lund 2017). The weakening of Jaish al-Islam placed its efforts to develop area-wide institutions in jeopardy and left the group open to challenge (Rollins 2016, Lund 2017). This weakening apparently opened the group to challenge. In the summer of 2015 civilians took to the streets to protest how armed groups were controlling and handling supplies. The second and third largest armed groups who were members of the Unified Military Council then announced that they would no longer participate in the council as it was simply a vehicle for JAI to further its own interests (Lund 2017). In November 2015 protests against the distribution of food by JAI apparently further emboldened other armed groups in the area, which led to fighting between these generally smaller rebel groups and JAI (alSaafin 2015). The death of JAI's founder, Zahran Aloush, on December 25, 2015 sealed the demise of the armed group's supremacy in the area (Lund 2017). For the purpose of this study, the weakening of the group several months prior to his death marks an important change, when the Eastern Ghouta could no longer be considered a hybrid institutional arrangement.

Yet even during this period Jaish al-Islam was not the area's only significant player. The competition between armed groups in East Ghouta is one of several factors that prevented Jaish al-Islam from attaining the coercive capacity and institution building of *rebelocracies*. At the same time, the armed groups operating in East Ghouta played a moderate role in the affairs of the area, preventing the emergence of clear civilian rule.

The next section will provide greater detail on the institutional landscape of the Eastern Ghouta to illustrate why the area did not neatly fall into the categories of *rebelocracy* or civilian rule before mid 2015, instead exemplifying a third, hybrid type.

Meeting the Criteria for Hybrid Institutional Arrangement

Civilian Institutions

A variety of civilian institutions emerged in East Ghouta, including the Eastern Ghouta unified services office, the unified relief office, and the Douma local council (al-Shami and Yassin-Kassab 2016: 72). This work discusses the Eastern Ghouta Unified Services Office, the Council for the Area of the Damascus Countryside – Eastern Ghouta, and the Local Council for the Area of the Damascus Countryside. The first of these entities focused on the provision of public goods in Eastern Ghouta, while the other two entities are focused on governance and coordination. Elections for the Damascus Countryside council were eventually held outside of Syria due to the levels of violence experienced in East Ghouta. A post on April 20, 2014 discusses a conference held in Gaziantep, Turkey which individuals attended via skype from East Ghouta both to participate in discussions and to vote. The position of governor was in fact won by an individual who participated in the conference via Skype (Local Council for the Area of the Damascus Countryside Facebook Page). This indicates that the entity's relevance in the area was probably curtailed as the security situation was deemed too precarious for regional elections and other activities to be carried out.

As was the case in Idlib province, the cities and towns of East Ghouta had their own local councils. In some cases, collections of villages shared a local council, such as the Local Council of the Marj Area. This case study focuses on the city of Douma, the largest city in East Ghouta. The origins of Douma's local council lie in activists' efforts

to organize demonstrations during the initial stages of the uprising. Following the retreat of the Syrian state, political organizers shifted their attention toward providing public goods to the citizens of the city. After several meetings of activists and prominent community members, it was agreed in September 2012 that a local council would be formed. Elections took place after regime fighters were forced to leave the city in October. At the time, the council had twenty-five members, with numbers of seats allocated to particular professions or designated to operate in certain fields, which included seven engineers. In addition, the council included six individuals who were given the task of coordinating with neighborhood-level committees (“Civilian Self-Rule in Douma”). In 2016 the Local Council’s Elections Committee put out a video, first in Arabic and subsequently in English, which used simple text and graphics to convey the structure of Douma’s council. The requirements for candidacy included the acceptance of “revolutionary principles,” a lack of ties to armed groups, and more customary limits regarding age and residency (Local Council for the City of Douma). According to the video, this democratically elected council of twenty-five then elected the members of the executive office, which included the local council’s secretary general, vice president, and president (Ibid). The Local Council has nineteen offices (a number which far exceeded the apparent number of offices under the Local Council of the City of Ma’arat a-Nu’mān). Of these nineteen offices, eleven focused on the provision of public goods while eight were engaged in administration (“Civilian Self-Rule in Douma”).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ The regional and local entities have not always agreed with each other’s actions. The following was posted by the Local Council of the City of Douma on January 31, 2014, “In the name of God the compassionate and the merciful, it seems that the local council of the governorate of Damascus countryside, that is headed by as-sayyid Jawad Abu Hatab, does not tire of its attempts/efforts to propagate the division and use money that is in his possession as political money and especially to serve our people inside (Syria?) through the local council. The Council of the Governorate of Rif Dimashq was blessed in the unity of the efforts of the civilian entities into a single body as an institutional act that takes into account the public interest. Accordingly, he strives to alter the amount Douma is allocated for the local council to the affiliated local administration for the affiliated Shura council, in its role for military

However, unlike under civilian rule discussed in the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man, civilian institutions in East Ghouta were subjected to influence and direct competition from armed actors. Sabr Darwish's research into the dynamics of Zamalka, another city within East Ghouta, provides some insight into the alternative means of influence available to armed groups. Rather than establish a new legal body, the Islamist armed group active in Zamalka (the Sword of Islam, which was supported by JAI) put pressure on the local legal council to change the composition of its membership. Following this transition in membership, religious law came to be the primary, and subsequently the only, legal resource used in adjudicating cases (Darwish 2015: 75). In this instance, armed actors interfered with civilian institutions by pressing these institutions to alter their composition, and presumably adopt positions more in line with the interests and preferences of the armed group. Other armed actors made effort to establish institutions of their own, including organizations intended to function as alternatives or rivals to those institutions established by civilians. This mixed institutional arrangement makes parts of East Ghouta, including the city of Douma, an area in which neither armed groups or civilians reigned supreme.

Institution Building by Armed Actors

In Douma and the surrounding area there was often been tension between the armed groups and local institutions. Islamist armed groups (including JAI) made efforts to establish alternative institutions to those created by civilians. These efforts included the formation of sharia commissions that functioned alongside the local councils of

formation/organization. Note that the local councils are independent administrative units with a prestigious character and do not follow any Shari'a or military council with the knowledge that the Shari'a service council is approved by the revolutionary forces and bodies." In this case, the leader of Local Council for the Governorate of the Damascus Countryside is seen as a divisive figure who is threatening the civilian character and independence of Douma's Local Council.

various towns and villages (al-Shami and Yassin-Kassab 2016: 72). Similarly, the Shura Council was established in late 2012 to supplant East Ghouta's council (Eastern Ghouta: Foundation of Independent Judiciary and Khibyeh 2014). Different rebel groups fighting in East Ghouta also supported the formation of a Judicial Council in 2013 to help settle disputes ("Rebel Factions Establish").⁷⁸ The Judicial Council had five members and dealt with corruption issues, handled criminal cases, handed down sentences, and kept the area's prisons (Hamou et al 2015). While the entity was theoretically supposed to be independent from the armed groups it was also required to discuss matters with the Shura Council and not act in any way which ran contrary to the Shura Council's own decisions (Hamou et al 2015).⁷⁹ Jaish al-Islam also ran a prison called at-Tawba, in which practices were reportedly similar to those of the Ba'athist regime (al-Dimashqi 2016). Thus, in the East Ghouta area, armed groups attempted to establish some alternative institutions to the preexisting civilian institutions.

However, it is not apparent whether or not the limited institutional involvement of JAI in civilian lives had a significant impact and led to the successful promotion of their identity program. There are some indications that armed groups could exert some control and did establish a limited degree of governance using their institutions. In 2013 a resident of Eastern Ghouta voiced concerns, "...that without assistance to the council, people would be 'forced to be dependent on the battalions that volunteer to provide such services in return... [for] loyalty and power'" (al-Shami and Yassin-Kassab 2016: 72).

⁷⁸ A year later, in June 2014, seventeen armed groups supported the formation of a Unified Judicial Council. The Council was comprised of experts in Islamic law and oversaw a number of local courts, such as one in Douma, another in the area of al-Marj, etc. While there were occasions when the Unified Judicial Council ruled against Jaish al-Islam, JAI had significant sway over the court and strove to ensure that other armed actors would abide by the court's decisions (Lund 2016).

⁷⁹ There is evidence to suggest that at least some cooperation existed between civilian institutions and Douma's Local Council and the Judicial Council. A post from September 9, 2014 by the Local Council discusses collaboration to ensure that decisions regarding land disputes are officially recorded.

The armed groups also had greater resources at their disposal than civilian entities (Khibyeh 2014). This was due in part to armed groups' ability to tax aid entering the Eastern Ghouta (Bellingeri 2017, Darwish interview with author). In addition, there are indications that the city was essentially divided into "two constituencies, one that followed the elected local council and the other the local executive and the Shura Council" (Local Council of the City of Douma April 3, 2014).⁸⁰ This indicates that both civilian institutions as well as those established by armed groups exerted authority over parts of the city of Douma, between 2013 and the summer of 2015.

However, there are indications that the institutions established by JAI and other armed groups may have lacked legitimacy. The Judicial Council was not deemed an impartial adjudicating body by many of those living in East Ghouta. Many residents believed the council was "directly subjected to the dominance of Zahran Aloush, the commander of Islam Army" ("After Quarrel"). The connection between the court and JAI may have continued to damage perceptions of the institution's fairness and impartiality after Aloush's death, limiting its ability to effectively promote the identity of the armed groups that established it. Some individuals interviewed for a news report even claimed that the court was a tool for armed groups to persecute noncombatants ("How do Syrians Value Courts' Performance"). In addition, it seems there may have been limited interaction between civilians and the few institutions that armed groups established. When civilians needed water or electricity, it was the civilian institutions that they went to for aid (Darwish interview with the author). In this situation in which many essential

⁸⁰ The post by the Local Council seems to be drawing upon an interview. The interviewer begins the section of interest by saying "it is known," indicating that the existence of multiple authorities within the same city is a fact generally acknowledged by the area's inhabitants.

institutions are developed by civilians with only a few institutions apparently run by armed groups, we have a hybrid institutional arrangement.

Source Material

To evaluate the impacts of the state's retreat on, this chapter considers both appeals to identities by institutions in East Ghouta as well as an evaluation of the salience of identities based upon footage and photos of public protest. As was the case in the previous chapters, this case study uses the Facebook pages of local institutions, which sometimes provide a lengthy record of the institution's pronouncements and perspectives. Unlike in the civilian-ruled case, this case study will explore the identity appeals made by institutions established by civilians and institutions established by armed groups.⁸¹

On the civilian side, the focus was primarily on governance. The Facebook pages of the opposition's Council for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq – Eastern Ghouta, the Local Council for Rif Dimashq, and the Local Council of the City of Douma were all included in the analysis. The Council for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq – Eastern Ghouta Facebook page and the Facebook page of the Local Council for Rif Dimashq were included as area-wide governance institutions. This Facebook page was deleted between the acquisition of the page's posts and the writing of this chapter, which limits the opportunities to access comments or images from the page.⁸² However, it covers an interesting period of time in the Eastern Ghouta, particularly a couple of reversals in fortune for one of the area's largest armed groups. The Local Council of the City of Douma Facebook page was as the governing institution for the area's largest city.

⁸¹ In the civilian ruled case there were not consistent institutions established by armed groups to incorporate into the analysis. Thus, there were not social media accounts for institutions established by armed groups to include in the analysis.

⁸² Before the Facebook page was deleted all of the posts from the page were scraped using a computer program so all of this material was included in the analysis. However, no comments or images from the page were collected before the account's deletion so these components could not be included.

In order to evaluate the efforts by armed groups to promote identities through institutions, institutions created by or connected to prominent armed groups were also evaluated. One of these is the aforementioned Judicial Council for Eastern Ghouta, which was established by a coalition of armed groups but came to be seen as primarily a tool for Jaish al-Islam.⁸³ The Shura Council, which was earlier described as an attempt by armed groups to provide an alternative to the local council, is also included in the analysis, although the Facebook page seems to only have been active between March 2013 and June 2014. The final entity associated with armed actors is the Shari'a Body for Damascus and its Countryside – East Ghouta. While the group's Facebook page only started in February 2016 it had 555 posts by the year's end. The group was recognized by a number of armed groups active in East Ghouta (Local Council of Douma April 1, 2014).

As was the case for the institutions of Ma'arat a-Nu'man, the Facebook pages for these organizations were subjected to two levels of analysis. The first level involved using the same key terms associated with ethnic, religious, national, and local identities which can be found in the appendix. In this case, East Ghouta and Damascus Countryside were used to denote the local area. The second step involved a closer read of particular texts that appeared particularly relevant after the first level of analysis. This was particularly helpful in illuminating variation between institutions associated with armed actors and civilian-run institutions.

The second stage of the analysis again involved the evaluation of protest materials. In this case, to find local recordings of protests, I incorporated materials posted

⁸³ In case there is any doubt about reports regarding the close relationship between JAI and the Judicial Council, a photo from September 3, 2014 shows JAI's founder, Zahran Alloush, meeting with a sheikh of the Judicial Council.

by the Douma Revolution 2011 Facebook page as well as Douma Coordination Facebook page to serve as local media sources. Posts by the Syrian Revolution Network and the Creative Memory database were also incorporated, although the Syrian Revolution Network did not apparently have any posts which met the criteria for inclusion (a recording or photos of a protest taking place in Douma). I also incorporated videos of protests from the DoumaVideos YouTube channel to supplement the lack of coverage on the Syrian Revolution Network Facebook page. This process yielded records of 248 protests between 2012 and 2016. This was a much higher number of protest recordings than in the Ma'arat a-Nu'man protest sample, and a much higher proportion of these were videos rather than photos. In order to analyze this large quantity of material, video or photo record of every fifth protest were analyzed. When multiple videos of a single protest existed a random number generator was used to select which video to analyze.

Identity Promotion by Civilian Actors

As was previously stated, East Ghouta, particularly the city of Douma, serves as an example of a hybrid institutional type as both armed actors and civilians played significant roles in institution building and governance. While armed groups may have specific identity programs, civilian institutions will be subjected to influence by armed groups as well as their own organizational roots and connections to the local milieu. Thus, I expect the identities promoted by civilian institutions in the hybrid arrangement to look more mixed than under solely civilian rule, which focuses predominantly on a local identity.

Available Identities

Before beginning a discussion of the identity appeals made by the various actors in East Ghouta, it is important to discuss which identities are generally available to the

area's population. Again, this work assumes that a repertoire of identities are available to each individual and that several of these identities will relate to connections to space or place. For example, for those living in Syria some kind of national identity is potentially

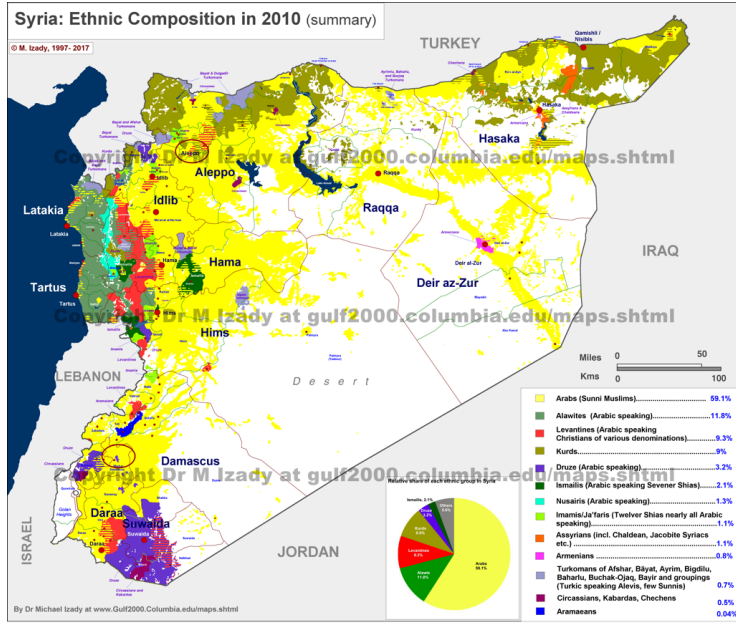


Figure 28 Map of Ethnic Composition of Syria in 2010 (Izady 2010)

viable, as is an identity based upon one's governorate or town. Ethnic and religious identities are additional options available to the country's inhabitants. Based on visual representations of the ethnic and religious divisions in Syria prior to the onset of conflict, the

population of East Ghouta appears to be predominantly Sunni Muslim and Arab. The city of Douma in particular is known as an important hub of religious education (Lund 2016). Thus, for most of East Ghouta's population a Sunni Muslim religious identity and Arab identity are potentially salient identities. We can therefore think of an individual whose identities include Arab, Sunni Muslim, Syrian, who is a proud native of *rif* Dimashq and of the city of Saraqeb in particular. The social context in which the individual lives and their day-to-day experiences will influence the relative salience of these identities.

As was true for the Idlib Governorate case, we must not assume that populations have remained the same since the onset of the conflict. East Ghouta in particular was subjected to high levels of violence as well as hardships imposed by years of government siege. This violence may have changed the ethnic and religious composition of the area

somewhat. However, the encirclement of the region by government forces means that the demographic features and range of identities available to the population of East Ghouta probably did not change significantly over the course of the conflict and that Sunni Muslim and Arab identities were available to the majority of East Ghouta's population.

Identity Promotion by Regional Civilian Actors

I was able to locate two Facebook pages for councils operating at a regional level. The first of these was the Facebook page for the Local Council for the Rif Dimashq Governorate. The Facebook page started in September 2013 and continued through 2016 with 554 posts published in that time. The second, area-wide governing institution included here is the Council for the Rif Dimashq Governorate – Eastern Ghouta Facebook page which was started only in 2015 and created 285 posts between its creation and the end of 2016. The former page spends many posts describing current events taking place in East Ghouta with an emphasis on the occurrence of violence. There are indications that the Rif Dimashq Council initially played a role in coordinating the efforts of the local councils in the governorate and provide monetary support. For example, the governorate Council requested copies of receipts and documentation of projects carried out by the Local Councils in exchange for continued monetary support (Rif Dimashq Council 10/12/2013). Another post from later in the month claimed that the Governorate Council had eight million US dollars to distribute to local councils per month for the subsequent three months (Ibid. 10/26/2013). The Local Council for the Rif Dimashq Governorate also had a General Coordination Office dedicated to coordinating the efforts of the local councils (General Coordination Office). The Council for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq – East Ghouta was apparently a subsidiary of the Local Council for the Rif Dimashq Governorate. The East Ghouta office also engaged in the coordination of Local

Councils within its geographic area, although it apparently did so in a more hands-on manner. A post from December 15, 2016 shows a meeting for local councils to coordinate relief efforts and projects in East Ghouta. These meetings took place on a regular basis (Local Council for the Rif Dimashq Governorate- East Ghouta). The Council also seems to have played a role in service provision, as posts discuss the Food Security Project and the provision of fresh water to towns in East Ghouta (Ibid.).

The Local Council for the Rif Dimashq and the Council for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq – East Ghouta made a very limited number of references to an ethnic or

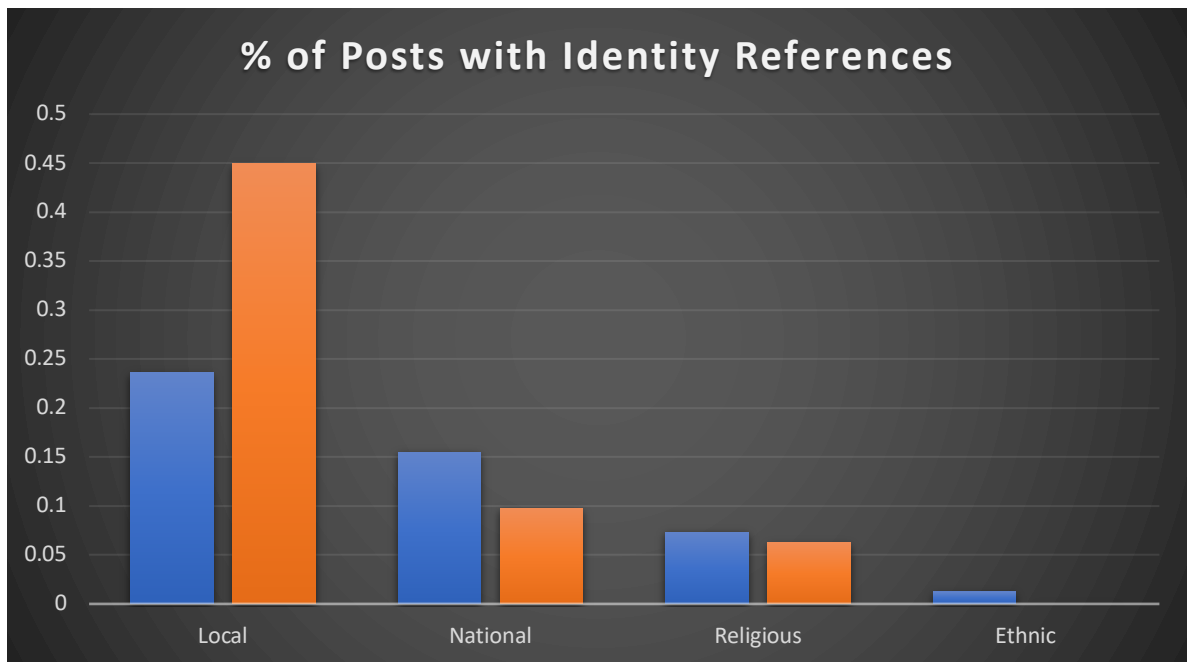


Figure 29 Identity references by the Local Council of Rif Dimashq Governorate and the Council for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq – East Ghouta. The Blue bars are for the Local Council of Rif Dimashq Governorate. The Orange bars are for the Council for the Governo

religious identity. A common use of religious language in these two pages is to express condolences. Sometimes these sentiments are expressed to particular individuals, such as a member of the financial staff who lost his father and his sister during bombing by the regime (Governorate East Ghouta 11/7/2016). Religious occasions are also sometimes marked, such as Ramadan or the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (Governorate East

Ghouta 6/7/2016, Council Rif Dimashq 1/14/2014). Other references are the use of somewhat quotidian phrases, such as opening an occasional post with the phrase, “In the name of God the compassionate and the merciful,” which is often used when one is about to begin a difficult task (Governorate East Ghouta 11/9/2015). When referring to the citizens or particular groups within the area, the term “God bless” is used, such as “God bless the efforts of the medical office,” (Council Rif Dimashq 2/27/2014).⁸⁴ Very few references were made to other Arab states and the only description of something as Arab was a reference to a Syrian Arab office, presumably an aspect of the Ba’thist regime.

The identities most frequently appealed to by both entities were local and national identities. The Local Council for Rif Dimashq Governorate’s Facebook page has a similar number of posts with local and national references, perhaps due to its greater

Word Counts, Local Council for the City of Douma		
Term	English	Count
مدينة*	city	2414
سوري*	Syria(n)	2080
دوما	Douma	1934
النظام	Regime	1554
المجلس	Council	1344
المحلي	Local	1157
الغوطة	Ghouta	1024
دمشق	Damascus	976
الله	God	839
الشهيد	Martyr	775

Figure 30 Word counts from Facebook account of Local Council for the City of Douma

degree of interaction with the National Coalition and other organizations that functioned at a national level. The East Ghouta Council page also includes some mundane references to Syria, such as references to funding received from the Syrian regional program or other Syrian organizations (5/27/2015). Not all references to the nation are so strictly utilitarian, however. For example, on November 5, 2013 The Rif Dimashq Council posted about plans to support the work of the local councils “on Syria’s beloved soil.” The phrase “victory for our revolution” appears several times on The Rif Dimashq Council page (5/18/2016, 2/14/2015, 9/18/2014, 1/30/2014, and 12/5/2013).

This phrase and the general use of the term “revolution” indicate

⁸⁴ All of these expressions would have led a post to be marked as religious in the coding scheme.

national aspirations, that the efforts of the Governorate Council are part of a larger effort to bring about fundamental change to Syria as a whole. The East Ghouta Council also uses the term revolution, although only in a couple of posts. In one post, the kidnapping of an individual is described as, "...a heinous crime against the revolution in general and freedom of opinion and expression in particular..." (7/25/2015). Here, the violation of one individual's rights is connected to the national efforts to transform the Syrian regime - in essence, the abuse of one man's rights is tantamount to an abuse of the rights of all.

On the Facebook pages for both of these institutions, local references certainly are the most frequent. Since locations are part of these groups' names, the reference to place is unsurprisingly consistent. However, references to the area are not limited to repetitions of each council's name. Many posts discuss the provision of goods in particular locations or the actions of other groups, such as the United Services Office of East Ghouta. A post by the East Ghouta Council from February 2, 2016 discusses elections for the local council of Zamalka, a town in East Ghouta. The post boasts of "great popular participation" "Despite the circumstances of war and siege." Both entities will sometimes post photos taken in East Ghouta which will include a caption about its specific location. A photo posted by the East Ghouta Council on July 28, 2015 shows a black plume of smoke and is accompanied by the caption, "Douma is resistance." An earlier post on the Rif Dimashq Council stated, "From the steadfastness/resistance of our children we learn persistence and confrontation. From their smiles we make the future. From their patience we take lessons and we hoped the generation of freedom is great. Here is the Damascus countryside, symbol of glory and parents."⁸⁵ The use of *rif Dimashq*, the Damascus

⁸⁵ The original Arabic text: "من صمود أطفالنا نتعلم الإصرار والتحدي .. من ابتسامتهم نصنع المستقبل .. من صبرهم نأخذ" "الدروس فأملنا بجيل الحرية كبير .. هنا ريف دمشق رمز العزة والإباء"

countryside, at the end of this poem is a clear declaration of what it means to be from this particular part of Syria and denotes a degree of pride on the part of the author.



Figure 31 Original logo for the Local Council of Rif Dimashq

The original logo for the Council for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq (figure 31) reflects this blend of primarily national and local identities. The logo incorporates the colors of the opposition flag, which is black, white and green. The red star at the center of the council’s logo echoes the red stars at the center of the flag of the pre-Ba’thist Syrian Republic, while the sets of three stars on each side of the circle echo the number of stars on the flag. The leaves in the logo are representative of Rif Dimashq’s agriculture. The second logo used by the Council for Rif Dimashq Governorate – East Ghouta simply added a line of text underneath the logo which said “East Ghouta Office” and was posted on July 1, 2015. Through that text the new representation reaffirmed the more local nature of the office. Thus, the initial logo blended national and local elements, like the Council for Idlib Governorate’s logo.

The logo was replaced as the profile picture for the Council in January 2016 with a logo that was adopted by a variety of other institutions in the area. It looks very much like a national seal in almost every aspect. First, the newer logo is reminiscent of the seal



Figure 32 New logo for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq

of the Syrian Arab Republic. The original logo featured the Hawk of Quraysh holding a shield. Presumably, this is the same bird featured on this new logo. The colors are primarily black, green and white with two sets of three red stars again mimic the flag adopted by the opposition. This logo was adopted not only by the Governorate Council, but by several other institutions in the area,

such as the Services Directorate of Rif Dimashq. A version of it became the profile

picture of Douma's local council in October 2016 and it appears on the Facebook pages of other Local Councils in East Ghouta, indicating an effort to provide a greater sense of unity across institutions. While it is clearly national in its iconography and a version of it is used by the temporary Syrian government, the alternative government in exile, I have not come across other local or Governorate level institutions that have used it. In this way, its use seems to reaffirm a degree of cooperation and efforts to at least appear to be part of a single civilian entity that operated throughout the Eastern Ghouta.

Identity Promotion by The Local Council of the City of Douma

The Local Council of the City of Douma Facebook page is by far the most prolific include in this study. Consistent posting began in April 2013 and by the end of 2016 the Local Council page had 5,741 posts. These posts were not evenly distributed across time, with 2013 being the most prolific year (June 2013 alone had 810 posts). Therefore, the chart below uses the percentage of posts each month that included at least one appeal to each type of identity. This is the percentage of appeals posts out of total posts, rather than the percentage of identity types out of those posts with incorporate some kind of identity appeal. As was noted in the last chapter, the same Facebook post may be coded for multiple identities. The rudimentary coding scheme points to a few possible trends. The first of these is the general decline in references to a national identity as the conflict continued. Appeals to a religious identity seemed to increase from January through October 2014. This trend parallels the rise of Jaish al-Islam in 2013 and 2014 (alSaafin 2015) and seems to reflect when the group was perhaps at its most powerful in East Ghouta. As was discussed previously, infighting between armed groups in East Ghouta as

well as protests against Jaish al-Islam took place in 2015 (Ibid). These challenges to Jaish al-Islam's

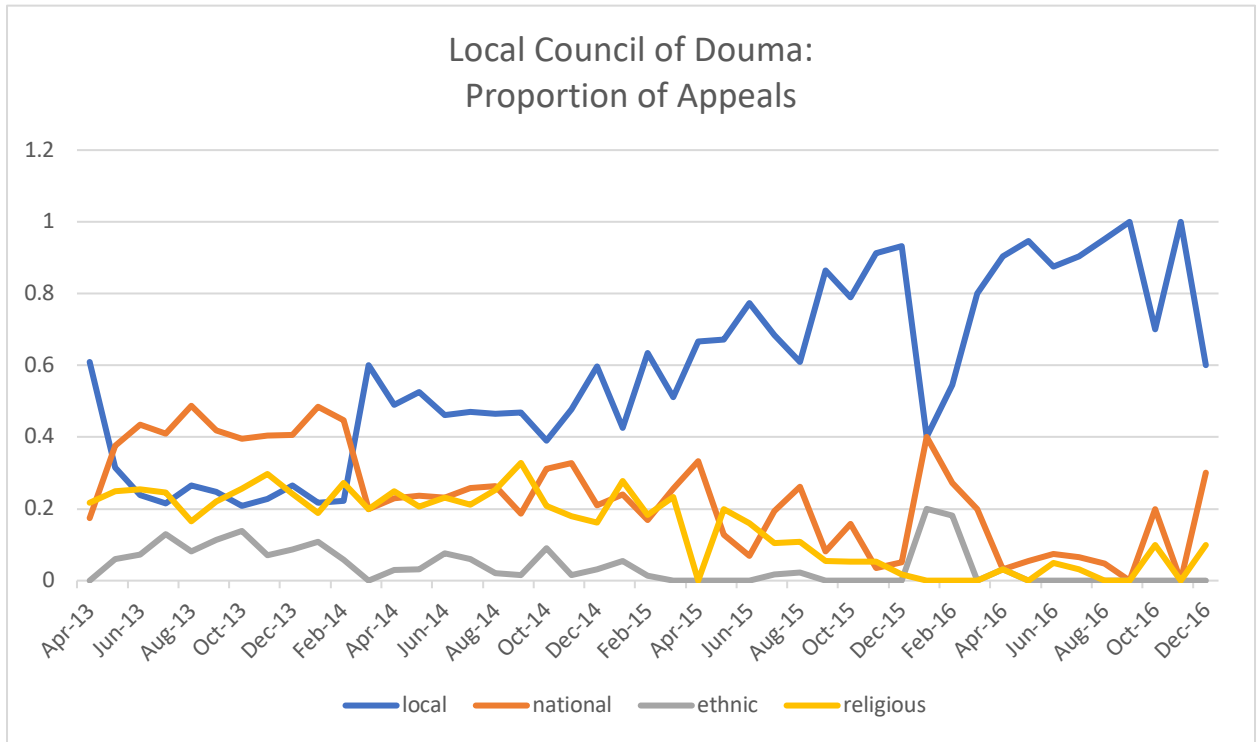


Figure 33 Identity References on the Facebook account for the Local Council of the City of Douma

position seem to generally correspond with the decline in religious appeals by the local council in 2015. This suggests that the strength of the armed group influenced the identity appeals made by local civilians, yielding a more mixed set of identity references.



Figure 34 Relative frequency of appearance of the word "God" by Month, Local Council of City of Douma

While a hybrid type was in place, the identity references made by the Local Council were as mixed as the theory would lead us to expect. Once the major armed group became too weak to sustain a hybrid

institutional arrangement, the identity references by the Local Council shifted.

A consideration of the posts' content also confirms the existence of distinct variations over time. In 2013 the Facebook page for the Local Council appeared to function in part as a media outlet, providing information on significant events happening not only in the city or area, but elsewhere in Syria. This includes links to news coverage by a variety of regional and national sources. Several posts also quote Syrian thinkers and their statements on the state of events in Syria, the state's relationship with external actors, and the apparent inefficacy and distance of the Syrian National Coalition. The mix of local and national news may be a driver of the national and local identities referenced during this period. For example, a post on October 10, 2013 discusses the "Red Line" that was ignored after the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The post goes on to say, "the Arabs and the West will not support us and we say that God will not forget us." This line is then followed by a verse from Sura 65 of the Qur'an which emphasizes that those who have followed the path of God will be spared the horrors of death (10/10/2013). This one post refers to the suffering of the "Syrian people," casting a potentially local tragedy, the use of chemical weapons in Eastern Ghouta, as part of the suffering of the entire nation. It also indicates a continued sense that fellow Arabs are culpable, presumably as they ignore the plight of their fellow Arabs. Finally, the post invokes Islam. In this one post, references to a national, ethnic, and religious identity are all evident, displaying the lack of coherence expected from civilian institutions operating in a hybrid type.

The growing influence of Islamist armed groups is reflected not only in the increased number of religious phrases in late 2013 and in 2014, but also in their quality and purpose. The use of the phrase "In the name of Allah, the merciful and compassionate" becomes much more consistent during this period and was more frequently used than it ever was by the regional councils. Quotations also make an

appearance in this period. On August 5, 2014 the Local Council's post began with, "In the name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful, 'And say, 'Do [as you will], for Allah will see your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger and the believers.'" This second part is from the Qur'an 9:105. This quotation appears in full or in part three times on the Facebook page, 11/29/2014, 8/5/2014, and 11/23/2013. This is not the only reference to holy text or religious belief. Several mundane initiatives by the Local Council were legitimated at least in with religion. Efforts to register real estate were undertaken, "under the slogan 'Property is a sacred right' (8/16/2014). A project to combat littering and deal with trash was "based on the principles of our religion ((cleanliness of faith))" (4/1/2014). A post on December 28, 2014 refers to the Muslim belief in the right to life when discussing the conditions faced by children living under siege. These clear religious appeals to legitimate the actions taken by the Local Council seem to be concentrated in 2014, with most direct quotations from the Quran used outside of the context of mourning, are in late 2013 or 2014. Thus, it seems that not only do the quantity of references to a religious identity change over time, but that when Jaish al-Islam was at its most powerful in the area, religious appeals were consistently made by the Local Council of the City of Douma.⁸⁶

As we saw in the chart, the Local Council adopted more local appeals in 2015 and 2016 as the influence of Jaish al-Islam waned. One of the changes which accounts for the increase in references to local identity is an increase in the number of photos or videos posted by the Local Council which show the city of Douma and express love or devotion

⁸⁶ There are several ways in which the armed group's capacity may have influenced the identity promotion by the local council. Council members may have made this choice in order to accommodate the armed group and promote cooperation with it. The armed group may have also exerted influence during the election process to promote the candidacy of religious individuals who looked favorably upon Jaish al-Islam, a more indirect means of attaining influence and shifting the council's identity promotion.

for their home. For example, a photograph from January 20, 2015 looks down upon some of Douma's palm trees dusted with snow. The accompanying caption reads, "We love your land and soils... we love your snow and waters." Attacks on the city are also recorded on the Facebook page, sometimes followed by lists of the deceased. Other photos display the various offices of the Local Council at work, showing that services are being provided to the citizens and occasionally repeating the slogan "We are here to serve you." Some of these videos are informational, providing details on the structure of the local council or explaining the responsibilities of the subsidiary offices. The use of religious language decreases significantly not only in quantity but in quality during this period. Phrases such as, "Oh God, peace," in posts about ongoing air raids or "God bless" in expressions of condolence are not uncommon, but such short references replace the lengthier quotations. Justifications of council action based upon religious beliefs or practices also disappear. Thus, a qualitative analysis backs up the results of the initial content analysis, that identity references shift away from religion in 2015 and 2016 to focus more squarely upon local identities.

Having access to the Local Council of Douma's Facebook page from 2013 through 2016 provides some helpful insights. First, it displays the lack of coherence that we expect to see when the city is experiencing a hybrid type – that is, when civilian institutions and armed groups are both involved in governance. In addition, we can see the ways in which civilian identity appeals are related to the strength of the area's armed group. Douma functioned as the headquarters for Jaish al-Islam, a group which grew in strength and influence after the Eastern Ghouta's encirclement in 2013. Through 2014 this group was a dominant actor in the area, which aligns with a shift in identity references made by the Local Council of Douma. The Local Council not only used more

religious language, but actually used religious beliefs to justify some of its actions during this period. Challenges to the authority of JAI align with the next shift in the Local Councils identity appeals, which shifted in favor of a more civil, local focus. This included not only accounts of local service provision but also images and captions that glorified the city and emphasized local heritage.

There are other ways in which we can see this variation across time, including in the Local Council’s logo. In August 2015 the Local Council’s Facebook page posted as



Figure 35 Old Local Council Logo for Douma

its logo a circular image that said “the Local Council for the City of Douma” in Arabic and “Local Council of Douma” in English. In the middle in red calligraphy is the name of the city, Douma, which is surrounded by a grape vine and a bunch of grapes. Like the Rif Dimashq Council’s logo, the Local Council is emphasizing the area’s agriculture. Several Douma groups have incorporated a

bunch of grapes into their logos or other visuals, such as Facebook cover photos. This initial version of the logo also connects to the larger opposition through the incorporation



Figure 36 New Local Council Logo for Douma

of green, black, white, and red, the colors found on the Syrian Ba’thist and pre-Ba’thist Syrian flags.⁸⁷ In October 2014 the color scheme of the Local Council’s logo changed. The black was replaced with navy blue and the red became pink. This change aligns with the peak in the Facebook page’s religious references

and follows the first period of increased references to local places and spaces. Thus, this change is open to several potential interpretations. On the one hand, this may have been

⁸⁷ These colors are also those found on the flag of the Arab revolt as well as the national flags of a number of Arab states, including Jordan, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

an effort to assert the civilian character of the Local Council by distancing itself from a flag associated with the armed (and peaceful) opposition. It may also have been an effort to assert the local character of the council, creating a visual distance between the Local Council and national revolutionary efforts. A third possible motivation for the change was a desire to abandon all connections to Arab nationalism. Any of these objectives would have aligned with a desire not to be seen as too much of a threat to the authority of a powerful armed group which embraced a strict interpretation of Islam and carried black flags rather than the green, white, and black flags associated with affiliates of the Free Syrian Army.⁸⁸

While civilians promote a local identity when they have the freedom to do so, when armed groups were relatively strong this influenced the identity repertoire of civilian actors. The next section discusses some of the institutions established by armed groups and their reflection of armed actors' identity repertoires. Here too, we can see changes over time as the power of armed groups, especially Jaish al-Islam, waxed and waned.

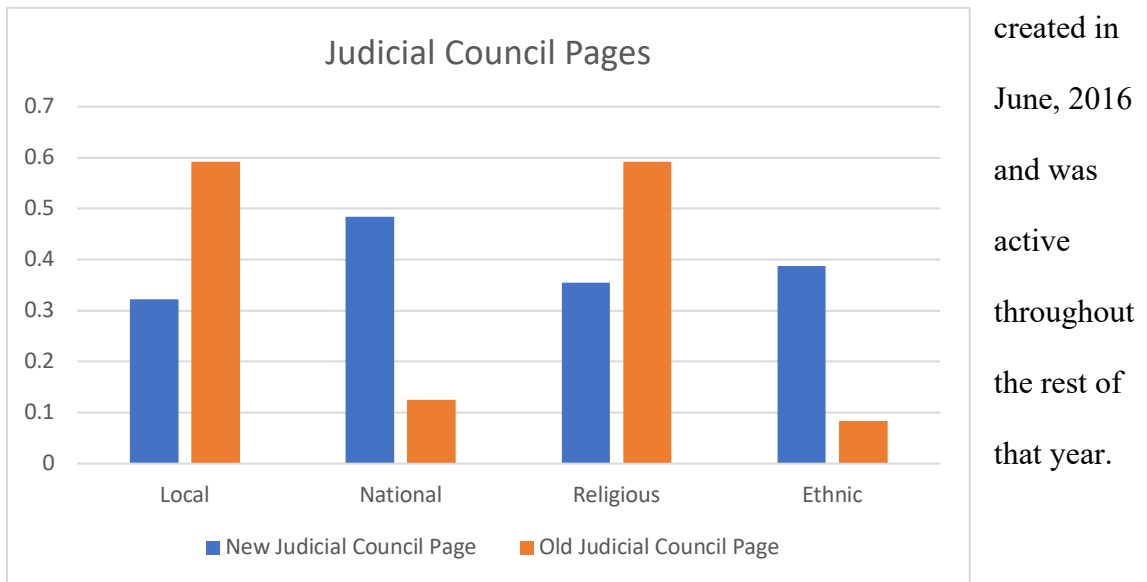
Identity Promotion by Armed Groups' Institutions

This chapter focuses primarily on the institution building and identity promotion efforts by Jaish al-Islam, one of East Ghouta's most prominent armed groups. From the beginning, this armed group was characterized by its embrace of Islam (Darwish 2015: 72). As such, we would expect to see a religious identity consistently promoted by institutions formed by the armed group. I will begin with a discussion on the identities

⁸⁸ Like the Council for the Governorate of Rif Dimashq, the Local Council of the City of Douma adopted a new logo with the opposition's national seal in 2016. At least, it adopted this logo as the profile picture on its Facebook page. In photos and videos, such as videos showing elections for the Local Council which took place in 2016, the pink, navy and green grape logo is the only seal visible.

referred to by the Judicial Council of East Ghouta. I find that the identity references do align with expectations in terms of their quantity and their quality. However, as was true for the strictly civilian institutions of East Ghouta, it seems that religious rhetoric was toned down somewhat as the power of Jaish al-Islam waned.

The Judicial Council of East Ghouta has two Facebook pages. The first of these pages was active between June 24, 2014 and October 2, 2015. The newer page was



created in June, 2016 and was active throughout the rest of that year.

Figure 37 Identity References by the Judicial Council of Eastern Ghouta

Unsurprisingly, the older page had more posts which were included in the sample (120) than the newer page (31 by the end of 2016). There are some important variations between the two incarnations of the Council’s Facebook page. Figure 37 uses proportions of identity reference posts out of the total number of posts and shows a fairly even mix of identity references by the newer page. The older Facebook page was more consistently local and religious, which fits with our expectations for an institution established by an armed group that embraced a religious identity. The higher degree of religiosity in the older Facebook page is matched by a qualitative analysis of the Judicial Council’s posts. There are numerous posts that incorporate Qur’anic quotations. Sura 4, a-Nisa’, appears

in at least six posts. It is one of the Medinan *surat*, which means that it was recorded while the prophet and his followers were establishing a community in the city of Medina and, like other *surat* from this period, is concerned with setting forth rules for the faithful to live by. Posts from January 31, 2015 and June 20, 2015 include portions of verse 58, “Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.” The third verse from this *sura* which appears on the Facebook page is verse 65, which was quoted on April 25, 2015, “But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission.” Both of these relate to the matter of judgement. In the former, god commands those who make judgements on Earth do so fairly. The use of this quotation by a judicial entity seems to indicate a desire to legitimate their position as a group which will abide by this religious commandment to judge fairly and as God instructs. The second quote also seems to be an attempt to strengthen the legitimacy of the court, as it is those who are willing, who deem themselves true believers, who will subject themselves to the council’s judgement.

Other quotations from the Qur’an touch less directly upon justice and are focused on specific issues, particularly theft. A post from July 13, 2014 also quotes the fourth *sura*, “And if any does that in hate and injustice – Soon shall We throw him into the fire: And it is easy for Allah (to do).” Another post from August 16, 2014 includes a quotation from the eighth *sura*, Spoils of War, “O you who believe! Do not betray to the trust of Allah and the Messenger, and do not steal (or cheat) knowingly from the things given you in trust.” Considering the conditions created by the siege, it is perhaps unsurprising that

concerns over theft and the distribution of resources would be of particular concern to the Judicial Council. That they chose to legitimate their decisions on such issues using text from the Holy Qur'an is interesting, as it shows a clear focus on using a religious identity as the source of their legitimacy.



Figure 38 Logo for the Judicial Council of Eastern Ghouta

There are also visual aspects of these Facebook pages which appeal to a religious identity. Both the old and the new Facebook page use the same judicial council logo. The logo incorporates several shades of green, the color of Islam. The circles are a teal shade, while the central geometric pattern is a much brighter shade. The geometric pattern recalls artwork of

the Middle Ages, when religious prohibitions on the depiction of people led to a decorative style that emphasized such patterns. The text at the center is clearly a Qur'an, as close inspection of the image shows the marks between verses. The placement of the Qur'an at the center indicates that it plays a similarly central role as the source of the Judicial Council's interpretation of justice. The image of the Qur'an at the center of the logo also has tinges of green. The top of the logo includes a portion of the aforementioned verse 4:65, "But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves." Here the Judicial Council is connecting itself to the life of the Prophet and the idea that it is believers who will seek judgement, thus only those who identify

themselves as true believers will seek the Council's judgement. Other visual elements on the page includes posts which are artistic renderings of quotations. One of these is a post from September 25, 2014 which features an artistic rendering of a quote by a medieval Sunni Jurist, Ibn Qayyim, that is critical of atheists. Thus, the content, visual and textual, of the Judicial Council's initial Facebook page make numerous appeals to a religious identity.

The promotion of a religious identity by Jaish al-Islam is also in evidence outside of the institutions the group established. The group joined the Islamic Front, an organization of Salafist⁸⁹ rebel groups. The Islamic Front adopted a charter in 2013, before Jaish al-Islam joined its ranks, in which it announced its intention to create a Syrian regime⁹⁰ in which Islam would be the, "religion of the state, and it is the principal and only source of legislation" (MacDonald 2015). Comments made by members of Jaish al-Islam fall in line with the Islamic Front's official position. The organization's founder, Zahran Alloush, told fighters, "O mujahideen brothers! We will leave these fields in which we finished our course and preparation and we will continue with preparing to wage jihad" (Ibid.). Here, the conflict against the regime was clearly couched in religious terms. Alloush also used sectarian language in an effort to rally Sunni Muslim support against the Ba'athist regime. In a video published online in 2014 Alloush claims that, "The mujahediin of Sham will wash the filth of the Rafida and Rafidism from Sham, they will wash it forever, if Allah wills it, until they cleanse Bilad al-Sham from the filth of the Majous who have fought the religion of Allah" (MacDonald 2015). *Rafida*, which means rejectionists, is often used in reference to members of the Shi'ite religious

⁸⁹ Salafism is a branch of Sunni Islam known for its extreme orthodoxy and encouraging followers to emulate the lives of the Prophet and his followers.

⁹⁰ Unlike internationalist groups like al-Qaeda or Daesh, the Islamic Front's aspirations and orientation are strictly national (MacDonald 2015).

community (MacDonald 2015). This category generally includes Alawites, an ethnoreligious group which counts many high-ranking members of the Syria's Ba'athist regime, including the President, Bashar al-Asad, as members.

As was mentioned earlier, there seems to be a significant shift in the content of the Judicial Council Facebook changes. The de-emphasis of religious language between the two pages follows the trends shown by the Local Council of the City of Douma. The decline in the power of Jaish al-Islam in 2015 may be associated with the cessation of posting on the old Judicial Council Facebook page. The new Facebook page has a more even distribution of identity references. It was also created in 2016 after East Ghouta saw outright armed conflict between Jaish al-Islam and other members of the opposition, after the standing of Jaish al-Islam in the area was undermined. This shift is not only shown in the coding of the content but also when we take a qualitative approach to the page's content. The new page makes multiple references to the Syrian constitution of 1950 (11 out of the 31 posts refer to its text). The only reference to "constitution" on the old Facebook page was a quote from a Turkish minister which describes the Qur'an as a constitution. These references to the 1950 constitution also indicate that the basis for decisions of the court may have shifted between the end of one Facebook page and the start of the other. While the new page has fewer photos of the court in deliberation, there are some indications that the composition of the court may also have shifted. The photos from the old Facebook page show men identifiable as sheikhs or men in religious dress. However, on the new page there is a photo of an individual working for the criminal court who is described as *ustaath*, a term which literally means teacher but is often used as a general term of respect in Syrian colloquial Arabic (Judicial Court of Eastern Ghouta

July 2, 2016). Thus, it seems possible that along with a shift in the religiosity of the council's discourse, the council's membership may have also changed.

This is not to say that religion was entirely abandoned by the Judicial Council on its new Facebook page. References to a religious identity still emerged in expressions of condolence and the phrase "In the name of God the Compassionate and the Merciful," was still used to start some posts. The new version of the Facebook page still uses the logo employed by the original Judicial Council, and that logo appears on images of official announcements. However, appeals to a religious identity were no longer invoked in order to legitimate the position of the Judicial Council.

Other institutions established by armed groups in the Eastern Ghouta also promoted a religious identity. The Shura Council, as mentioned earlier, was established by a coalition of armed groups in East Ghouta to replace the Local Council ("Eastern Ghouta: Foundation of Independent Judiciary" and Khibyeh 2014). As these armed groups appealed to a religious identity, it is no surprise that the Council they established did the same. Even the name of the group had a religious connotation. *Shura*, consultation, is set forth as a key component of good governance in the Qur'an and has been used historically by those who interpret democracy through an Islamic lens (Esposito and Piscatori 1991: 434). While the term "Local Council" sounds very civic, a "Shura Council," is inherently legitimated through its connection to Islam.

The Facebook page for the Shura Council was only active from March 21, 2013 until June 2014 although it had 693 posts in that span of time. The formation of the page fits with the rise of Liwa al-Islam, the entity that would become Jaish al-Islam. The timing of the Facebook page's end does not seem to clearly align with a change in JAI's fortunes, nor does it fit with overall trends in the level of violence experienced in the

governorate (which seems to have been relatively higher in 2013 than 2014 according to the Syrian Shuhada database).

While the cause of the cessation in the Facebook page’s activity is unclear, for the time period available we

can see the role of religion in the institution’s identity appeals. When we consider the percentage of posts which make a reference to any of the

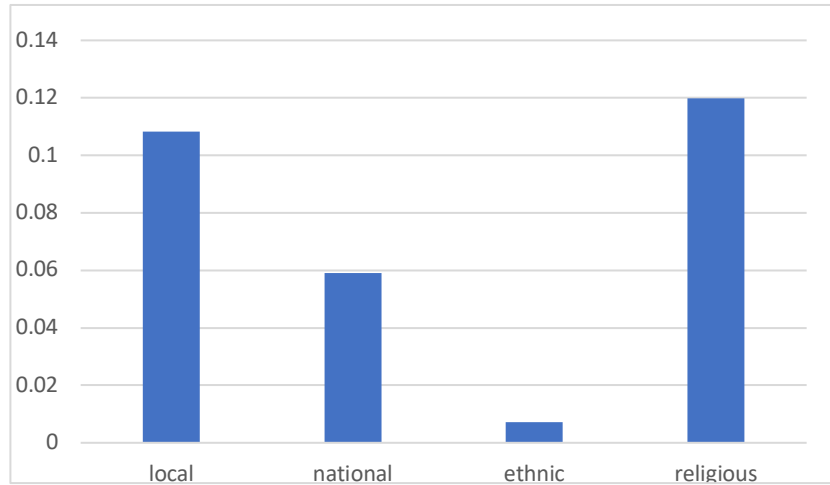


Figure 37: Identity References by the Shura Council

four kinds of identity, religious identity references are the most common, followed closely by local references. Interestingly, while the page had almost 700 posts, only a limited number met the criteria set out in the coding scheme (only 83 posts were coded as having religious identity references). This may be because the coding scheme is focused on text while the Shura Council mostly posted photos. These photos include images of



Figure 39 Photograph posted by the Facebook page of the Shura Council’s Local Executive

service provision, such as trash collection and street cleaning, as well as images of the Council’s announcements. The men in the photos who are out on the streets providing services are generally depicted wearing vests with the logo of the Shura Council’s Local

Executive. This indicates an effort to associate the public goods provided to the population with the Shura Council.

The pattern holds for institutions associated with or established by armed groups other than Jaish al-Islam. Other Islamist armed groups in East Ghouta also promoted their religious identities through institution building. One of these institutions was the Shari'a

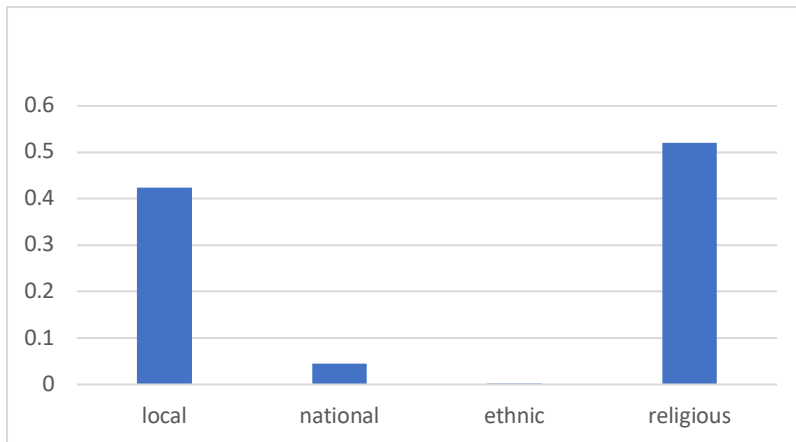


Figure 40 Identity References by the Shari'a Body of Damascus and its Countryside

Body of Damascus and its Countryside – Eastern Ghouta. Numerous armed groups operating in Eastern Ghouta, many of which were Islamist, acknowledged this institution (Local

Council Douma April 1, 2014). The Facebook page for the Shari'a Body only started on February 15, 2015 and by the end of the year 2016 had 555 posts. Here too, the content analysis indicates an emphasis on religious and local identities. In this case, over half of the posts produced had some reference to a religious identity. Thus, this pattern is true for institutions established by or with strong ties to other Islamist armed groups in the Eastern Ghouta, not only those institutions tied to Jaish al-Islam.

The Role of External Actors in Identity Promotion

The Role of External Support in Identity Promotion

In a situation of state retreat the state lacks the capacity to enforce sovereignty and is open to interference by other states. External actors have two channels through which they may influence (wittingly or unwittingly) the identities promoted by particular groups. The first mechanism is through the provision of material support to actors who support a particular identity, one that aligns with the donor. Support improves the

likelihood that the client organization will survive and have the capacity to provide public goods to civilians, thereby influencing the salience of identities among civilians. The second mechanism is direct military engagement, a tactic which has been of particular relevance to East Ghouta. This may mitigate the ability of groups which embrace particular identities to survive or support civilians.

External support played a significant role in the survival and success of Islamist armed groups in Eastern Ghouta. Support from states such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar had significant impacts on the ability of armed groups to succeed on the battlefield (al-Shami and Yassin-Kassab 2016). The success of Jaish al-Islam from 2012 until 2015 can be largely attributed to the support the group received from outside Syria. As was mentioned earlier in the chapter, the founder of Jaish al-Islam was Zahran Alloush, whose father was a Salafist preacher who studied in Saudi Arabia (MacDonald 2015). Alloush himself had also studied in Medina and had connections to Salafist preachers and thinkers in the Gulf who supplied his armed group (Lund 2017). In the Fall of 2013 external support increased dramatically, as Jaish al-Islam received money raised on telethons by Kuwaiti preachers. The reigning family of Saudi Arabia also threw its support behind JAI due in part to its Islamist bona fides (Lund 2017). The material support Jaish al-Islam obtained from abroad meant that the group could attract individual fighters away from poorer armed groups (Ibid). In some cases, JAI was able to attract entire brigades to its banner. A local brigade in Zamalka, another town in East Ghouta, became a part of JAI, and in return the group received gear and ammunition (Darwish 2015: 72). It is unlikely that JAI

would have been able to expand in this manner without material support from external actors, including Saudi Arabia.⁹¹

The identity embraced and promoted by Jaish al-Islam made it appealing to religious scholars and leaders residing in the Gulf states. While the support of Saudi royals may have had as much or more to do with JAI's proximity to the capital city than its religious credentials, the support of donors in Kuwait was predicated on the identity promoted by Jaish al-Islam (Lund 2017). Thus, the ability of Jaish al-Islam to become Eastern Ghouta's strongest armed group between 2012 and 2015 was predicated upon the identity it embraced.⁹² However, this support was not to last. It seems that the support that Jaish al-Islam received from outside Syria tapered off in 2015. This could be because the United States put diplomatic pressure on Gulf governments to limit private donors (Lund 2017). While this was not the only thing that weakened Jaish al-Islam, this seems to have played a significant role in the group's economic woes and subsequent weakening.

It does not appear that civilian institutions received external support that was tied to the promotion of any particular identity. The Local Council of the City of Douma, as well as the Local Council for Rif Dimashq Governorate thanked a variety of NGOs and other organizations for their support. Among these were the Syrian Business Forum,

⁹¹ The virulent language used by JAI in reference to Da'esh is clearly an effort to damage the legitimacy of a rival actor. This anti-Da'esh position also fits the interests of JAI's client, Saudi Arabia. There are multiple ways in which Da'esh can be considered a threat to Saudi Arabia: as an opponent of the established Arab state order and as an entity which claims to speak for a "true" version of Islam.

⁹² Many individual donors appear to be ideologically motivated, emphasizing the religious identities embraced by the armed groups they support and spurning appeals for funds from armed groups that primarily promote a national identity (Hubbard 2013). Armed groups have made efforts to publicly thank their sponsors, sometimes posting videos on YouTube to do so (Ibid; Dickinson 2014). Syrian armed groups also produced videos in order to convey their efficacy to potential donors (Dickinson 2014). Raising funds for armed groups has been used by Kuwaiti politicians to make themselves more popular (Westall and Harby 2013) and private donors often have photos and videos which they show to display the efficacy of their fundraising efforts (Hubbard 2013; Dickinson 2014).

Chemonics, a Sudanese NGO, and other charitable organizations based in the Middle East.⁹³ These groups seem to have provided support directly to local institutions which they could then distribute and use to provide public goods to the community. The variety of sources and lack of coherence across them in terms of country of origin or religious inclination, make it unlikely that civilian institutions embraced particular identities in order to obtain the support of outside actors. For the civilian institutions it seems that identity appeals do not yield a particular set of donors. The wider range of organizations willing and able to support civilian institutions leads their relationships to differ from the relationships between donors and armed actors.⁹⁴

The Influence of Violence by External Actors

Just as the support of external actors can aid civilian and armed actors in their efforts to govern the population, violence perpetrated by external actors can make this task difficult or impossible. As was discussed in a previous chapter, Russia became directly involved in the Syrian conflict in September 2015. Across Syria, Russian aircraft targeted critical infrastructure, such as water supplies, generators, and hospitals (Amnesty 2016). According to the LiveUMap, there were 35 attacks on the Eastern Ghouta from October through December 2015. While attacks certainly damaged the ability of civilian institutions in Eastern Ghouta to supply public goods, the social media accounts of the Local Council and the Eastern Ghouta and governorate institutions provide consistent accounts of sustained efforts to provide public goods to the population, often striving to

⁹³ The Local Council has also thanked independent entities which have provided support for the people of Douma directly. This includes several posts thanking the Civil Defense or White Helmets as well as posts thanking the Red Crescent.

⁹⁴ Bob focuses on the pursuit of external support by armed actors and claims that demand in these situations always exceeds supply (2005: 17-18). While there is clearly a significant level of demand from civilian groups, they are able to find numerous sources of support. This changes the relationship between donor and recipient for civilian actors as compared to the armed groups which are the focus of Bob's work.

repair damage inflicted by regime bombardment or aerial attacks by Russian and Syrian aircraft. Thus, bombardment by an outside actor shaped the forms that public goods provision took but not necessarily whether or not it occurred.

The direct engagement of the Russian military seems to have had a more significant impact on Jaish al-Islam. First, civilians grew frustrated as armed groups seemed more intent on competing with each other over smuggling tunnels than dealing with threats imposed by Russia or the Syrian regime, which damaged the legitimacy of JAI (Lund 2017). The direct support of the Russian military also aided the regime in reversing some of the loss of territory it had previously suffered, which, when combined with the weakening of previously strong groups like Jaish al-Islam, led armed groups in the Eastern Ghouta to lose territory to the Asad regime. The third way in which the engagement of Russia had a particular and important impact on Jaish al-Islam was the impact of airstrikes on the group's leadership. On Christmas Day, 2015 JAI lost its charismatic leader, Zahran Alloush, to an airstrike. Commentators declared that remaining hopes that the area could be unified died as well, and JAI never regained the standing it possessed under his leadership (Lund 2017). While the involvement of external actors in the Syrian conflict was not the only factor which reduced the strength of Jaish al-Islam in 2015, it did play a role in reducing the group's capacity to function and to effectively promote the religious identity it had embraced. However, it is important to note that by the time Russia became directly involved in the Syrian conflict, Eastern Ghouta could no longer be considered a hybrid type, as Jaish al-Islam had already weakened significantly. Thus, in this case it appears that external involvement exacerbated existing weakness. While Russian airstrikes may have further damaged the

ability of Jaish al-Islam to promote a religious identity, this capacity had already been curtailed by other factors, such as the decrease in external material support.

Protest Analysis

Before discussing the result of the protest analysis, it is important to note the sources used to create the sample of videos and photos of protests. The Douma sample included videos from the creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution. None came up from a search through the posts by the Syrian Revolution Network. For local sources included videos and photos posted to the Douma Revolution 2011 Facebook page which recounted a great deal of public political activity, as well as a local YouTube channel. The Douma videos channel stopped uploading in 2013 but included hundreds of video clips of protests that took place through March of 2013. While other sources were more evenly distributed across years, the Douma Videos sample meant I had over a thousand video clips and photos of protests in Douma, most of which were from 2012. To address the temporal imbalance of the sample, I included no more than two video clips or photos from each month. If there were more than two (as was the case for most of 2012 and early 2013) I used a random number generator to decide which materials to include in a sample. The results were still somewhat skewed, with 20 clips or photos from 2012, fourteen from 2013, eleven from 2014, two from 2015, and seventeen from 2016. Unlike the protest sample from Ma'arat a-Nu'man, almost all of the source materials for Douma were videos, and as such chants, songs, speeches, banners, flags, and other visual elements meant this limited sample had a significant quantity of information to analyze.

In the mixed case, the theory anticipates that a mix of identities will be salient for locals. The mixed identity promotion across the institutions created by armed actors and civilians should result in a mix of identities being expressed by civilians. As figure 41

shows, a mix of identities were used by the residents of Douma during public protests.⁹⁵

National, religious, and local identities were all referred to and there were even a few appeals to an Arab identity. The latter largely took the form of chants which shamed

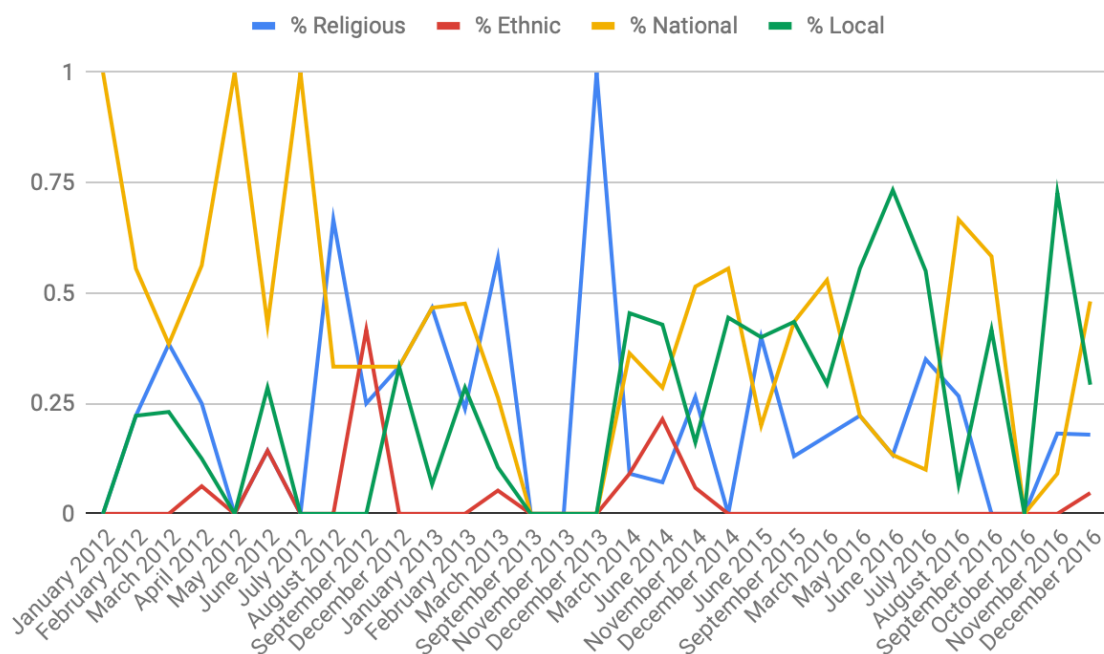


Figure 41 Identity References in Demonstrations from the City of Douma, January 2012-December 2016

other Arab states for the regime’s crackdown against protesters in Syria. A protest held in Douma on June 15, 2012 included the chant, “Fear God, O Arabs. O Arabs, you’ve abandoned us.” Another protest from September 2012 had a chant with a similar tone, “...O Arabs, you’ve beaten us. Fear God, O Arabs, from the nation (*watan*) you’ve displaced us...” In neither of these statements do we see an Arab identity referred to in a positive manner, in a way which affirms the centrality of a common tie. Instead, fellow

⁹⁵ It should be noted that there are several months in 2013 in which there were no protests in the sample – April through August had no protests and neither did October. The other months did have at least one protest in the sample per month.

Arabs share blame for the displacement experienced by many Syrians from their homeland.⁹⁶

The mixing of national, religious, and local identities can be seen in chants which referred to all three identities. One chant from April 2012 included the following passage:

“Douma, the great! Praise God! God is Great! Praise God! God is Great! Apple of my eye, bless my soul, the Syrian thinks he’s all that. The Homsian is light hearted, his laugh makes you forget your cares. He doesn’t care for bullets or blood, keeping life up to God. Apple of my eye, bless my soul, the Syrian thinks he’s all that. Maher threatened us with a uniform. By God, you’re gonna get licked. And we’ll raise a generation just the way it is...”

This chant plays upon local, religious, and national identities. The first line asserts the city’s greatness, playing upon a local identity. There are several references to God and the listeners are directed to “praise God.” The people of Homs, who are described in glowing terms, also are depicted as being brave because they trust in God who determines who lives and dies. The nation is invoked in several ways. First are the references to Syrians, who are referred to as confident. The entire chant refers to Syrians of multiple cities far from Douma, including Homs, Daraa, Idlib, and Deir az-Zor. The references to other places engaged in revolting against the regime is an act of “remapping the nation,” creating a new vision of the national space (Ismail 2011). In addition to expressing solidarity with other parts of Syria, there are also references to regime figures. This excerpt refers to threats made by Maher al-Asad, the brother of Bashar al-Asad and a General in the Syrian military. The chant therefore includes a positive articulation of the nation defined by the epicenters of protest, as well as the national opponent, the regime.

⁹⁶ Arabic has two words which are often translated into English as nation. *Qawm* is a word for nation used to refer to the Arab nation while *watan* is used to refer to the homeland, nation as delimited by nation states.

Such a mix of identities can also be seen in later protests. Other examples bring together national, religious, and local identities. A speech from a small demonstration held in November 2014 provides a dramatic example. Two excerpts are included below and a translation of the entire text can be found in Appendix 3:

“ Another thing I want to tell you, Syria will always remain Ottoman and not Safavid, Syria will always remain Ottoman and not Safavid. Say it with me, Syria is Ottoman and not Safavid. Unfortunately, the images we saw out of the Umayyad mosque yesterday demonstrate that Damascus is an occupied city, and these images show that Damascus is occupied. There was an Ashura procession where they chanted words that insult the disciples (of Mohammad) and they hit themselves. They want to impose their culture and prove that Damascus belongs to Iran. We swear that small children with their small hands will defeat this Iranian project...”

This part of the speech begins with a historical reference to two Middle Eastern empires. The Ottoman Empire, which was founded in Anatolia in the 16th century, legitimated its rule using Sunni Islam (Cleveland and Bunton 2009: 139). This reference to Syria’s Ottoman past connects the present to a time when Sunni Islam played an important role in legitimating the political order. The Safavid Empire, a Persian empire which included modern Iran, was the first Persian dynasty to embrace Shiite Islam as its official religion. It was under the Safavids that Shiite Islam became that area’s most popular sect (Cleveland and Bunton 2009: 52-53). The term “Safavid” has been used by Salafists to refer to Shiites in a negative way (Dickinson 2014). The speaker goes on to connect the Shiite Safavids with modern Iran and Iran’s support of the al-Asad regime. He discusses images of an Ashura procession, an annual event in Shiite Islam which marks the death of the sons of the Caliph Ali. The speaker sees the enacting of such an event outside Damascus’ most famous mosque as an imposition by outsiders of their religious culture.

The speaker repeats this distinction between Sunnis and Shiites later in the speech when he says, “Damascus belongs to Muslims, not the regime's people, and not for

heretics and not for the Iranians. To free fighters and to revolutionaries, your names are fire in Bashar's heart... Oh Mulaiha we are coming back, an army of Muslims to clean your soil..." In this passage "Muslims" are contrasted with "the Iranians," who are Shiite, and "the regime's people," many of whom are Alawite. Thus, it seems that Damascus belongs to Sunni Muslims. In addition it is clear that the speaker is identifying himself and listeners as the Muslim "we" who will purge the occupiers and cleanse the town of Mulaiha, a suburb of Damascus. While this portion of the speech clearly has strong religious elements it also has national and local elements. The reference to free or liberated individuals and "revolutionaries" are both terms used regularly during the national uprising in 2011. There is also a reference to a local place, Mulaiha, a suburb of Damascus. This example shows how religious, national, and local identities were woven together in Douma protests.

Other examples, especially from 2016, bring together national and local identities. In one protest from March 2016 a crowd joined in the chorus of a modified rendition of a traditional Syrian song:

"Decorate Marja, Marja is ours. Damascus is a wonder to behold when it is decorated. And her (damascus') leaders are free. Her leaders are free and its people (men) are revolutionaries. And we will see our country decorated again.... Where is the clapping and where is the voice...And the Syrian does not fear death, And Ghouta does not fear death, and Douma...(inaudible)."

This song weaves together national and local appeals. First, the song itself is a well-known, national song which describes Marja Square in Damascus, also known as Martyr's Square. It was at this location that several Syrian activists were executed by Ottoman authorities, an act later replicated by French colonial officials. In addition to references to the national revolution and "our country," there are also references to the

local community. Both the area of al-Ghouta and the city of Douma are explicitly referenced.

Although the identities were largely mixed, a couple of trends emerge in the data. Through the Summer of 2012 national identities were more prominent and were in turn replaced by religious identities which spiked in their relative appearance in late 2012 and 2013. Starting in the Spring and Summer of 2014 the identity picture becomes more evenly mixed between local, national, and religious identities, with local identities becoming relatively more prominent than it had been in earlier protests. In this later period, a local identity increases relative to its appearance in earlier protests.

The relative increase in the emphasis on a local identity takes two forms. Some of these references to the local are expressions of solidarity with other places in Syria. A banner from a protest on September 2, 2016 said, “From Douma to Darayya, the brotherhood of grapes and blood, a salute to your perseverance. Eastern Ghouta, 2 September, 2016.” Similarly, a chant from March 2016 also included expressions of solidarity between Douma and other locations, “Darayya, Douma is with you unto death... O Der'a, Douma is with you unto death... O Marj, Douma is with you unto death...” In these examples references to Douma are used in an expression of solidarity, the local community reaching out to others.

In addition, a number of protests in 2016 focused on issues that were particularly pressing in the Eastern Ghouta. Numerous signs and chants called for the unification of armed groups. One example is this speech from a demonstration in November 2016,

“This protest is gathered under the slogan save al-Ghouta and we are gathered to ask the factions to agree to the demands of the civil movement. God willed it that Jaish al-Islam has also agreed on these terms. We ask today that all the factions meet to agree to all these demands and to work immediately to achieve them... The civil movement in the Eastern Ghouta demands the removal of the checkpoints, returning rights to their owners whoever they are and whatever their

rights may be; re-igniting the latent fronts in Eastern Ghouta (AKA restarting the fight with the regime); and the creation of an operation room. Whoever does not respond to these demands in the coming days we will declare that he is not part of Eastern Ghouta... I am from Ghouta and I don't have a checkpoint between a brother and a brother. We all ate its grapes and drank the same water. Remove the checkpoints so there has to be an argument about it..."

In this example, people protest the divisions between the armed groups in East Ghouta, the existence of infighting between opposition groups and a lack of unified focus against the Ba'thist regime. In addition to focusing on local actors (the armed groups active in the area, including Jaish al-Islam) there is an emphasis on membership in the local community. Those armed groups which fail to abide by the protesters' demands, "...we will declare that he is not part of Eastern Ghouta..." In other words, these armed groups will not be considered part of the local community. There is also an emphasis on the shared identity of those who live in East Ghouta, who are described as "brothers" who "all ate its grapes and drank the same water." The reference to eating the same grapes connects to the agricultural character of the area and the grapes, as previously discussed, have been consistently used as a symbol by institutions in Douma.

It is also worth noting that, while religious appeals still appear in the mix of identity references, they appear relatively less frequently in the protests that take place starting in the Spring of 2014. This decreased emphasis on religion bears similarities to the shifts which we saw in the identity promotion of the Local Council of the City of Douma which placed increasing emphasis on a local identity and a decreasing emphasis on a religious identity. While the protests reflect the mixed identity references anticipated by the theory, the relative weight of the religious and local identities shifted in a way that was similar to changes in the identity promotion by the Local Council of the City of Douma.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored identity promotion by actors in the Eastern Ghouta between 2012 and 2016. When the major armed group, Jaish al-Islam, was supported by outside actors it was able to establish institutions that promoted a religious identity. This religious identity also attracted the external donors who supported the armed group. While the armed group was strong, it was never strong enough to take control and establish a *rebelocracy* in East Ghotua. Civilian institutions continued to play a significant role in the provision of order and public goods in the area. However, the strength of the armed group was reflected in the identities promoted by civilian institutions. When Jaish al-Islam was strong, civilian institutions like the Local Council for the City of Douma presented a mixed set of identities, including the identity promoted by the armed group. This supports the hypotheses that who establishes institutions, whether it is armed actors, civilians, or a mix of the two, matters. This scenario in which civilians promote a mixture of identities looks different from the consistency of the promotion of ethnic identities across institutions established by the Kurdish PYD or the consistent emphasis on local identities promoted by the institutions analyzed in the Idlib case study.

In the city of Douma, when the strength of the armed group waned, identity promotion by civilian institutions shifted and it came to resemble the identity promotion seen in the civilian ruled case, the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man. The local council in both cities promoted a primarily local identity, although Douma's council only did so after the local armed group had lost its strength. This adds additional strength to the theory that civilian actors will generally promote local identities. This stands in stark contrast to the identities promoted by armed actors, who promote identities that are national or even supranational.

Chapter 6:

In the Wake of the State: Patterns and Extensions

As of this project's completion, the Syrian conflict has dragged on for over seven brutal years. The state has regained territories from which it had retreated, including the Eastern Ghouta. When the conflict eventually ends many will return to homes that look nothing like the places they once knew. Syrian society and Syria's people have been changed. In some parts of the country, people have become accustomed to having a say in their own affairs and holding democratic elections. In other areas people have experienced extreme levels of oppression at the hands of actors like the Islamic State. The areas that spent years outside of state control have seen the promotion of a variety of identities; local, national, ethnic, and religious. It is unclear whether a Syrian national identity will one day be able to assert itself or what that content of that national identity may be.

Although there are many uncertainties, there are lessons to be learned about identity politics from the events which have taken place in Syria. While scholars have puzzled for decades to explain the emergence of national identity, this work considers the opposite - what happens when that national identity is challenged, when the institutions that supported national identity retreat or fail completely. Syrian national identity was not only a prominent part of the state's identity repertoire in the decades prior to the uprising (Mufti 1996, Phillips 2013), but expressions of national identity also played prominent roles in the 2011 protests (Ismail 2011, Della Ratta 2012, Gilbert 2013). Yet since the shift from peaceful protest to conflict and in the subsequent years in which the Syrian state retracted, different kinds of identities emerged as salient across Syria. Why is it that different kinds of identities emerge as salient under these conditions? I argue that we

must look to local dynamics, to who governs and builds institutions in the state's absence, to understand the increasing salience of different kinds of identities. The interests of these actors shape which identities will be included in the group's symbolic repertoire. This does not presume that any one identity will be a feasible choice. History, demography, and culture all play roles in shaping the field of available identities. The focus here is on why, out of a range of choices, specific kinds of identities become salient.

This chapter is intended to accomplish several objectives. First, it re-articulates the argument made in the preceding chapters, drawing upon comparisons between the subnational case studies. It also considers a number of out of sample cases, discussing the ways in which the theory explains identity shifts in the recent cases of state failure in Libya and Yemen as well as historical cases, like the collapse of Tajikistan and the end of the Ottoman Empire. It ends with a discussion of the theory's implications and potential applications for those engaged in with state building and post-conflict reconstruction.

Revisiting the Argument

To understand what shapes the interests of non-state actors who provide governance, we must consider the variation which exists between these nonstate actors. In particular, I have argued here that there will be significant variation between civilian and armed actors. When civilians rule, they promote local, place-based identities. This is motivated by several factors. First, is the interest in garnering legitimacy by employing identities which are already salient among the local population. Since civilian actors lack coercive capacity, they cannot use strength of arms to ensure the obedience of the local population. Nor can they use coercion to enforce their selection of a particular identity, which limits their capacity to innovate. The emphasis on a specific, local place also

allows civilian actors to avoid raising the ire of armed actors who generally promote larger, space-based identities.

This is illustrated by similarities in the identity promotion by civilian institutions in different parts of Syria. The logos for the councils of the Idlib governorate (Figure 6) and Rif Dimashq (Figure 31) incorporate local symbols as an effort to communicate that the institution is genuinely local. As was discussed in earlier chapters, the Idlib Governorate logo includes olive tree branches, fitting for an area known for these plants, as well as an archaeological artefact reminiscent of the historical treasures found there. The council for Rif Dimashq also makes a visual appeal to the area's agricultural character. The fact that both governorate-level councils make similar design choices despite the geographic distance between them says something about which identities these civilian institutions believe garner them legitimacy.

However, the logos do not feature only appeals to local identities. The logos for the councils of the Idlib governorate (Figure 6) and Rif Dimashq (Figure 31) also use national symbols. The national elements legitimate the councils by connecting them to the national uprising in 2011, creating a visual connection between these new institutions and the initial political movement and organizations from which they emerged. This can be seen in the use of green, black, red, and white in both logos, the colors included in the Syrian flag. The Idlib governorate council's logo has a version of the national flag embraced by the opposition, with its green, white, and black bars and red stars. The red star also appears at the center of the Local Council of Rif Dimashq. Both logos also use stars in clusters of three, a design choice which connects to the pre-Ba'thist Syrian flag (which has three red stars) rather than the Syrian flag adopted under the Ba'th regime (which has two green stars). Thus, while the local may visually be the center of these

logos, they still strove to connect themselves visually to the pre-conflict revolutionary movement. The similarities point to analogous motivations, concerns, and identities for these civilian institutions.

There are other telling similarities between the cases discussed in the previous chapters. Several civilian institutions eschewed the use of colors which would visually connect them to abstract spaces or the actors which incorporate their corresponding identities in their repertoires. While the Internal Body of the Jazira Canton (Figure 23) was established in an area controlled by the PYD and incorporated much of its pan-ethnic language in its own identity promotion, as a civilian institution it also promoted a local identity. An effort to be deemed impartial in larger regional politics also explains the decision to avoid the colors used by the Democratic Union Party and other Kurdish political parties in the institution's logo. The decision to eschew colors related to national or other space-related aspirations is also reflected in the logo for the Local Council of the City of Douma (Figure 36). As was discussed in the chapter on the Eastern Ghouta, a decision was made to alter the logo, abandoning the colors that would associate the institution with the initial, national uprising in favor of colors with no connection to available national, religious, or ethnic identities. In these cases, unlike the local council for Idlib governorate or the council for the Damascus Countryside, armed groups played a more prominent role which created an incentive to avoid visual references to space-based identities. The prominence of the PYD/YPG in Jazira led to an effort not to be too visually tied to the group, to attain a level of independent organizational legitimacy. In Douma, the city which would become the home base for the armed group Jaish al-Islam, there was an incentive to be seen as posing no challenge to the armed group. This interest in focusing on the local and avoiding competition with actors who promoted ethnic,

national, or religious identities in two very different areas again points to a shared set of concerns and strategies among civilian actors.

One of the most striking similarities between the cases is the way in which the identity repertoires of the local councils of the cities of Ma'arat a-Nu'man and the city of Douma shifted in response to the capacity of local armed groups. Particularly in the earlier months of the sample, the city of Ma'arat a-Nu'man promoted a strictly local identity in the text of its social media account, which fit with the theory's expectation of a civilian-ruled case. Douma, which was in the mixed type and share governing responsibilities with local armed groups, started off with a more mixed identity promotion, apparently appeasing the local armed groups by incorporating their chosen identities in its own repertoire. As the armed group weakened, the identity repertoire for Douma's local council came to resemble Ma'arat a-Nu'man in that it also focused on a local identity. This again points to a shared interest and shared promotion of a local identity by civilian actors when they have the opportunity to promote the identities they prefer.

This picture is markedly different from the kinds of identities we see promoted by armed actors. Armed groups generally promote identities that are tied to abstract spaces, such as the larger territories occupied by nations, ethnic groups, or members of a religious community. Which of these imagined communities the armed group promotes is determined by the objectives of the group as well as other factors which may influence the group's ability to meet those goals. An armed group with national aspirations will likely include a national identity in its identity repertoire, while those groups that wish to secede or attain control over only a portion of the state will promote a subnational identity, such as an ethnic or regional identity. The ability to influence the space it

occupies as well as the ability to coerce civilians living in areas under the armed group's control means that they have an ability to be more innovative than civilian rulers. Rather than relying on identities that are already salient, as civilian actors do, armed groups can promote identities that are not salient for locals and perhaps even introduce new identities.

In the preceding chapters I presented two armed groups which both engaged in a significant degree of innovative identity promotion. The Democratic Union Party, a Kurdish political organization, and its armed wing, the People's Protection Units promoted an ethnic identity, one in which different ethnic groups were treated as peoples, *shu'ub*, or *mukawwinat*, components, of a single society. In the (largely democratic) institutions established by the group this ethnic identity has been a featured part of their identity promotion. This stands in contrast to the Islamic State, an armed group which originated in Iraq and became notorious for its brutality, its strict interpretation of Islam, and the way in which those deemed not "true" Muslims were treated. In a state in which the regime had been primarily secular and in which most practitioners of Islam tended to follow more moderate interpretations of the religion, the identity choices made by the Islamic State were indeed innovative.

In addition to being more innovative, these cases also illuminate how shifts in the objectives of armed groups also led to changes in the identities they promoted. While the Democratic Union Party was initially concerned with the predominantly Kurdish areas of northern Syria, successes on the battlefield expanded the group's territorial goals. In December 2015 it was one of the major actors involved in the formation of the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Syrian Democratic Council which had territorial ambitions that extended into eastern Syria. This shift in the objectives of the organization was

reflected by an increasing emphasis on a Syrian national identity as well as the decision to drop the Kurdish word for northern Syria, “Rojava” from the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. In this case changes in capacity and objectives led the PYD to shift the identities it promoted – with potentially national ambitions came the promotion of a national identity.

Armed groups are also distinct from civilian actors due to the competitive pressures that they face. Armed groups must ensure the maintenance of their territory, eliminating internal rivals and beating back external challengers.⁹⁷ The costs of these endeavors will lead armed groups to not only seek financial support from the local population but also from external actors. The pursuit of patrons will shape the identity repertoires of armed groups as the identity embraced by armed groups factors in the decision making of potential clients.⁹⁸ While the promotion of a particular identity may help ensure external sponsorship, it may also make local armed groups a target for outside intervention.

There are numerous examples from Syria of outside actors supporting armed groups due at least in part to the identity they promoted, a choice which improved the likelihood of the group’s survival. Ahrar ash-Sham, a group established in December 2011 was capable of surviving numerous setbacks in large part due to the availability of external support. Its objective was national, although it called for the formation of a national government which implements Islamic law (Stanford). The timing of the organization’s formation also coincided with the introduction of funding from Saudi

⁹⁷ This is very similar to the responsibilities of early states as discussed in Tilly (1990) and other works on the formation of early modern states.

⁹⁸ The decision to adapt international symbols for the local context provides rebels with a means of connecting a local conflict to larger struggles (Mampilly 2015 92) and obtain support from outside actors (Bob 2005).

Arabia and Qatar late in 2011 (Kinninmont 2014: 48). Ahrar ash-Sham's main supporter was, according to some reports, Qatar but they received support from private donors from gulf countries as well. In 2012 one of its most important supporters was a Salafist fundraiser, Sheikh Hajjaj al-Ajami (Stanford). Generally, the organization was one of the best supplied rebel entities in the early years of the Syrian conflict, despite appearing to run into some trouble in 2014 when many of its leaders were killed in a single explosion (Stanford, Lund 2015). It is believed that the organization was able to survive the blow in part due to the support it has received from within Turkey and Qatar (Lund 2015). In this case, the incorporation of a religious identity opened doors for Ahrar a-Sham and allowed it to attain external funding that helped the armed group successfully compete with others.

In other cases, the availability of external patronage to Syrian armed groups who embraced a religious identity led armed groups to alter their identity repertoires. Suqour ash-Sham (Hawk of Syria),⁹⁹ an armed group established in September 2011, initially claimed to support "a civil state that would guarantee rights for all and hold general elections." While the group was considered more Islamist than other groups in the Free Syrian Army, Suqour ash-Sham's objectives were national and a national identity was at the center of its identity promotion (Stanford). This shifted and religion came to play a much more prominent role in the group's identity repertoire after it joined Islamist umbrella groups, one of which was supported financially by Qatar (Reuters). The change in identity promotion can be best illustrated by the change in Suqour ash-Sham's logos during this time period.

⁹⁹ *Sham* is a term historically used for Damascus and greater syria. The hawk also has connections to Islamic history as it was the symbol of the clan of the Prophet Muhammad (the Quraish). The Hawk of Quraish also appears on the coat of arms of many Arab states, including Syria. Thus the name appeals to a number of identities simultaneously.



Figure 42 Logos for Suqour ash-Sham



The early logo bears similarities to the logo of the Free Syrian Army in both its modern design and the echoes of the flag adopted by anti-regime

protesters and the FSA (the green, black, and white circular stripe with red stars on the white stripe). While the phrase “God is great” was incorporate in this initial logo, it was limited to a space between the hawk of the group’s name. However, the newer logo for Suqour ash-Sham looked far more Islamist due to the more traditional style of its calligraphy. The colors associated with the Syrian national flag are also discarded in the new logo, a visual rejection of a nation state. In this instance, the availability of external support created incentives for Suqour ash-Sham to alter its identity repertoire and place a heavier emphasis on a religious identity rather than a national one.

In those areas in which both civilians and armed groups strive to govern, we sometimes find uneasy accommodation or competition between the two kinds of actors. In these mixed types civilians are still guided by their interests and their emphasis on local identities while armed groups are shaped by the objectives and pressures outlined above. The lack of coercive capacity does lead to civilian actors placating local armed groups by incorporating their identities in civilians’ identity repertoires. One finding that was unexpected was how responsive the level of accommodation was to the capacity of the armed group, how quickly identity promotion by civilians shifted. As was seen in the Eastern Ghouta case study, as the capacity of the armed group declined, the identity promotion of the Local Council of the City of Douma came to resemble identity

promotion in civilian-run areas - a local identity emerged as dominant. In addition, even those institutions which were initially established by the armed group shifted in their identity promotion as the strength of the armed group waned. The Judicial Council of Eastern Ghouta shifted away from a religious identity as the local armed group weakened, even though that armed group had played a leading role in establishing the institution. This result was surprising as we may very well expect the interests, goals, and identities of the armed group to be the most entrenched in institutions they themselves established. However, even when formed by an armed group, civilian institutions have their own interests and are more inclined to focus on promoting a local identity if given the opportunity to do so.

Taking the Argument Outside Syria – Libya and Yemen

Syria is not the only case in the Middle East that recently experienced the failure or retraction of state institutions. Both Yemen and Libya experienced indisputable state failure. While these cases vary from Syria in a variety of ways, the arguments proposed here regarding identity promotion appear to provide us with some insight into the identities that we have seen promoted in both of these contexts.

There are some significant differences between the Yemeni, Libyan, and Syrian states prior to their failures. Of the three, Syria was the strongest with the largest state bureaucracy. The Yemeni state was never strong enough to extend its authority consistently throughout its territory. This means that in many areas governance was provided by local non-state actors, including tribal leaders, al-Qaeda, or members of the Yemeni military who acted almost like local warlords (Förster 2017). While the capacity of the Libyan state was somewhat higher than that of Yemen, its kleptocratic leadership was often more concerned with the acquisition of personal wealth than the building of

state institutions. The formation of weak institutions has largely been attributed to Libya's multi-decade autocrat, Muammar Qadhafi, who utilized informal networks to select government appointees. The institutions established often lacked clear goals or boundaries (Lacher 2011: 142). In Yemen and Libya, the long-standing weakness of the center led to non-state actors playing significant roles in the provision of governance even before the state failed. Therefore, these nonstate actors were already in a position to play significant roles in the absence of the Yemeni and Libyan states. While this bears some similarity to the Kurdish case and, to a limited degree, the Islamic State, both of which had roots which preceded the 2011 uprisings. However, many Syrian institutions were created by actors who only emerged during and following the 2011 uprising due to limitations on civil society put into place by the Syrian Ba'thist regime.

In Yemen and in Libya tribes have played particularly significant roles in local life.¹⁰⁰ In Yemen, tribes played a more significant role in social and political life in the northern parts of the country. The dictator who ruled over North Yemen and then the unified Yemeni state prior the Arab Spring, Ali Abdullah Saleh, pitted tribes against one another in an effort to keep potential challengers weak. While he would have liked to do this in the south, after decades of Marxist rule in South Yemen tribes no longer played a significant role in the region's social fabric (Day 2010: 6-7). In northern Yemen tribes played a variety of important roles. The central government often worked through the tribes, which meant that local councils were comprised of individuals who represented

¹⁰⁰ A tribe is, "...a segmentary social group characterized by a (myth of) common lineage and abound together by linear loyalties" (Tibi 1991: 131). Tribes, unlike armed actors, are not defined by their coercive capacity. Instead, it is the belief in distant kinship which serves as the basis for a tribe's existence and legitimacy. As such, tribes are varied in their characters and their relationships with modern states and are often described in ways that are not dissimilar to other societal actors which interact with the state (Tapper 1991: 48). States may allow tribal leaders to engage in local dispute settlement and tribes are often used as a means for the distribution of state patronage (Migdal 1974: 199; Gao 2016). Thus, while some members of a tribe may have weapons, in this work they are considered primarily civilian in their character.

local tribes (Basalmah 2018: 9). In essence, these state institutions were a vehicle in the north used by local tribes. This meant that tribes could redeploy these local institutions to provide governance and influence identities after the state failed.

There is significant evidence which indicates that tribes have played prominent roles in parts of Yemen following the state's failure. Many tribal leaders provided order and security at a local level (al-Sabahi and De Santis 2016: 55). The local councils in northern Yemen which were comprised largely of tribal representatives survived the collapse of national-level institutions (Basalmah 2018: 9). Local tribal leaders also took prominent roles in local governance and institution building in other parts of Yemen. In 2012 Mareb's most prominent tribal leader, Sultan al-Arada, became the region's governor (Reuter 2017). The area saw significant institution building and the provision of public goods actually improved since conflict began and the state failed. Before the state failed, four out of Mareb's fourteen districts had consistent supplies of electricity. As of 2017 this number had risen to 9 of 14 districts (Salisbury 2017: 19). Mareb and other tribally-run parts of Yemen apparently became civilian-run or possibly mixed cases. Civilian actors provided order, built institutions, and provided public goods.¹⁰¹

This is not to say that there are no armed groups active in these areas. While local actors, particularly tribes, engaged in governing Mareb, this region was also home to the Hadrami Elite Forces. These armed actors attained funding from a variety of sources, with some units receiving monetary support from the vestigial Yemeni state while others were paid by the United Arab Emirates (Fahim 2018). However, these armed actors

¹⁰¹ It appears that civilian actors in some parts of Yemen have a significant degree of legitimacy. In the region of Mareb 88% of respondents to a poll said they thought that tribal sheikhs should be involved in promoting stability and security in their area and 50% felt tribal leaders were having a positive impact on local affairs (Yemen Polling Center "Perceptions of the Yemeni Public on Living Conditions and Security-Related Issues" 2017). When asked who provided security in their area, the two most popular answers were "Neighborhood/village citizens" (27%) and "Sheikhs/tribe" (26%) (Ibid.).

appear to have played a limited or non-existent role in the running of local affairs, which indicates that Mareb was under civilian rule.

The theory proposed here would lead us to expect governing actors to promote a local identity, one which focuses on place and avoids appeals to larger, space-based identities. This helps to avoid them being the target of internal, armed actors as well as outside actors. The tribes of Mareb avoided appealing to a religious identity, in part because of concerns that being connected to groups like al-Qaeda may make them the targets of outside actors like the United States (Reuter 2017). A preliminary look through the posts made on the Mareb Governorate's Facebook account indicate that a local identity was the focus, with many references to the local area.¹⁰² Thus, it seems that in areas of civilian rule in Yemen identity promotion efforts have fit the pattern anticipated in the theory set forth here.

In Libya, as in Yemen, tribes were incorporated into state networks and institutions prior to the state's collapse.¹⁰³ Under Qadhafi, making tribal identities salient was a means for dividing Libyan society and helping to limit political challengers. Since most Libyans are Sunni Muslim and Arab neither national, religious, or ethnic identities could be used to foster divisions within Libyan society (Hweio 2012: 117). Various components of the military and security forces were led by relatives of the dictator and were drawn predominantly from three tribes (Lacher 2011: 142). Thus, when the state fell apart, these nonstate actors were already playing an important role in Libyan life (Hweio 2012).

¹⁰² Even references to tribe or sheikh were not in evidence in the texts of the posts, although dress that is more customary in parts of Yemen in which tribal identity is salient can be seen regularly being worn by officials in the photos.

¹⁰³ This is very different from Syria, where the role of tribes and clans were reduced under the Ba'thist regime (Hussein 2018).

In the wake of the Libyan state tribes had an organizational advantage and armed groups and political organizations were often set up “along family, tribal and local interests” (Lacher 2011: 140). In northwestern Libya, there were “tribal and communal interests with varied political and financial motivations, often cloaked in a strong revolutionary or tribal discourse” (Smits et al 2024: 45). In several Libyan regions, tribal institutions stepped in to provide order in the state’s absence and often provided a basis for the organization of armed groups and governance (Lacher 2013, 151-152).¹⁰⁴ The importance of tribes in parts of Libya would lead us to expect the existence of civilian-run or mixed institutional arrangements as seen in Yemen, and the promotion of local identities.

There are examples from the Libyan uprising and its aftermath that local institutions and local identities came to the fore in much of Libya after 2011 (Mezran 2018: 213). It is the reliance on tribal institutions in the state’s absence that has led to the increased salience in tribal identity for many Libyans (Cherstich 2014). For example, in Bani Walid, a tribal council, the “social council of the Warfalla tribes” was established to replace a civilian local council (Lacher 2013: 164). The Warfalla tried to stay out of the 2011 Libyan conflict, not supporting Ghaddafi or opposition forces, focusing instead on maintaining the continuity of local societal structures – despite its previous ties to the Ghaddafi regime (Cole and Mangan 2016, 23-24). They went to significant lengths to distance itself from the National Transition Council. The council’s founding documents did not refer to the Libyan revolution and created a logo which did not incorporate the colors of the Libyan national flag. All local councils had previously embraced the

¹⁰⁴ Tribes were not the only local basis for the development of institutions as, according to Lacher, “The rise of tribal politics was part of a larger phenomenon during and after the civil war, whereby the local level – tribes, towns, and cities – became the most important arena for political and military organization” (2013: 152).

national red, black, and green flag (Lacher 2013, 164). There are other indicators that tribal identity is becoming increasingly salient. Since the 2011 uprising, more Libyans have changed how their names appear on social media to include the name of their tribe (Cherstich 2014: 417). Thus, there are indications that a reliance on tribal institutions following the failure of the Libyan state has made tribal identities increasingly salient.

While in both states local tribes emerged as prominent actors and promoted local and tribal identities, Yemen also saw the promotion of other identities, one of which is the resurgence of a South Yemen national identity. Given the argument proposed in this work, we would expect a national identity to be spearheaded by armed actors (rather than civilians) and this does indeed seem to have been the case. The promotion of a South Yemen national identity has ties to earlier movements from before the failure of the Yemeni state. In 2007, officers of the former South Yemeni military began to engage in protests against Yemen's central government (Day 2010: 8). After the failure of the Yemeni state, much of southern Yemen was occupied by secessionist armed groups supported financially by the United Arab Emirates (Salisbury 2017: 15). In addition to the identity being promoted by armed groups, there were also protests in 2017 in which civilians called for the independence of South Yemen. The national flags of South Yemen were a common feature of these demonstrations ("Thousands Protest for Independence in Yemen" 2017). In this case, it seems that armed groups played an important initiating role in promoting a South Yemeni national identity both before the failure of the Yemeni state as well as after.

Another identity that was promoted by armed groups in Yemen and Libya was a religious identity. Again, this fits with the theory proposed in this work as armed groups are more likely to promote identities associated with larger, imagined communities than

civilian actors are. In Yemen, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was present before the failure of the Yemeni state. The organization, like the Islamic State in Syria, took advantage of the loss of central control. For example, in the Spring of 2015 al-Qaeda took control of the Yemeni city of Mukalla, although it lost the city about a year later (Fahim 2018). From 2015 to 2016 AQAP attempted to establish a *rebelocracy*, with Mukalla functioning as its capital (Kendall 2018: 9). The promotion of a hardline, religious identity also made al-Qaeda a U.S.-target before and after the failure of the Yemeni state. Not only did outside actors directly attack al-Qaeda, but they used their financial clout to strengthen rival armed groups and entice potential recruits to join al-Qaeda's local rivals. The opposition of outside actors also appears to have had a negative impact on local tribes' support of AQAP (Ibid. 12). The experience of AQAP following the collapse of the Yemeni state in several respects fits with the arguments proposed here. Armed groups are more likely to promote a national or supra-national identity than civilian actors, and AQAP fits into this latter category as it promotes a religious identity. The promotion of this supranational identity, while it had organizational benefits and allowed AQAP to attain some legitimacy in predominantly Sunni parts of Yemen, there have also been costs as the group's reputation and identity have made it the target of outside actors.

Thus, in Yemen and Libya, state collapse was followed by the emergence of an array of actors who promoted different kinds of identities. While civilian actors focused on local tribal and place-based identities armed groups have promoted religious and national identities. These local actors have engaged in institution building, providing governance in the absence of the central state. External actors played significant roles in

the ability of local armed groups to compete with one another, which strengthened or damaged the capacity of these actors to promote identities.

Taking the Argument Outside the Middle East – The Collapse of the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan

While Syria, Libya, and Yemen have all been examples of state failure or retreat in the Middle East, the arguments posited here can also be applied to other instances in which state institutions collapsed. In some respects, the collapse of the Soviet Union bears a resemblance to situations in which the state suffers from prolonged periods of weakness before failing, as was true in Yemen and Libya. In all of these situations, the denouement of central authority created opportunities for local actors to fill in the governance gaps. In Libya and parts of Yemen this led to the strengthening of tribes vis-à-vis the central state. In the weakening Soviet Union this often looked like the acquisition of greater degrees of power at the level of the individual Soviet Republics. As the USSR weakened these smaller abstract spaces often became the main organizational unit and the basis upon which national identities were articulated and promoted.

The way in which Soviet institutions were constructed laid a map for the potential field of identities available at the USSR's end. Between 1924 and 1936 the USSR mapped out and delineated particular territories as the homelands for specific ethnic groups. In each of these regions a particular language was given the status of official language and national identities were promulgated. While these efforts were abandoned in the 1930s, these ethnic distinctions were still a part of citizens' lives and had ramifications for the prospects of individual Soviet citizens (Hierman 2015: 522-523). Decades later, the reforms which were enacted prior to the demise of the Soviet Union weakened central authority and Those who held power under the Soviet system found their power bases weakened by the reforms that occurred in the period prior to Soviet

collapse (Roeder 1991: 231). As these reforms left local leaders more independent of Moscow these leaders had to find new means for obtaining resources and opportunities to members of their communities. This led “to a strategy of mobilizing their elites behind legislative agendas and their populations in ethnic protest in order to secure additional resources from Moscow and to maintain their hegemony within their homelands” (Ibid. 212). Yet not all of the Soviet Republics were able to successfully establish hegemony in their homelands. One of the states which failed in this regard was Tajikistan (Suny 1999/2000: 172).

Tajikistan had suffered long-standing institutional weakness stemming from its lackluster development under the USSR (Lynch 2001: 54-55). In the final years of the USSR’s existence 46% of Tajikistan’s revenue came from the Soviet center. This made the collapse of the Soviet Union extremely destabilizing for Tajikistan (Ibid). In May 1992 the state failed and “...violent non-state actors transformed the conflict to an instrumentalist struggle of local elite groups and opportunistic individuals in a weak institutional environment” (Epkenhans 2016: 10). A variety of identities were employed by a variety of actors in the state’s absence, including ethnic and regional identities (Ibid, Suny 1999/2000: 172).

The argument proposed here would expect civilian actors to promote local identities while armed actors would be more likely to promote larger identities attached to abstract space. In addition, the identity promoted should relate to the goals of the armed group and may also be influenced by outside actors and the potential support they may offer. One militia leader, “Bobo” Sangak Safarov incorporated a variety of identities in his identity repertoire. Initially he attained legitimacy by leading a militia with a reputation for being willing to do anything. As the conflict progressed his identity

repertoire came to include, “a locally entrenched Islamic identity” (he claimed to be descendent of a Sayyid) and “clan’ (Russ.: *rod*) as the original (eastern Iranian) inhabitants of south-eastern Tajikistan” (Epkenhans 2016: 264). In this instance, an armed actor drew upon a number of identities that suited subnational and national objectives. The vast majority of Tajikistan’s population is Sunni Muslim, so connecting to local religious tradition can be interpreted here as an identity that could have national appeal as well as potentially attract outside actors. The use of clan with its geographical emphasis seems to have been connected to a subnational, regional identity.

There is also evidence from Tajikistan which suggests that the loss of central order may have had lasting ramifications on the salience of identity. Polls conducted in 1996 and 1999 indicate that over this time period an ethnic Tajik identity decreased for that portion of the population as did the salience of a national identity. However, regional identities increased in their salience (Korostelina 2007: 226). Although many mark the 1997 peace agreement as the end of Tajikistan’s civil war, this did not mark the return of state institutions or security throughout the country and in many areas “local strongmen” filled important leadership roles and strove to provide essential public goods at a local level (Wiegmann). The results of the polling data indicates that in Tajikistan the shift of identities matches the expectations of the theory, that in the absence of the state and when local governance is primarily in the hand of local civilians, the salience of more local identities increases, while the others, such as a national identity, decrease. The Tajik case therefore seems to fit the theory proposed in this project regarding the collapse of the state’s influence on identity.

The Fall of the Ottoman Empire

As was alluded to in the last case, the collapse of empires bears some similarities to state failure. The collapse of imperial order bears some similarities to the arguments set forth in this project. The gradual decay and collapse of central order provided an opportunity for an array of identities to emerge as salient. In addition, the development of local institutions played a significant role in shaping which of these identities would become salient. However, the existence of institutions and the maintenance of a degree of political order, as was true in much of the Ottoman Empire, placed the elites in local institutions in a favorable position and altered how local struggles for authority and legitimacy were. The situation in these instances of imperial collapse therefore bears some similarities to the expectations of the theory proposed here, although some modification is required to account for the ability of new actors to step in to the void and maintain the provision of governance. Here, a larger imperial space and Ottoman identity was replaced by the formation of new, smaller spaces which would eventually spawn their own national identities.

The structure of an empire prior to its death will alter whether or not an empire's end is accompanied by the collapse of state order and whether some modification of the theory is necessary to explain identity changes in these instances. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, the collapse of the center did not uniformly lead to a lack of any form of central order as other institutions existed which could step in to provide governance. When the larger imperial space fell apart other abstract spaces, state spaces, were available. This had a significant impact on which identities were available and salient when the centers of these empires collapsed.

In the case of the Ottoman Empire, the relationship between the center and communities living within the empire was organized along different identity lines than

the Soviet Union. Ottoman imperial order was, for much of the empire's existence, legitimated with a religious identity and the population was organized according to the *millet* system, in which subjects were categorized by their religion and these identities governed the relationship between ruler and subjects (Cleveland and Bunton 2009: 137-138). In the early 1900s a group known as the Young Turks or the Committee of Union and Progress came to power and sought to establish a constitution that would unite all Ottoman citizens (Mango and Sharp 2010: 16). They strove to promote an Ottoman identity that would be shared by subjects of all religions and disbanded the *millet* system. However, they seemed unwilling to commit to full-blown secularism as religion still played an important role in legitimating the Ottoman ruler, the caliph (Cleveland and Bunton 2009: 139). Thus, the CUP damaged the position which religious identity held within the empire.

In addition to weakening the place of religion as the identity promoted under Ottoman rule, other actions taken in the final decades of the empire's existence influenced the salience of other identities, making them more viable alternatives to a primary identity. The CUP strove to modernize the empire and improve the efficiency of its bureaucracy. This objective resulted in the dismissal of many local and regional officials (many of whom were Arab) and their replacement by Turkish officials (Cleveland and Bunton 2009: 140). These efforts, as well as other efforts to "Turkify" predominantly Arab regions led to significant alienation among Arab elites (Kamrava 2013: 27, Cleveland and Bunton 2009: 140). Young Arabs who found their paths to advancement within the Ottoman hierarchy blocked began to articulate an Arab identity,

although this was not yet a national identity (Cleveland and Bunton 2009: 141).¹⁰⁵ Thus, the attempts at reform in the latter years of the Ottoman Empire both weakened the promotion of religious identities and opened the door for ethnic identities, and eventually national identities, to increase in salience.

In the Ottoman Empire, as in the Soviet Union, the collapse of central order did not always result in the collapse of political order. In many former Ottoman territories, colonial actors stepped in, altering the boundaries of the boundaries of governorates and provinces to construct mandates that would become the basis of many modern Arab states. The weakness of these early states made the promotion of state-based, national identity difficult. It was not until the 1980s and 1990s that calls for a single Arab state diminished and an acceptance of the state, *al-watan* had set in (Dawisha 2003: 274). In Syria specifically, Hafez al-Asad's efforts to engage in significant state building and efforts to incorporate citizens into the state through non-military institutions played a significant role in promoting a Syrian national identity (Mufti 1991: 237). Eventually, as had been done in the Soviet Union, the strengthening of institutions that functioned at a more local level than imperial authority made it possible for local elites to promote national (*watani*) identities. In the Arab world, these national identities played prominent roles during the protests which called for regime change across the region in 2011.

Conclusion

In this project I have argued that to understand the impact on identity of state failure or retreat we need to look at the local level, to consider who provides governance and essential public goods, their interests, and the kinds of identities that they are most

¹⁰⁵ These early references to an Arab ethnic identity in the Ottoman empire were largely in discussions on the role of the Arabs *within* the Ottoman Empire. Given later events and the emergence of Arab nationalism this is often mistaken for the first articulations of a national identity (Cleveland and Bunton).

likely to promote. In doing so I contribute to the continued exploration of the role of identity in conflict and the lasting ramifications of wartime experiences.

One of the challenges and contributions of this work has been the acquisition and analysis of information about an area in which the state was absent and violence was commonplace. Individuals produced an enormous quantity of information in the form of videos, photos, and text – so much so that some scholars despaired at finding a way to systematically analyze it (Lynch et al 2014). The wide access to the internet as well as the number of individuals engaged in sharing information, “resulted in unprecedented access to events on the ground, oftentimes in close to real-time” (Power and O’Loughlin 2015: 174). This project has collected a portion of this wide array, saving the text of multiple social media accounts as well as a collection of photos and videos which may be used by future researchers. I have also offered methods that can be used to analyze this information.

To understand identity dynamics on the ground, I analyzed both material produced by elites as well as recordings of the political expressions of ordinary citizens. Based on literatures on identity and work in the fields of communications, I created a method for systematically analyzing the symbolic content of public expression, both by ruling elites as well as ordinary people. To do the latter, I analyzed protests, developing a method for evaluating which identities ordinary people used as they expressed themselves in public political events. These methods present new opportunities for using data produced during civil conflict or other situations in which it may not be possible for researchers to safely visit. In addition, it also provides methods for considering organic articulations and expressions of identity by citizens without prompting by outsiders.

To evaluate the promotion of identities by ruling elites, I drew upon a tradition common in the nationalism literature which looks at the role of elites in articulating and reifying identities (Zerubavel 2012; Laitin 1986; Anderson 1983; Morgan 1983). I subjected these texts to both a coding scheme as well as more interpretive analysis, both of which are tools that have been used to analyze elite articulations of identity (Abdelal et al 2009; Phillips 2013; Suleiman 2003). Obtaining an insight into the feelings and beliefs of ordinary people has generally posed a greater challenge and many studies have analysis have therefore focused on materials produced by elites (Hobsbawm 1990: 10; Lawrence 2013: 14). However, ordinary Syrians have gone out to demonstrate and protest between 2011 and the present. The recordings of these events have generally not gone through the editing and selection process which curates the images that appear on mainstream media sources (Andén-Papadopoulos 2014: 754). In protests, individuals employ a variety of symbols with which they legitimate their claims and establish shared membership (Tilly and Wood 2013: 4; Schatz and Lavine 2007: 332; Khatib 2012).

This project joins the work of other scholars who question the assumption that local events are strictly a reflection of macro-level events. The attribution of local behaviors to larger cleavages is often an artifact of history (Bergholz 2016: 272-337, Kalyvas 2006). In the Syrian conflict, much of elite discourse has focused on religious divisions. This was true for President Bashar al-Asad, who depicted regime critics as religious extremists early on in the conflict. Commentators from the region and abroad regularly reduced the conflict to a front in a regional rift between Shiites and Sunnis, with the Ba’thist regime, Iran, and Hizbollah representing Shi’ism while the opposition and its supporters represent Sunnism.

Yet religion has only been promoted by some of the Syrian actors described here, all of which were armed groups and only one of which, the Islamic State, succeeded in establishing control over parts of Syria. Even when local civilians accommodated Jaish al-Islam in the Eastern Ghouta, religion was one of several identities referenced. Indeed, the cases discussed here have analyzed multiple discourses and divisions. The conflict has been split into regime and opposition, *nizam wa mu'arida* (regime and opposition), in some instances. The Democratic Union Party employed a language around ethnicity that referred to ethnic groups as peoples, *shu'ub*, or components, *mukawwinat*, of a single society. More extreme religious actors, such as the leadership of Jaish al-Islam, articulated a division between believer and rejectionist, *rafida*, a term used to depict the predominantly Alawite Ba'athist leaders as the worst kind of heretic. Finally, we have seen discourse which seem to avoid much of this polarizing language, promoting a civic identity as shown in the discourse produced by civilian actors. Even in a single conflict, the identities at play are varied and the terms used to articulate divisions have varied significantly.

The identities discussed here not only vary but have significant ramifications for the lives of ordinary people. Political science has largely focused on those who promote identities and the ways in which these efforts legitimate their assertions of authority (Mampilly 2015, Bergholz 2014). However, the decision to promote a particular kind of identity also influences the lives of civilians. Those who ascribe to an identity that does not fit the repertoire promoted by local actors may find their involvement in political life curtailed, their access to public goods limited, or in a most extreme case perhaps experience expulsion. The behaviors of the Islamic State function as a most extreme way in which being relegated to the “other” category can have dangerous ramifications. One

of the numerous acts which made the armed group notorious was the killing and enslavement of members of the Yazidi religious minority. In this instance, decisions regarding identity boundary and behavior toward outgroup members had catastrophic results. This experience was different from civilians who found themselves living under civilian rulers who promoted civil, local identities. In effect, who ruled, the identity they promoted, and decisions regarding how to treat those who did not share in that identity, can be the difference between life and death.

In the Syrian case it is too early to say for sure what the long-term effects of these identity changes will be. There is significant evidence from other cases that indicates that wartime transformations can have far-reaching consequences. How rebels rule in the state's absence can shape post-conflict regime-type (Müller 2012, Huang 2016). Even if local institutions that are built in the state's absence experience significant change or are destroyed, the identities they promoted may remain. There are examples from eastern Europe in which identities outlasted the institutions which promoted them (Kolsto 2014, Dumitru and Johnson 2011).¹⁰⁶ Thus, even if some of the actors discussed here ultimately lose to the Syrian state, the identities that they promoted may remain salient for the populations they ruled.

The development of local institutions and the different identities and identity cleavages described here may have ramifications for future efforts to bring peace to

¹⁰⁶ Kolsto (2014) explores “Yugonostalgia” a sense of affinity for the former Yugoslav Republic, using surveys to evaluate the degree to which such sentiments are felt in the states that were once Yugoslavia and how this compares to the number of people who claim to have once felt an affinity for Yugoslavia. Kolsto concludes that, “Even if loyalty toward the former state will inevitably be weakened as this state recedes into the background, that in itself does not guarantee that ex-nostalgics will automatically transfer their loyalty to the new state. They may end up as cynics with no national loyalty, or attach their overarching political loyalty to, for instance, their ethnic group or religious community” (2014: 777). While there may no longer be a Yugoslav state to which individuals may express their loyalty, Kolsto’s results suggest that the collapse of the state does not mean the complete and immediate dissolution of the identity associated with it.

Syria. The formation of local governing institutions can spoil peace negotiations. Should local institutions survive but not be taken into account during negotiations the settlement may not be deemed legitimate. The existence of local governing structures may also limit the field of potential negotiated solutions, exacerbate divisions between regions, or become the basis for subsequent recurrence of conflict with the central authority (Forster 2017). Identity cleavages can also prove to be a significant impediment to a future settlement, particularly if the various actors involved in the negotiation process believe different identities and identity cleavages are salient (Campbell 1998: 8). This could be particularly problematic if external actors make assumptions about the salience of a particular kind of identity and write a settlement that takes only that identity into account.¹⁰⁷ Taking into account both the variation in local institutions as well as the identities that they promote is therefore an important element in developing an agreement that can be deemed legitimate in the eyes of the larger population.

The Syrian people have been subjected to a catastrophic deluge of violence. Hundreds of thousands have perished and millions have been displaced. Those who eventually return may find that their homes were obliterated in their absence. The scars may be deep but the Syrian people have also displayed a degree of perseverance and ingenuity that is remarkable. While munitions rained down, Syrians have built institutions, provided public goods, and held elections. They designed logos and took the time to place those logos on uniforms and equipment. Citizens sewed their own flags and

¹⁰⁷ This was seen in the United States' emphasis on religious identity as it developed an interim government after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. This religious-centric view was also embraced during earlier interventions in the Middle East, as the French during the mandate period also assumed that religious identities were the most important and therefore focused on religious identities in their governance of Lebanon and Syria (Neep 2012: 24).

organized demonstrations in which participants sang and even danced between piles of rubble.

One of these songs, a rendition of a Syrian folk song, was sung in the city of Douma in March, 2016:

زينو المرجة و المرجة لينا
شامنا فرجة و هي مزينة
قادتها أحرار ورجالها ثوار
بلا زخرفتي بلدنا و هي سنرى
...
السوري ما رهب الموت
و غوطة ما رهب الموت

Decorate al-Marjia,¹⁰⁸ al-Marja is ours
Damascus is a wonder to behold when it is decorated
Damascus' leaders are free and her men are revolutionaries
We will see our country decorated again...
The Syrian does not fear death
The Ghouta does not fear death...

¹⁰⁸ Al-Marja is a square in Damascus, also known as Martyrs' Square. In May 1916 Ottoman officials executed seven Syrian political dissidents there. The square was also used for executions under the French mandate.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Content Analysis Codebook – Social Media Text

A post is marked as referring to an identity if it contains one of the following terms. Adjective and plural version of nouns were also marked:

Religious identity

God, prayer, prophet, mosque, Qur'an, Islam, Muslim, *umma*, Church, Christian, Druze, sect (a specific sect such as Alawite or sect in general), mentions a particular religious leader

Ethnic Identity

In predominantly Arab areas: Arab, Arabism, or the name of any Arab state that was not Syria

In primarily Kurdish areas: Arab, Kurd, Abdullah Ocalan, Nisreen Abdullah, Components, Rojava, YPG, YPJ, Asayish, PYD

National Identity

Syria, nation (*watan*), state (*dawla*) when used to refer to the Syrian state, land (when used to refer to Syrian land), Free Syrian Army/ FSA, Regime, al-Asad

In primarily Arab areas only - revolution, revolutionaries

Kurdish National

Kurdish nation (*al-watani al-kurdi*), Kurdistan, PKK

Local Identity

The name of the city where the institution is located, name of another town or city in the same governorate, the name of the governorate

Appendix 2: Coding Book for Content Analysis of Protest Materials

An inter-reliability check between two coders for the analysis of the banners, chants, and speeches was 89.07%. All of the coding for this dissertation project was conducted by one person (the author).

- I. Media type (photo or video)
- II. How many people are shown
 - a. 0-5
 - b. 6-15
 - c. 16+
- III. Number and type of flags which appear
 - a. If a video includes multiple shots or has been edited in some way, count only the flags which appear before the first edit to the video
 - b. If there were multiple sources in the sample of a single protest, use only one source per protest event to avoid redundancy. The source which includes the highest total number of flags should be used.
 - c. For Ma'arat a-Nu'man
 - i. flag with a white field and round seal in the middle that includes green, white, and black should be marked as local and national
 - ii. flag that looks like the usual black, white, and green flag but have an extra stripe that says "division 13" should be considered local and national
 - d. Flag with green, white, and black bars with red stars should be coded as national
 - e. Flags which bear the *shuhada*, God is Great, or other religious phrases should be coded as religious
- IV. Units of Analysis within each protest video
 - a. Banners and posters
 - i. Each poster or banner is treated as a single unit
 - ii. Multiple references to a religious or national identity are only counted once per poster
 - iii. Some videos will start with the videographer holding up a small piece of paper to the camera- this is only captured by the camera and is not coded as a banner or poster
 - b. Chants
 - i. If the same line is repeated multiple times (either because it is used in a call-and-response or if the crowd repeats the same line) only code the first time a line is used
 - ii. A single sentence should be treated as one chant
 - c. Songs and speeches
 - i. If the same line is repeated multiple times (either because it is used in a call-and-response or if the crowd repeats the same line) only code the first time a line is used
 - ii. Any modification of a lyrics or phrase is coded if it is unique from a previous line.
 - iii. For example, if the line "The Syrian people do not fear death" is repeated verbatim it would only be coded once. If the song goes, "The Syrian people do not fear death. The people of Ghouta do not fear death," then both of these lines would be coded.

- V. Banners and Posters
 - a. Coding textual elements
 - i. Marked religious if banner’s text includes one of the following:
 - ii. Marked ethnic if banner’s text includes one of the following
 - iii. Marked national if banner’s text includes one of the following
 - iv. Marked international if banner’s text includes one of the following:
 - b. Coding visual elements
 - i. National
 - 1. A poster is decorated in black, white, and green
 - 2. Has a drawing of a Syrian flag on it
 - 3. Includes a depiction of a regime leader (e.g. Bashar al-Asad)
 - ii. Religious
 - 1. Poster includes a depiction of a religious leader
 - 2. Poster depicts leader of a religious armed group, such as the Islamic State or Jaish al-Islam
 - iii. Local
 - 1. Poster includes a symbol affiliated with a local group or organization
 - 2. Poster includes a visual representation of a local landmark
 - iv. Ethnic
 - 1. Poster includes a drawing of the Arab national flag or flag of another Arab state
 - 2. Poster includes a depiction of an Arab leader (*not* Syrian)
 - v. International
 - 1. Poster includes English or another non-Middle Eastern language
 - 2. Poster includes a depiction of a world leader, INGO, IGO
- VI. Coding texts: chants, songs, and speeches
 - a. Religious
 - i. The text refers to God, prayer, the Prophet Muhammad, mosque, Qur’an, Islam, Muslim, *umma*, Church, Christian, Druze, sect (a specific sect such as Alawite or sect in general), heretics, apostates
 - ii. The text includes a quote from the Qur’an
 - iii. Mentions an Islamist armed group in a positive way
 - iv. Mentions a particular religious leader in a positive way
 - b. National
 - i. Text refers to Syria, which includes
 - 1. Explicit references to Syria and/or Syrians
 - 2. References nation (*watan*), state (*dawla*), when used to refer to the Syrian state, land (when used to refer to Syrian land, e.g. “this land”), country (if clearly referring to Syria, e.g. “this country”)
 - ii. Free Syrian Army/ FSA (if not a negative comment)
 - iii. Mentions a location in Syria that is not in the same governorate as the protest
 - iv. References to the Syrian Regime, a member of the al-Asad family, the Ba’th Party

- v. In primarily Arab areas only - revolution, revolutionaries
- c. Ethnic
 - i. In predominantly Arab regions- the text refers to Arab, Arabism, or an Arab state that is not Syria
 - ii. In primarily Kurdish areas- Arab, Kurd, Abdullah Ocalan, Nisreen Abdullah, Components, Rojava, YPG, YPJ, Asayish, PYD, other Kurdish parties
 - iii. References to Turkmen, Syriacs, Circassians, or other ethnic minorities
- d. Local
 - i. Text includes reference to the city or town the protest is taking place in
 - ii. Text refers to a local region by name
 - iii. Text mentions a town or city in the same governorate as the protest
 - iv. Text refers to the governorate by name
 - v. Text expresses support for a group that only operates locally
- e. International
 - i. The text refers to the world or international community
 - ii. Text refers to a specific state (non-Arab) or leader of a foreign, non-Arab state
 - iii. The text refers to an international organization or institutions (e.g. the United Nations)

Appendix 3.

Translation from speech in the city of Douma. November 7, 2014.

The lies of the regime are unraveling, it has been revealed that the shells used against the school in Qaboun are Russian-made, and Russia is not supplying us with any arms or weapons. The shells used against the Qaboun school are Russian weapons in the hands of the Syrian national army, it is a treasonous army.

Another thing I want to tell you, Syria will always remain Ottoman and not Safavid, Syria will always remain Ottoman and not Safavid. Say it with me, Syria is Ottoman and not Safavid. Unfortunately, the images we saw out of the Umayyad Mosque yesterday demonstrate that Damascus is an occupied city, and these images show that Damascus is occupied. There was an Ashura procession where they chanted words that insult the disciples (of Mohammad) and they hit themselves. They want to impose their culture and prove that Damascus belongs to Iran. We swear that small children with their small hands will defeat this Iranian project.

I say to the people of the Gulf and Saudi Arabia that if we get hit, I swear that you will get hit after. Wake up that this project will extend from us to Saudi Arabia via Lebanon. It will not exempt you.

What the regime has failed to force us to accept by shelling us, it is now trying to impose on us by starving our children. It wants us to kneel and we say we will only to God (the crowd repeats). We will not kneel (crowd repeats) not with your starving and nor with the canon (crowd repeats). This regime is trying to disrupt the only passageway that supplies 700,000 humans. It has spent the past 4-5 days trying to invade the city through this passageway.

Yesterday the Syrian Red Cross sent vaccines for children, who have now been riddled with disease, and the regime prevented the van from entering. For that reason, I will not speak to anyone today, I will not talk to any Arabs and complicit people, only to human rights organizations. You can help us, we ask you to pressure your countries to and your governments to send UN forces to monitor and protect this passageway and to let aid, medical supplies and food from it. I call on international organizations, the UNICEF, you are responsible for the lives of these children. They have been deprived of education for the past four years. Bring the children here, come children.

Sadly, yesterday in the neighborhood right next to us, the Asad neighborhood they did a poll and asked people do you support the shelling of Douma with planes and with barrels, they asked do you agree? Sadly, 99% agreed and said if you run out of barrels hit them with nuclear weapons. and if you don't have nuclear weapons hit them with Skoda.¹⁰⁹

These are insects.

This is how the Asad regime thinks of us, and you people of the rural areas, the regime is using you like slippers. *Takbir!*¹¹⁰ Look to the people of Suweida who refused to send their sons to be used like shoes, they refused to send their children to kill your children. Someday Syria will return to us, and we are the majority, we are 20 million and you are just one million. Bashar al Asad will die, and this nation will remain until the day of judgement.

¹⁰⁹ This seems to be a reference to an old brand of artillery gun, Škoda Works was a Czech manufacturer of weapons and munitions.

¹¹⁰ *Takbir* is a verbal noun (*masdar*) which refers to the act of saying "God is great." It is often used to call on listeners to say or chant "God is great."

One other thing I say to the international organizations needs to do their jobs, and it needs to work on protecting these children and their lives are your responsibility. They are starving, and they have been without education for four years, disease is eating them, we don't even have IVs in our hospitals. They don't have vaccines, yesterday the regime turned back a vaccine van, even Israel didn't do it. When Israel imposes a siege it only stops steel and cement and explosives but not medical and food supplies. This is why I say this regime (stops sentence there).

Everyone should be part of this revolution, those living abroad what are you doing there, you should be protesting in front of embassies. International organizations send teams to India and other places, why are we deprived? We are 700-800 thousand people living here and we are living under siege, we are deprived of cleaning medical and food supplies. Worst of all, it is forbidden that any educational materials enter our city, this is the generation that will rebuild Syria, they are being made illiterate. This is the generation that you worry will become terror. What the regime is doing will only lead to this. Bashar al Asad is looking to make this people illiterate.

We will all chant together. Oh mother, lean on the soil of this nation, make your people cherish this nation, sing the songs of this country for people to hear them, and ululate for the martyrs. I am coming to you Syria, I am coming to you. (crowd chants) to step on this regime (repeat and crowd repeats). Damascus belongs to muslims, not the regime's people, and not for heretics and not for the Iranians. To free fighters and to revolutionaries, your names are fire in Bashar's heart. (repeat refrain). Oh Mulaiha we are coming back, an army of Muslims to clean your soil (repeat refrain). (repeat refrain again).

I would like to tell the guy in Lebanon who says (imitates Nasrallah's lisp) that this war is not sectarian, who is saying it's sectarian? I would like to remind him of the slogan that he sent his mercenaries with which was that Zainab will not be insulted in Damascus. Who was insulting her, she is one of the prophet's disciples and whoever insults her is a *kafir*. She is of the prophet's family, her and Hassan and Hussein. Meanwhile you Hassan Nasr ash-Shaytan, you are coming with a foreign culture that is not ours, that includes insulting the disciples. I tell the people of Damascus to go back to our culture and to be aware.

You are unaware of what is happening around you. Your brothers in Suweida refused to send their children but you are still sending your children to come kill us. You should try your best to not send your children to fight in the regime's forces. (*takbir*).

A few months ago, we met with international organizations to agree on a temporary government and we asked the transitional authority to save the Ghouta. The resilience of Ghouta in spite of all of this. We say that in Ghouta that this resilience needs help. There is an international law that forbids the use of siege in warfare, and the regime has not lifted the siege and so I ask the organizations again that they implement Resolution number 2139. Look at how the regime has dumped your resolution in the garbage with help from Russia. Yesterday Bashar Jaafari claimed that this resolution was being respected. I tell you that the Syrian regime is a liar (repeat). Did he implement the UN resolution (crowd: no!). Is the passage open? (crowd: closed!). We are your responsibility and you need to be working to get us food and medicine. We will buy it with our money we are not begging, just open the passage. (*takbir*).

Bibliography

- Abbas, Noorhan and Atwell, Eric. The University of Leeds Qurany Tool.
<http://www.comp.leeds.ac.uk/nora/html/>
- Abdelal, Rawi, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, Rose McDermott.
Introduction to *Measuring Identity: a Guide for Social Scientists* edited by Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, Rose McDermott, 1-17.
New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Abouzeid, Rania. "Ground War: Syria's Rebels Prepare to Take a Province from Asad." *Time Magazine*. February 7, 2013. <http://world.time.com/2013/02/07/ground-war-syrias-rebels-prepare-to-take-a-province-from-Asad/>
- Adams, Julia. "Culture in Rational-Choice Theories of State Formation" in *State/Culture* edited by George Steinmetz, 98-122. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- AFP. "Syria rebel clashes 'leave 52 dead' in eastern Ghouta" *The Daily Mail*. May 17, 2016. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3595106/Syria-rebel-clashes-leave-52-dead-Eastern-Ghouta.html>
- AFP. "Qaeda, allies advance on Syrian regime bastion: monitor" Daily Mail.com. April 24, 2015. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3053811/Qaeda-fighters-advance-regime-northwest-Syria.html>
- "After Quarrel with Ahrar al-Sham, Alloush Threatens Nusra" *Syria Mirror*. March 1, 2015. <http://syrian-mirror.net/en/cat/syria-mirror/after-quarrel-with-ahrar-al-sham-alloush-threatens-nusra/>
- Akturk, Şener. "Regimes of Ethnicity: Comparative Analysis of Germany, the Soviet Union/Post-Soviet Russia, and Turkey." *World Politics* 63, no. 1 (2011): 115-64.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23018799>.
- al-Dimashqi, Youmna. "Iron Rule: Jaish al-Islam in Eastern Ghouta." *Syria Deeply*. March 22, 2016. <https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2016/03/22/iron-rule-jaish-al-islam-in-eastern-ghouta/>
- al Hilali, Nouran Mohamed and Diana al Rifai. "Under Siege: Syria's Eastern Ghouta" *Al Jazeera Online*. May 3, 2017.
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2017/05/siege-syria-eastern-ghouta-170503080230797.html>
- Al-Sabahi, Mohammed and Fausto Aarya De Santis. "The role of cultural norms and local power structures in Yemen." *Forced Migration review*. Vol 53 (2016) pp 55-56. <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/community-protection/alsabahi-desantis.pdf>
- Ali, Mohammad al-Haj. Interview with Islam Alloush. *Syria: Direct*. March 23, 2015.
<http://syriadirect.org/news/jaish-al-islam-spokesperson-'we-represent-the-biggest-threat-to-is'/>
- Allsopp, Harriet. *The Kurds of Syria: Political Parties and Identity in the Middle East*. New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2014.

- Alsaafin, Linah. "Syria's Eastern Ghouta: the latest casualty of war." *Middle East Eye*. February 6, 2015. Updated February 13, 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/eastern-ghouta-caught-between-rock-and-hard-place-1997307396>
- Al-Shami, Leila and Robin Yassin-Kassab. *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*. Pluto Press, 2016.
- Amnesty International. "Syrian and Russian Forces Targeting Hospitals as a Strategy of War." March 3, 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/03/syrian-and-russian-forces-targeting-hospitals-as-a-strategy-of-war/>
- "An Unflinching Account of how the Syrian Town of Maaret al-Numan Was Taken by the Rebels. *The Guardian*. October 12, 2012. <http://www.businessinsider.com/an-unflinching-account-of-how-the-syrian-town-maaret-al-numan-was-won-by-the-rebels-2012-10>
- Andén-Papadopoulos, Kari. 2014. "Citizen camera-witnessing: Embodied political dissent in the age of 'mediated mass self-communication.'" *New Media & Society*. 15 (5), 753-769.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. New York, NY: Verso, 1983.
- Angelova, Iilina, "Governance in rebel-held East Ghouta in the Damascus Province, Syria." Centre of Governance and Human Rights Working Paper #10. October 2014
- Arafat, Hisham. "'Rojava' no longer exists, 'Northern Syria' adopted instead." *Kurdistan 24*. December 28, 2016. <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/51940fb9-3aff-4e51-bcf8-b1629af00299/-rojava--no-longer-exists---northern-syria--adopted-instead->
- Arango, Tim and Eric Schmitt. "Turkey Uneasy as U.S. Support of Syrian Kurds Grows." *The New York Times*. June 29, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/30/world/middleeast/turkey-uneasy-as-us-support-of-syrian-kurds-grows.html?_r=2
- Arjona, Ana. "Institutions, Civilian Resistance, and Wartime Social Order: A Process-driven Natural Experiment in the Colombian Civil War." *Latin American Politics and Society*. Vol 58 No 3 (2016) pp: 99-122.
- "Wartime Institutions: A Research Agenda." *Journal of Conflict Resolutions*. Vol 58 No 8. (2014): pp. 1360-1389
- Atassi, Basma. "Armed Kurds clash with protesters in Syria." *Al Jazeera Online*. June 28, 2013. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/06/201362723251718913.html>
- Bacchi, Umberto. "Syria's olive farmers are leading a resurgence in olive oil even as the country burns." *Business Insider*. October 14, 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/syrias-olive-farmers-are-leading-a-resurgence-in-olive-oil-2015-10>
- Baladi News-Network. "مظاهرة لأهالي مدينة معرة النعمان في ريف إدلب في جمعة تجديد العهد نادت" 11/3/2016 "بإسقاط النظام" Filmed March 11, 2016. YouTube video, 1:02. Posted

March 11, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5U9SPX-22Q&feature=youtu.be>

- Barany, Zoltan, "Comparing the Arab Revolts: The Role of the Military." *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 22, No. 4 (October 2011): pp. 24-35.
- Barnett, Michael N. "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System." *International Organization* (The MIT Press) 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 479-510, Accessed November 23, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706906>
- Basalmah, Badr. "Local Governance in Yemen: Challenges and Opportunities." Berghof Foundation. May 2018. https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Other_Resources/Berghof_Foundation_Yemen_locgov_Paper02LocalGovernance_WEB.pdf
- Bates, Robert. "State Failure." *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 11 (2008): pp. 1-12. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060606.132017.
- Beardsley, Kyle and Brian McQuinn "Rebel Groups as Predatory Organizations: The Political Effects of the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 no. 4 (August 2009): pp. 624-645.
- Bell, Duncan S.A. "Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity." Vol. 54 no. 1 (March 2003): 63-81.
- Bell, Philip. "Content Analysis of Visual Images." In *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*. Edited by Theo Van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt, 10-34. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2001
- Bellingeri, Marta. "How Eastern Ghouta residents survive siege." *Al-Monitor*. November 19, 2017. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/11/how-eastern-ghouta-residents-are-managing-to-survive-siege.html>
- Ben-Porat, Guy and Bryan S. Turner. Introduction to *The Contradictions of Israeli Citizenship: Land, Religion and State*. Edited by Guy Ben-Porat and Bryan S. Turner. New York, NY: Routledge, 2011.
- Bergholz, Max. *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community*. Cornell University Press, 2016. Kindle Edition.
- Billig Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1995.
- Blomfield, Adrian. "Asad regime launches assault to retake Maarat al-Numan." *The Telegraph*. October 19, 2012. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9621369/Asad-regime-launches-assault-to-retake-Maarat-al-Numan.html>
- Bob, Clifford. *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Bowman, Glenn "Violence before identity: an analysis of identity politics." *The Sociological Review*. Vol. 62 No. S2 (2014): pp. 152-165.
- Braddick, Michael, *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550-1700*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

- Breen, Michael P. *Law, City, and King: Legal Culture, Municipal Politics, and State Formation in Early Modern Dijon*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007.
- Brown, Andrew D. "Politics, Symbolic Action and Myth Making in Pursuit of Legitimacy." *Organization Studies*. Vol 15 No 6 (1994) pp. 861-878.
- Butz, David A. "National Symbols as Agents of Psychological and Social Change." *Political Psychology* 30.5 (2009): pp.
- Bush, Sarah S. (2015). *The Taming of Democracy Assistance: Why Democracy Promotion Does Not Confront Dictators*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Byman, Daniel. "Forever Enemies? The Manipulation of Ethnic Identities to End Ethnic Wars." *Security Studies*. Vol. 9 No. 3 (2000): pp. 149-190.
- Byman, Daniel, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brennan. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001.
- Callimachi, Rukmini and Andrew Rossback. "The ISIS Files: Extreme Brutality and Detailed Record-Keeping." *The New York Times*. April 4, 2018.
- Campbell, David. *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Cederman, Lars-Erik. *Emergent Actors in World Politics: How States and Nations Develop and Dissolve*. Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1997.
- Chandra, Kanchan. Introduction to *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics* edited by Kanchan Chandra, 1-47. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- "What is Ethnic Identity and Does it Matter?" *annual Review of Political Science*, 9 (2006): 397-424.
- Chandra, Kanchan and Steven Wilkinson "Measuring the Effect of 'Ethnicity.'" *Comparative Political Studies* Vol. 41 No. 4/5 (April/May 2008): pp. 515-563. DOI: 10.1177/0010414007313240
- "Civilian Self-Rule in Douma." *Syria Untold*. March 1, 2016. <http://syriauntold.com/2016/03/civilian-self-rule-in-douma/>
- Cleveland, William L., and Martin P. Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 4th ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009.
- Cockburn, Patrick. "Life under Isis: The everyday reality of living in the Islamic 'Caliphate' with its 7th Century laws, very modern methods and merciless violence." *The Independent*. March 15, 2015. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/life-under-isis-the-everyday-reality-of-living-in-the-islamic-caliphate-with-its-7th-century-laws-10109655.html>
- Connor, Walker. *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

- Cambanis, Thanassis. "The Syrian Revolution Against Al-Qaeda." *Foreign Policy*. March 29, 2016. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/29/the-syrian-revolution-against-al-qaeda-jabhat-al-nusra-fsa/>
- Chandra, Kanchan and Steven Wilkinson "Measuring the Effect of 'Ethnicity.'" *Comparative Political Studies* Vol. 41 No. 4/5 (April/May 2008): pp. 515-563. DOI: 10.1177/0010414007313240
- Cherstich, Igor. "When Tribesmen do not act Tribal: Libyan Tribalism as Ideology (not as Schizophrenia)." *Middle East Critique* Vol. 23 No. 4 (2014): pp. 405-421.
- Chivers, Tom and Barney Henderson. "Egypt Protests: Tuesday 1 February 2011 as it Happened." *The Telegraph*. February 2, 2011. Accessed April 2, 2013. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/829770/0/Egypt-protests-Tuesday-1-February-2011-as-it-happened.html>
- Cole, Peter and Fiona Mangan. "Tribe, Security, Justice, and Peace in Libya Today." *Peaceworks*. No. 118. The United States Institute of Peace, 2016.
- Deacon, Terrence William. *The Symbolic Species: The Co-Evolution of Language and the Brain*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1997.
- Dale, Helle. "ISIS Social Media Campaign Falters Under Military Assault." *The Daily Signal*. October 26, 2016. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2016/10/26/isis-social-media-campaign-falters-under-military-assault/>
- Damascus Bureau. "People's Houses' Step in for Absent State in Qamishli." *The Syrian Observer*. July 8, 2013. <http://syrianobserver.com/EN/Features/25210/Peoples+Houses+Step+in+for+Absent+State+in+Qamishli>
- Darwish, Sabr. "عندما حمل السلاح.. زملاكا نموذجاً" in *سورية تجربة المدن المحرّرة* edited by Sabr Darwish. (2015). Riad El-Rayyes Books S.A.L. Beirut, Lebanon. 65-86.
- Darwish, Sardar Mila. "After Approving Constitutions, What's Next for Syria's Kurds." *Al-Monitor*. July 22, 2016. Translated by Pascale el-Khoury. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/north-syria-rojava-kurdish-federation-constitution.html>
- Interview by Victoria Gilbert and Noor Halabi. Skype Interview. October 7, 2016.
- Das, Veena, "Collective Violence and the Shifting Categories of Communal Riots, Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide" in *the Historiography of genocide*. Edited by Dan Stone, 93-127. NY, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Davies, Wyre. "Crisis in Syria Emboldens Country's Kurds." *BBC*. July 28, 2012. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19021766>
- Dawisha, Aheed. *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Day, Stephen. "The Political Challenge of Yemen's Southern Movement." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Middle East Program No. 108. March 2010. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/yemen_south_movement.pdf

- Della Ratta, Donatella, "Syrian Hands Raised: User Generated Creativity Between Citizenship and Dissent," *Jadaliyya* (October 31, 2012). Accessed November 23, 2012. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8125/syrian-hands-raised_user-generated-creativity-betw
- "Demonstrations against the Repressive Practices of the PYD." *Syria Freedom Forever*. August 16, 2016. <https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2016/08/16/مظاهرات-ضد-ممارسات-حزب-الاتحاد-الديمق>
- Dettmer, Jamie. "Syrian Kurds Take Steps Toward Self-Governance." *Voice of America News*. November 29, 2013. <http://www.voanews.com/content/syrian-kurds-take-steps-toward-self-governance/1800450.html>
- Dickinson, Elizabeth. "The Syrian War's Private Donors Lose Faith." *The New Yorker*. January 16, 2014. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-syrian-wars-private-donors-lose-faith>
- "Dozens Killed During Syrian Protests" *Fox News*. June 10, 2011. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2011/06/10/syrian-tv-army-begins-operations-in-north-town.html>
- Drott, Carl. "A Christian Militia Splits in Qamishli." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. March 6, 2014. <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54794>
- "Syriac-Kurdish Cooperation in northeast Syria." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. March 7, 2014. <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54797>
- "The Syrian Experiment with 'Apoism.'" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. May 20, 2014. <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55650>
- "Syrian Kurdish Areas Under the Rule of Law?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. May 7, 2014 <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55526>
- Dumitru, Diana and Carter Johnson. "'Constructing Interethnic Conflict and Cooperation: Why Some People Harmed Jews and Others Helped Them During the Holocaust in Romania.'" *World Politics*. Vol 63 No. 1 (January 2011): pp. 1-42.
- Esposito, John L. and James P. Piscatori. "Democratization and Islam." *Middle East Journal*. Vol 45 No 3 (Summer 1991): pp. 427-440.
- "Eastern Ghouta: Foundation of Independent Judiciary following Liberation." *Enab Baladi*. January 26, 2016. <http://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2016/01/eastern-ghouta-foundation-of-independent-judiciary-following-liberation/>
- El-Naggar, Mona and Michael Slackman. "Hero of Egypt's Revolution, Military Now Faces Critics." *The New York Times*. April 8, 2011. Accessed on April 2, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/09/world/middleeast/09egypt.html?pagewanted=all>
- Encyclopedia Britannica*. "Khalid ibn al-Walid." <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Khalid-ibn-al-Walid>

- Encyclopedia Britannica*. “Shura.” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/shura>
- Fahim, Kareem. “U.S. approach to Yemen is challenged as country splinters and government vanishes.” *Washington Post*. September 21, 2018.
- Fazal, Tanisha M. “State Death in the International System” *International Organization* Vol. 58 No. 2 (Spring 2004): pp. 311-344. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3877860>
- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity” *International Organization* Vol. 54 (2000): pp. 845-877.
- Förster, Till. “*Dialogue Direct: Rebel Governance and Civil Order in Northern Côte d’Ivoire.*” In *Rebel Governance in Civil War*. Ed: Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir, Zachariah Mampilly. 2015 Cambridge university press. NY, NY. 203-225
- Frantz, Eva Anne. “Violence and its Impact on Loyalty and Identity Formation in Late Ottoman Kosovo: Muslims and Christians in a Period of Reform and Transformation.” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. Vol 29 No 4 (December 2009): pp. 455-468.
- Gagnon, Bernard. “Minaret of the Great Mosque of Maarrat al-Numan, Syria.” April 3, 2010. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Mosque_of_Ma%27arrat_al-Numan_01.jpg
- Gao, Eleanor. “Tribal Mobilization, Fragmented Groups, and Public Goods Provision in Jordan.” *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 49 No. 10 (2016): pp 1372-1403.
- Gates, Scott. “Recruitment and Allegiance: The Microfoundations of Rebellion.” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 46 No. 1 (2002): pp. 111-130. DOI: 10.1177/0022002702046001007
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism* Ithaca, NY: Blackwell Publishing, 1983.
- Gilbert, Victoria. “Syria for the Syrians: the rise of Syrian nationalism, 1970–2013.” Master’s thesis, Northeastern University, 2013.
- Glatzer, Bernt. “War and Boundaries in Afghanistan: Significance and Relativity of Local and Social Boundaries.” *Die Welt des Islams* Vol. 41 no. 3 (2001): pp. 379-399. DOI: 10.1163/1570060011164891
- Glioti, Andrea “Kurdish Group Gaining Autonomy in Northern Syria.” *Al-Monitor*. May 7, 2013. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/05/pyd-pkk-syria-kurdistan.html>
- Greif, Avner and David D. Laitin, “A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change,” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 98, No. 4 (November 2004): pp. 633-652.
- Gubler, Joshua R. and Joel Sawat Selway. “Horizontal Inequality, Cross-Cutting Cleavages, and Civil War.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 56 No. 2 (2012): pp. 206-232. DOI: 10.1177/0022002711431416
- Gutman, Roy. “America’s Favorite Syrian Militia Rules with an Iron Fist.” *The Nation*. February 13, 2017. <https://www.thenation.com/article/americas-favorite-syrian-militia-rules-with-an-iron-fist/>

- Hanna, Jason. "Here's how ISIS was really founded." *CNN*. August 13, 2016. <https://www.cnn.com/2016/08/12/middleeast/here-is-how-isis-began/index.html>
- Herbst, Jeffrey "States and War in Africa" in *The Nation-State in Questions*, edited by John Hall, John Ikenberry, and T. V. Paul, 166-181. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Hamou, Ammar, Dan Wilkofsky and Kristen Gillespie. "Questions of 'overstepping' judiciary as Jaish al-Islam claims Douma victory." *Syria: Direct*. January 9, 2015. <http://syriadirect.org/news/questions-of-'overstepping'-judiciary-as-jaish-al-islam-claims-douma-victory/>
- Heller, Sam. "Al Qaeda's Screwing Up in Syria." *The Daily Beast*. April 5, 2016. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/04/05/al-qaeda-s-screwing-up-in-syria.html>
- Hinnebusch, Raymond. "Modern Syrian Politics." *History Compass* 6, no. 1 (2007): 263-285.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. Introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1-14. New York: Press Syndicate of the university of Cambridge, 1983.
- Hodie, Matthew and Caroline Hartzell. "Signals of Reconciliation: Institution-Building and the Resolution of Civil War." *International Studies Review*. Vol. 7 No. 1 (March 2005): pp: 21-40.
- Hogg, Michael A., Deborah J. Terry, Katherine M. White. "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly*. Vol. 58 No. 4 (December 1995): pp. 255-269.
- Horowitz, Donald L. "Conciliatory Institutions and Constitutional Processes in Post-conflict States." *William & Mary Law Review*. Vol. 49 No. 4 (2008): pp. 1213-1248. <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmlr/vol49/iss4/7>
- Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1985.
- "How do Syrians value courts' performance and Judiciary in their Liberated Areas?" *Enab Baladi*. January 26, 2016. <http://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2016/01/how-do-syrians-value-courts-performance-and-judiciary-in-their-liberated-areas/>
- Hubbard, Ben. "Private Donors' Funds Add Wild Card to War in Syria." *New York Times*. November 12, 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/13/world/middleeast/private-donors-funds-add-wild-card-to-war-in-syria.html>
- Hultman, Lisa. "Targeting the Unarmed: Strategic Rebel Violence in Civil War." Doctoral Dissertation, Uppsala University, 2008. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:172134/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Hussein, Akil. "Division Defines Syria's Tribes and Clans." *Chatham House*. January 2018. <https://syria.chathamhouse.org/research/division-defines-syrias-tribes-and-clans>

- Hweio, Haala. "Tribes in Libya: From Social Organization to Political Power." *African Conflict & Peacebuilding Review*. Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring 2012): pp. 111-121.
- Ibrahim, Mohammad Abdulssattar and Nelson, Maria. "Asayish crack down on political opponents in Al-Hasakah after protests" *Syria Direct*. August 17, 2016. <http://syriadirect.org/news/asayish-crack-down-on-political-opponents-in-al-hasakah-after-protests/>
- Ismail, Salwa. "The Syrian Uprising: Imagining and Performing the Nation." *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 11 (2011): 538-549.
- Izady, Michael. *Atlas of the Islamic World and Vicinity* (New York, Columbia University, Gulf 2000 Project: 2006-present). <http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/maps.shtml>
- International Crisis Group. "Middle East Report No. 143: Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts." June 27, 2013. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Syria/143-syrias-metastasizing-conflicts.pdf>
- Jackson, Robert H. *Quasi-States: Sovereignty International Relations and the Third World*. New York, NY: University of Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Jackson, Robert H. and Carl G. Rosberg. "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood." *World Politics* Vol. 35 No. 1 (October 1982): pp. 1-24.
- Jones, Rhys and Peter Merriman, "Hot, Banal and everyday nationalism: Bilingual road signs in Wales," *Political Geography* 28 (2009): 164-173.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. "Ethnic Defection in Civil War" *Comparative Political Studies* Vol. 41 No. 8 (August 2008): pp. 1043-1068.
- The logic of violence in civil war*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars" *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 1 No. 3 (September 2003): pp. 475-494.
- Kamrava, Mehran. *The Modern Middle East, Third Edition: A Political History Since the First World War*. 3rd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Kasfir, Nelson. "Guerillas and Civilian Participation: The National Resistance Army in Uganda, 1981-86." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 43 No 2 (June 2005) 271-296. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876207>
- Kaufmann, Chaim. "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars." *International Security* Vol. 20 No. 4 (Spring 1996): pp. 136-175.
- . 2001. *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- . 2006. "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Violence." *International*
- Keister, Jennifer Marie. "States within States: How Rebels Rule." PhD diss, for University of California, San Diego, 2011.

- Kendall, Elisabeth. "Contemporary Jihadi Militancy in Yemen: How is the Threat Evolving?" *Middle East Institute*. Policy Paper 2018-7.
https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/MEI%20Policy%20Paper_Kendall_7.pdf
- Kfir, Isaac. 2015. "Social Identity Group and Human (In)Security: the Case of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. 38: 4, 233-252.
- Khatib, Lina. *Image Politics in the Middle East: the Role of the Visual in Political Struggle*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.
- Khibyeh, Souad. "An Interview with the Head of the Elected Local Council in Douma" *The Syrian Observer*. March 13, 2014.
<http://syrianobserver.com/EN/Interviews/26876/An+Interview+with+the+Head+of+the+Elected+Local+Council+in+Douma>
- Khodr, Zeina. "America's partners on the ground in Syria." *Al Jazeera Online*. November 1, 2015. <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/middleeast/2015/11/america-partners-ground-syria-151101163906637.html>
- Kienle, Eberhard. "Arab Unity Schemes Revisited: Interest, Identity, and Policy in Syria and Egypt." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Cambridge University Press) 27, no. 1 (Feb 1995): 53-71, Accessed November 26, 2011.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/176187>
- Kinninmont, Jane. "The Syria Conflict and the Geopolitics of the Region." *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook* (2014): pp. 48-53.
- Kinnvall, Catarina. "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security." *Political Psychology* (2004) Vol 25 No 5 pp. 741-767.
- Kolsto, Pal. "Identifying with the old or the new state: nation-building vs. Yugonostalgia in the Yugoslav successor states" *Nations and Nationalism* Vol. 20 No. 4 (2014): pp. 760-781.
- Lacher, Wolfram "Libya's Local Elites and the Politics of Alliance Building" *Mediterranean Politics* Vol. 21 No. 1 (2016): pp. 64-85.
- "The Rise of Tribal Politics." In *The 2011 Libyan Uprisings and the Struggle for the Post-Qadhafi Future* edited by Jason Pack. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Laitin, David D. *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change Among the Yoruba*. Chicago, Il: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Lake, David and Donald Rothchild. "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict." *International Security* Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall 1996): pp. 41-75.
- Larbi, Louafi. "Convoy of Tunisians Arrive in Sidi Bouzid" in "Tunisian Minister Suspends Former Ruling Party." *The Guardian*. February 7, 2011. Accessed April 4, 2013. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/07/tunisian-minister->

[suspends-dc-party](#)

- Lawrence, Adria. *Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism: anti-Colonial Protest in the French Empire*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Letsch, Constanze. "US Drops Weapons and Ammunition to Help Kurdish Fighters in Kobani." *The Guardian*. October 20, 2014.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/20/turkey-iraqi-kurds-kobani-isis-fighters-us-air-drops-arms>
- Levi, Margaret. *Of Rule and Revenue*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1988.
- Leigh, Karen. Interview with Lama Fakih "How the Kurdish PYD Operate Their Own Autonomous Government." Syria Deeply. February 18, 2014.
<http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2014/02/4583/kurdish-pyd-operates-autonomous-government/>
- Lieberman, Evan S. "National Political Community and the Politics of Income Taxation in Brazil and South Africa in the Twentieth Century." *Politics & Society* 29, no. 4 (December 2001): 515–55. doi:10.1177/0032329201029004003.
- Lieberman, Evan S. and Preena Singh, "Measuring the State's Institutionalization of Ethnic Categories across Time," *QMMR Newsletter* (Spring 2009) Vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 29-35.
- Lister, Charles R. *The Syrian Jihad: al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency*. Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Lund, Aron. "The Free Syrian Army Doesn't Exist." Syria Comment Blog. March 16, 2013. <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/the-free-syrian-army-doesnt-exist/>
- "A Timeline of the Tightening Siege in Eastern Ghouta." *Syria Deeply*. December 27, 2017. <https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2017/12/27/a-timeline-of-the-tightening-siege-in-eastern-ghouta>
- "Islamist Mergers in Syria: Ahrar al-Sham Swallows Suqour al-Sham" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. March 23, 2015.
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=59471>
- Lustick, Ian. "The Absence of Middle Eastern Great Powers: Political 'Backwardness' in Historical Perspective." *International Organization* Vol. 51 No. 4 (Autumn 1997): pp. 653-683.
- "Hegemony and the Riddle of Nationalism: The Dialects of Nationalism and Religion in the Middle East." *Logos* Vol 1 No 3 Summer 2002. Pp 18-44
- Lustick, Ian and Dan Miodownik. "The Institutionalization of Identity: Micro Adaptation, Macro Effects, and Collective Consequences." *Studies in Comparative and International Development*. Vol. 37. (2002): pp. 24-53.
- Lynch, Marc, Deen Freelon, and Sean Aday. 2014. "Syria's Socially Mediated Civil War." United States Institute of Peace. Peaceworks. No. 91.
- Maara Media Center. "تقرير عن مظاهرة أهالي معرة النعمان ضد العدوان الروسي على سوريا وقتله" للمدنيين . Filmed October 2015. YouTube video, 2:36. Posted October 2, 2015

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smgyJxatEdk&feature=youtu.be>
- MacDonald, Alex “Rise of Jaish al-Islam marks a turn in Syria conflict.” *Middle East Eye*. May 7, 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/jaish-al-islam-piece-918366283>
- Mann, Michael. “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results.” *European Journal of Sociology* Vol. 25 No. 2 (1984): pp. 185-213.
- “Mapping Militant Organizations: Syria” Stanford University.
<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/maps/view/syria>
- Masi, Alessandra. “Jabhat Al-Nusra’s Attacks on Moderate Rebels Put Western Strategy in Jeopardy.” *International Business Times*. November 3, 2014.
<http://www.ibtimes.com/jabhat-al-nusras-attacks-moderate-rebels-put-western-strategy-jeopardy-1717949>
- Masters, Roger D. “World Politics as a Primitive Political System.” *World Politics* Vol. 16 No. 4 (July 1964): pp. 595-619.
- Mahmoud, Zuhour. “Marat al-Numan: the Thorn in al-Nusra’s Side” *Syria Deeply: News Deeply*. June 24, 2016.
<https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2016/06/24/maarat-al-numan-the-thorn-in-al-nusras-side>
- Majstorovic, Staven. “Ancient Hatreds or Elite Manipulation?” *World Affairs* Vol. 159 No. 4 (Spring 1997): pp. 170-182.
- Mampilly, Zachariah Cherian. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.
- “Performing the Nation-State: Rebel Governance and Symbolic Processes” in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*. Ed: Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir, Zachariah Mampilly. 2015 Cambridge university press. NY, NY. 74-97
- Mango, Andrew. *From the Sultan to Atatürk : Turkey*. London: Haus Publishing, 2010. Accessed January 10, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Mann, Michael. “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results.” *European Journal of Sociology* Vol. 25 No. 2 (1984): pp. 185-213.
- Marx, Anthony. *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- McKernan, Bethan. “Female Kurdish Fighters Announce New Training Academies for Arab Women to Take on Isis in Syria.” *The Independent*. January 4, 2017.
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/female-kurdish-fighters-ypj-set-up-new-training-academies-arab-yazidi-women-to-fight-isis-a7508951.html>
- Menkhaus, Ken. “Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping” *International Security*. Vol 31 No 3 (Winter 2006/07): pp. 74-106.
- Mezran, Karim. “Libya: Stuck in Transition.” *IEMED Mediterranean Yearbook 2018*. Pp. 213-215.

- Migdal, Joel. *Strong Societies and Weak States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Peasants, Politics and Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974.
- Milliken, Jennifer and Keith Krause, "State Failure, State Collapse, and State Reconstruction: Concepts, Lessons and Strategies" *Development and Change* Vol. 33 No 5. (November 2002): pp. 753-744.
- Mitchell, Timothy. "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics." *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 85, No. 1 (1991): pp. 77-96.
- Montalvo, Jose and Marta Reynal-Querol. "Ethnic Polarization and the Duration of Civil Wars." *Economics of Governance*. Vol. 11 No. 2 (2010): pp. 123-143.
- Morgan, Prys. "From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period." in *The Invention of Tradition*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 43-100. New York: Press Syndicate of the university of Cambridge, 1983.
- Moriss, Loveday. "The War for Free Kurdistan" *Foreign Policy*. October 25, 2012. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/25/the-war-for-free-kurdistan/>
- Mufti, Malik. *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Müller, Tanja R. "From rebel governance to state consolidation – Dynamics of loyalty and the securitization of the state in Eritrea." *Geoforum*. Vol. 43 (2012): pp. 793- 803.
- Muslih, Muhammad. "The Rise of Local Nationalism in the Arab East." In *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, edited by Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S. Simon, 167-185. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Nepstad, Sharon Erickson, "Mutiny and nonviolence in the Arab Spring: Exploring military defections and loyalty in Egypt, Bahrain, and Syria." *Journal of Peace Research*. Vol. 50 No. 3 (May 2013): pp. 337-349.
- Nets-Zehngut, Rafi "The Passing of Time and the Collective Memory of Conflicts: The Case of Israel and the 1948 Palestinian Exodus." *Peace & Change*. Vol 37 No 2 (April 2012): pp. 253-285.
- Nisman, Daniel. "Have Syria's Kurds Had a Change of Heart?" *The World Post*. April 8, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-nisman/have-syrias-kurds-had-a_b_3036931.html
- Norton, Anne. *Reflections on Political Identity*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.
- North, Douglas C., John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- O'Leary, Brendan. Introduction to *Right-Sizing the State: The Politics of Moving Borders*. Edited by Brendan O'Leary, Ian Lustick, and Thomas Callaghy. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.

- Oleinik, Anton. "On content analysis of images of mass protests: a case of data triangulation." *Qual Quant* (2015) 49: 2203-2220
- Oweis, Khaled Yacoub and Erika Solomon, "Syria Islamists unite as faction-fighting goes on" *Reuters*. November 22, 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/22/us-syria-crisis-islamists-idUSBRE9AL0T420131122>
- Paris, Roland. *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Penrose, Jan, "Designing the Nation: Banknotes, Banal Nationalism and Alternative Conceptions of the State," *Political Geography* 30 (2011): 429-440.
- Pérez-Sales. "Identity and Trauma in Adolescents Within the Context of Political Violence: A Psychosocial and Communitarian View." *Clinical Social Work Journal*. Vol 38 (2010): pp 408-417.
- Perry, Tom. "Syrian Kurds, allied set to approve new government blueprint." *Reuters*. December 28, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-constitution-idUSKBN14H0X3?il=0>
- Perry, Tom and Suleiman al-Khalidi. "Al Qaeda seizes territory from moderate Syrian group" *Reuters*. October 28, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idlib-idUSKBN0IH1KW20141028>
- Phillips, Christopher. *Everyday Arab Identity: The Daily Reproduction of the Arab World*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013.
- Pierson, Paul "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics" *American Political Science Review* Vol. 94 No. 2 (June 2000): 251-267.
- Power, Shawn and Ben O'Loughlin. "The Syrian data glut: Rethinking the role of information in conflict." *Media, War & Conflict*. Vol 8 No 2 (2015): pp. 172-180.
- Posen, Barry R. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict" *Survival* Vol. 35 No 1. (Spring 1993): pp. 27-47.
- Posner, Daniel. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- "Protests Erupt in Syrian Cities; at Least 34 Reported Dead." *CNN*. May 20, 2011. <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/05/20/syria.unrest/index.html>
- Qaddour, Kinana. "ISIS' War on Families Never Ended." *Foreign Policy*. February 1, 2018. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/01/isiss-war-on-families-never-ended/>
- "Rebel Factions Establish a Unified Judicial Council in East Ghouta." National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces. June 25, 2014. <http://en.etalaf.org/all-news/news/rebel-factions-establish-a-unified-judicial-council-in-east-ghouta.html>
- Resident of Ma'arat a-Nu'man, Whatsapp communications with the author, April 10, 2017
- Reuter, Christoph. "The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State." *Der Spiegel Online*. April 18, 2015.

- “In a Devastated Country, One City is Thriving.” *De Spiegel Online*. November 15, 2017. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/the-city-of-marib-is-flourishing-while-yemen-falls-apart-a-1177800.html>
- Revkin, Mara. “The legal foundations of the Islamic State.” The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic world. July, 23 216. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Brookings-Analysis-Paper_Mara-Revkin_Web.pdf
- Roeder, Philip G. "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization." *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991): 196-232. doi:10.2307/2010471.
- Rollins, Tom. “The unravelling of Syria’s Eastern Ghouta.” *Al-Jazeera*. December 18, 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/unravelling-syria-eastern-ghouta-161204082727105.html>
- Rose, William. 2000. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict: Some New Hypotheses." *Security Studies* 9, No. 4: 1-51.
- Rotberg, Robert I. Introduction to *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg, 1-50. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Salehyan, Idean. “The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 54, no. 3 (2010): 493-515.
- Salehyan, Idean, David Siroky, and Reed M. Wood “External Rebel Sponsorship and Civilian Abuse: A Principal-Agent Analysis of Wartime Atrocities” *International Organization*, 68 no. 3 (June 2014): 633-661.
- Salehyan, Idean, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and David E. Cunningham “Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups.” *International Organization*, 65 no. 4 (Fall 2011): 709-744
- Salisbury, Peter. “Yemen: National Chaos, Local Order.” Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House. December 2017. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2017-12-20-yemen-national-chaos-local-order-salisbury2.pdf>
- Sambanis, Nicholas and Moses Shayo. “Social Identification and Ethnic Conflict” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 107 No. 2 (May 2013): pp. 294-324.
- Sanín, Francisco Gutierrez and Elisabeth Jean Wood “Ideology in Civil War: Instrumental Adoption and Beyond.” *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 51 No. 2 (2014): pp. 213-226.
- Sary, Ghadi. “Kurdish Self-Governance in Syria: Survival and Ambition.” *Chatham House*. September 15, 2016. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/kurdish-self-governance-syria-survival-and-ambition>
- Schatz, Robert T. and Howard Lavine. “Waving the Flag: National Symbolism, Social Identity, and Political Engagement. *Political Psychology*. Vol. 28 No. 3 (June 2007): pp. 329-355.
- Schwandner-Sievers, Stephanie. “The enactment of ‘tradition’: Albanian construction of identity, violence and power in times of crisis.” in *Anthropology of Violence and*

- Conflict*. Edited by Bettina E. Schmidt and Ingo W. Schröder, 97-120. Ny, NY: Routledge, 2001.
- Selway, Joel Sawat. "Cross-Cuttingness, Cleavage Structures and Civil War Onset. *British Journal of Political Science*." Vol. 41, (2011): pp. 111-138.
DOI:10.1017/S0007123410000311
- Sen, Amartya "Violence, Identity and Poverty" *Journal of Peace Research*. Vol 45 No 5. (2008): pp 5-15.
- Shaheen, Kareem, Paul Torpey, Pablo Gutiérrez, and Cath Levett. "Who Backs Whom in the Syrian Conflict." *The Guardian*. December 2, 2015.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2015/oct/09/who-backs-whom-in-the-syrian-conflict>
- Shadid, Anthony. "Syria Protests Regain Momentum, Draw Fire." *Boston.com*. May 21, 2011.
http://archive.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2011/05/21/syria_protests_regain_momentum_draw_fire/
- Shane, Scott and Ben Hubbard. "ISIS Displaying a Deft Command of Varied Media. *The New York Times*. August 30, 2014.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/world/middleeast/isis-displaying-a-deft-command-of-varied-media.html>
- Simonsen, Sven Gunnar. "Addressing Ethnic Divisions in Post-Conflict Institution-Building: Lessons from Recent Cases." *Security Dialogue*. Vol. 36 No. 3 (2005): pp. 297-318.
- Smart News*. November 9, 2015. بدعوة من المجلس الوطني الكردي، مظاهرة في المالكية تندد بتجاوزات لإدارة الذاتية "الكرديّة" بدعوة من-المجلس-11839-<https://smartnews-agency.com/ar/wires/11839/>-الوطنية-الكرديّة-مظاهرة-في-المالكية-تندد-بتجاوزات
- Smith, Anthony D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, Inc., 1986.
- Smits, Rosan; Floor Janssen; Ivan Briscoe; Terri Beswick "Revolution and its discontents: state, factions and violence in the new Libya" Report for the Conflict Research Units, The Clingendael Institute. Hague, the Netherlands, September 2013.
- Snyder, Jack and Karen Ballentine. "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas." *International Security* Vol. 21 No. 2 (Fall 1996): pp. 5-40.
- Sommerville, Quentin and Riam Dalati. "An education in terror." *BBC*. August 2017.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/an_education_in_terror
- Speckhard, Anne and Amet S. Yayla. 2017. "The ISIS Emni: Origins and Inner Workings of ISIS's Intelligence Apparatus." *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 11:1.
<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/573/html>
- Spyer, Jonathan. "Amid Syria's Atrocities, Kurds Scratch Out a Home." *The Atlantic*. April 2, 2013. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/amid-syrias-atrocities-kurds-scratch-out-a-home/274573/>

- Stroup, David R. "Boundaries of Belief: Religious Practices and the Constructon of Ethnic Identity in Hui Muslim Communities." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 40 No. 6 (2017): pp. 988-1006.
- Suleiman, Yasir. *The Arabic Language and National Identity*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003.
- "Syria army shells Homs and northern towns in Idlib." *BBC*. February 27, 2012. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-17176943>
- "Syria conflict: Islamists capture Jisr al-Shughur" *BBC* online. April 25, 2015. Accessed December 21, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32461693>
- Syria Live U Map. <https://syria.liveuamap.com>
- "Syria: Local Government." *Fanack*. September 3, 2018. <https://fanack.com/syria/governance/#Local%20Government>
- Syrian Shuhada database. <http://syriansshuhada.com>
- Tablet. BM Number 15826, Registration Number 1896,0612.46, British Museum. http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=326405&partId=1&searchText=15826&page=1
- Taleb, Julia. "Syrians roll back extremism in Idlib without military intervention." *Waging Nonviolence: people-powered news & analysis*. May 23, 2017. <https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/syrians-roll-back-extremism-idlib/>
- Talentino, Andrea Kathryn. "The Two Faces of Nation-Building: Developing Function and Identity." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. Vol. 17 No. 3 (2004): p. 557-575.
- Tapper, Richard. "Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East." In *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*. Edited by Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, 48-73. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1991.
- Testerman, Matthew "Removing the Crutch: External Support and the Dynamics of Armed Conflict." Working Paper, International Studies Association, 2014. <http://web.isanet.org/Web/Conferences/ISSS%20Austin%202014/Archive/8932f607-8845-4849-9508-7c5ee3af8491.pdf>
- Thompson, Nick and Atika Shubert. "The anatomy of ISIS: How the 'Islamic State' is run, from oil to beheadings." *CNN*. January 14, 2015.
- "Thousands Protest for Independence in Yemen." *Middle East Eye*. July 7, 2017. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/thousands-protest-independence-south-yemen-1726887313>
- Tibi, Bassam. "The Simultaneity of the Unsimultaneous: Old Tribes and Imposed NAtioin-States in the Modern Middle East." In *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*. Edited by Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, 127-152. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1991.
- Tilly, Charles, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1990.

- “War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime.” In *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by Peter Evans et al, 169-187. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Tilly, Charles and Lesley Wood. *Social Movements, 1768-2013*. 3rd ed. Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2013.
- “Timeline: Unrest in Syria,” *Washington Post Online*. Accessed March 25, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/world/syria-timeline/>
- Toft, Monica Duffy “Getting Religion? The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War” *International Security* Vol. 31 No. 4 (Spring 2007): 97-131.
- “Religion, Civil War, and International Order.” Discussion Paper, No. 2006-03 (Cambridge, MassL Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, July 2006).
- Trentin, Massimiliano. "Modernizing as State Building: The Two Germanies in Syria, 1963-1972." *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 3 (June 2009): 487-505. Accessed November 27, 2011. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2009.00782.x/abstract>
- Tufekci, Zeynep. “The Medium and the Movement: Digital Tools, Social Movement Politics, and the End of the Free Rider Problem.” 2014. *Policy and Internet*. 6(2), 202-208.
- Tufekci , Zeynep and Christopher Wilson. 2012. “Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square.” *Journal of Communication*. 62, 363-379.
- “Turkey will not cooperate in US support for Kurds in Syria says Erdogan” *The Guardian*. October 19, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/19/turkey-will-not-cooperate-us-support-kurds-erdogan>
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). “UNHCR's Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-seekers.” August 2007. Available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/46deb05557.html>
- “US military special forces pictured aiding Kurdish fighters in Syria.” *The Guardian*. May 26, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/26/us-military-photos-syria-soldiers-fighting-isis>
- Van Evera, Stephen. 2001. "Primordialism Lives!" *APSA-CP: Newsletter of the Organized Section in Comparative Politics of the American Political Science Association* 12, no. 1: 2-20
- Van Wilgenburg, Wladimir. (2017, October 21). “Kurdish fight for women’s rights faces challenges in Syria.” *Middle East Eye*. Retrieved from <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/kurdish-fight-women-rights-faces-challenges-syria-1018812004>
- Varshney, Ashutosh. “Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* edited by Carles Boix and Susan Carol Stokes, 274-294. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007.

- Volkan, Vamik D.. "Psychoanalysis and Diplomacy: Part I. Individual and Large Group Identity," *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*. Vol. I, No. 1 (1999): pp. 29-55.
- Wall, Melissa and Sahar el Zahed. 2015. "Syrian Citizen Journalism." *Digital Journalism*. 3(5), 720-736.
- Weber, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The modernization of rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford University Press, 1976.
- Wedeen, Lisa. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Wehrey, Frederic "Libya's Militia Menace" July 15, 2012. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (originally in *Foreign Affairs*).
- Weinstein, Jeremy M. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Nook edition.
- Weiss, Michael. "The Syrian Opposition: Who are They?" *The New Republic*. July 5, 2011. Accessed February 28, 2012.
<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/world/91253/syrian-opposition-Asad-kucinich>
- Westall, Sylvia and Mahmoud Harby. "Insight: Kuwaitis campaign privately to arm Syrian rebels." *Reuters*. June 27, 2013.
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/27/us-syria-kuwait-insight-idUSBRE95P0TG20130627>
- Wheeler, Nicholas. "The Noble Enterprise of State-Building: Reconsidering the Rise and Fall of the Modern State in Prussia and Poland." *Comparative Politics* Vol. 38 No. 8 (October 2011): pp. 21-38.
- Wilkinson, James., "Al-Qaeda seizes weapons and bases from US-backed Free Syrian Army, reportedly kicks them out of town of Maarat Al-Numan" *DailyMail.com*. March 13, 2016. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3490077/Al-Qaida-seizes-weapons-bases-US-backed-Syrian-rebels.html>
- Wilkofsky, Dan. "The Commune System: a Look at Local PYD Governance in Northeastern Syria." *The Atlantic Council*. March 12, 2018.
<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/the-commune-system-a-look-at-local-pyd-governance-in-northeastern-syria>
- Wilmer, Franke. *The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War: Identity, Conflict, and Violence in the Former Yugoslavia*. NY, NY: Routledge, 2002
- Wimmer, Andreas. "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory." *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 113, No. 4 (January 2008): pp. 970-1022.
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. "The Social Processes of Civil War: The Wartime Transformation of Social Networks." *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 11 No. 1 (June 2008): pp. 539-561.

- Facebook page for the Judicial Council of East Ghouta.
<https://www.facebook.com/qadaa.ghuta> and
<https://www.facebook.com/QadaAlghotah>
- Facebook page for the Local Council of *Rif Dimashq*.
<https://www.facebook.com/local.Rural.Damascus>
- Facebook page for the Local Council for the Governorate of *Rif Dimashq* – East Ghouta.
<https://www.facebook.com/Councils.eastern.Ghouta>
- Facebook page for the Local Council of Douma City.
<https://www.facebook.com/Douma.local.council?fref=photo>
- Facebook page for the Local Council of Jisr a-Shughur.
<https://www.facebook.com/jisral2011/>
- Facebook page for the Local Council of Ma'arat a-Nu'man.
<https://www.facebook.com/loc.con.maarra/>
- Facebook page for the Democratic Unity Party, Rojava.
<https://www.facebook.com/PYD.Rojava.ar/>
- Facebook page for the Shari'a Body of Damascus and its Countryside – Eastern Ghouta.
<https://www.facebook.com/ShariahBoardGotaEast>
- Facebook page for the Shura Council's Local Executive.
<https://www.facebook.com/majls.alshura>
- Facebook page for the Syrian Democratic Council.
<https://www.facebook.com/Council.Democratic.Syria>
- Facebook page for Tev-Dem Public Relations Office of the Jazira Canton.
<https://www.facebook.com/tev0dem/>
- Facebook page for The Syrian Revolution Network.
<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution>
- Maara Media Center. تقرير عن مظاهرة أهالي معرة النعمان ضد العدوان الروسي على سوريا وقتله “ للمدنيين”
 . Filmed October 2015. YouTube video, 2:36. Posted October 2, 2015”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smgyJxatEdk&feature=youtu.be>
- Syrian Revolution Network Facebook page. Photograph posted May 1, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2017.
<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution/photos/a.10150397575815727.619133.420796315726/10155678473175727/?type=3&theater>
- Syrian Revolution Network Facebook page. Photograph posted May 2, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2017.
<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution/photos/a.10150397575815727.619133.420796315726/10155681256125727/?type=3&theater>
- Syrian Revolution Network Facebook page. Photograph posted August 3, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2017.
<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution/photos/a.10150397575815727.619133.420796315726/10156059392880727/?type=3&theater>

Syrian Revolution Network Facebook Page. Photograph posted January 15, 2016.

Accessed April 27, 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution/photos/a.10150397575815727.619133.420796315726/10156612109760727/?type=3&theater>

Syrian Revolution Network. “ تخليداً لذكرى الثورة وتأكيداً على أنّ أبطال سورية مصممون على سورية “
خالية من عصابة أسد

عن مظاهرة معرة النعمان في هذا التقرير من محمد الضاهر #شبكة_الثورة_السورية

جمعة #الثورة_مستمرة

#TheRevolutionContinues”. Filmed March 4,2016. Facebook Video, 2:44. Posted March 4, 2016.

<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution/videos/10156787455640727/>

Syrian Revolution Network. “ قبل قليل والتي دعت إلى وقف من المظاهرة الليلية لأهالي #معرة_النعمان “

” وإعادة الأرتال إلى نقاط الرباط و #الفرقة_13 الإقتتال بين #جبهة_النصرة

Facebook video, 4:31. Posted March 12, 2016.

<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution/videos/10156822202535727/>

Syrian Revolution Network. “ ”. Filmed April 2016. Facebook video, 1:01. Posted April 22, 2016.

<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution/videos/10157038924515727/>

Syrian Revolution Network. “ في الوقت الذي يقوم به ثوارنا الأبطال بتحرير أراضينا من رجس الإحتلال “
الصفوي يقوم الأحرار بنفس الوقت بالتظاهر والتأكيد على استمرارية الثورة

في جمعة #روسيا_تحرق_سورية مظاهرة أحرار #معرة_النعمان

“Filmed June 2016. Facebook video, 4:31. Posted June 3, 2016.

<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution/videos/10157199114900727/>

Syrian Revolution Network Facebook page. Photograph posted December 24, 2016.

Accessed April 27, 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution/photos/a.10150397575815727.619133.420796315726/10158183831825727/?type=3>.

The Movement for a Democratic Society (Tev-Dem) Website. [http://tev-](http://tev-dem.com/ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=99&Itemid=141)

[dem.com/ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=99&Itemid=141](http://tev-dem.com/ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=99&Itemid=141)