RUPTURES AND RIPPLE EFFECTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND

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Introduction: Eight Myths of Conflict and Development in the Middle East

Jan Selby and Mariz Tadros

Abstract In this introductory article we identify eight myths of conflict and development related to the Middle East region. Some of these myths, which cut across academia, foreign policy and development interventions, are specific to the Middle East; others are 'global' myths that regional developments contradict. We do not claim to be the first to identify all these myths; many of our arguments are indebted to a long history of critical scholarship. The articles in this *IDS Bulletin* all speak to the disconnects, disjunctures and misconceptions highlighted here.

Perhaps more than any other region or in any period of post-Cold War history, the Middle East since the Arab Spring constitutes a significant challenge to established ideas about development and its relationship with conflict. The struggles of democracy movements, the resilience and rebirth of authoritarian regimes, the regional conflagration around Syria, new experiments with Islamism, and the return of geopolitics all, in one way or another, challenge these established ideas. The Middle East has always been something of an outlier within development thinking and practice: development policy and the discipline of development studies have always taken sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America as their central reference points, not the Middle East. But with so much international attention currently on the Middle East, it is worthwhile examining what trends and events there tell us about development and the role of conflict therein. This is what we try to do in this article.

In what follows, we identify eight myths of conflict and development related to the Middle East region. Some of these myths are specific to the Middle East; others are 'global' myths that regional developments contradict. We do not claim to be the first to identify all these myths; many of our arguments are indebted to a long history of critical scholarship. Moreover, we should emphasise that we do not mean to suggest that these myths are adhered to all of the time: a diversity of views about development and the 'development–security nexus' of

course exists. However, we think that these myths cut across a great deal of academia, policy and practice, and provide underpinning assumptions for development thinking and interventions, even when they are only implicit. Myth number one is a clear case in point.

Myth number 1: that there is a unilinear model of development

The idea that development is a linear process, whereby societies progress through a series of steps from 'low' to 'high' development, or from 'traditional' to 'modern' forms, is one of the hallmarks of modern development thinking. So also is the assumption that just one overall form or direction of this process exists, whatever the minor or temporary deviations from it. Such assumptions were explicit in classical early 'modernisation theory', in which, at least by Rostow's account, societies were understood to develop through five stages of economic growth, from 'tradition' to 'maturity' and 'high consumption', with different societies being at different stages of this process (Rostow 1960). Few now understand development in such explicitly unilinear terms. Nevertheless, at a more implicit level, the belief in the existence of a single linear model of development continues to underpin much development thinking and practice. It is implicit in the oft-voiced claim that there is a direct positive relationship between economic and political liberalisation – that is, in claims that economic growth, commercial interests, trade and investment interdependencies, and consumer power naturally build up pressure for democratisation. It is no less implicit in the standard modernist dictum that modernisation is associated with the decline of religion and weakening of communal and sectarian identities, as politics and identities realign around the de-secularised national state (see e.g. Berger 1999). It was assumed by the 'end of history' mentality that characterised the early post-Cold War years (Fukuyama 1992). And it is implicit, too, in the notion of 'transition', whereby 'countries in transition' are assumed to be transitioning from some abnormal to a normal liberal development path.

In reality, of course, there is no unilinear model of development: there is neither a single direction nor a single destination, nor even a single route towards it. In this broadest of senses no correlates of development exist – as the Middle East, more strikingly than any other region, makes clear. Thus, on the Arabian Peninsula, in particular, rapid economic development, urbanisation, global economic integration and, more recently, financialisation have been associated not with the withering of authoritarian regimes, but with their entrenchment. Across the Middle East – as also elsewhere – modernisation has been associated not with the weakening of religious, communal and sectarian identities, but with their consolidation and reinvention. Contra Fukuyama, no post-ideological or post-historical convergence has occurred, but rather an explosion of political projects and forces, most obviously on the Islamist side but also including, for instance, anti-capitalist and anarchist movements (Cemgil and Hoffmann, this *IDS Bulletin*). What we see in the contemporary Middle East, in sum, is not a region that is transitioning from tradition to modernity, but one where rapid economic and social change, and politically inspired 'revolutions of backwardness'

(Matin 2013), have produced strikingly hybrid social and political structures, in which 'modern' and 'traditional' forms are juxtaposed, and from which the direction of future development is far from clear.

Myth number 2: that low development and violent conflict are natural bedfellows

Nothing illustrates the continuing allure of the unilinear model of development better than the widely held assumption that there is a clear correlation as well as causal relationship between low development and violent conflict. The belief in such a linkage almost goes without saying in post-Cold War development thinking and policy, and is the founding assumption of the very idea of the 'security–development nexus': that under-development is a central motor of conflict, which in turn is an obstacle to development, trapping poor societies in a vicious cycle of poverty and violence. Kofi Annan's contention that 'there can be no long-term security without development; there can be no long-term development without security' (quoted in Allouche and Lind 2013: 1); a former UK International Development Secretary's claim that 'the higher a country's GDP per capita, the lower the risk of internal war' (Mitchell 2010); Paul Collier's characterisation of war as 'development in reverse' (Collier 2003); Shimon Peres' claim that 'poverty and distress' in the Middle East' have given rise to 'fanaticism, fundamentalism and false messianism' (Peres 1993: 45–6); and Thomas Friedman's thesis that once a country has a middle class large enough to support a MacDonald's franchise, or an industrial base large enough to provide parts for his laptop computer, it will no longer go to war (Friedman 1999: 195; 2005: ch. 12) all illustrate this line of thinking. The contemporary post-conflict 'peace-building' project does the same, its fundamental rationale and overall objective being to transform vicious cycles of under-development and conflict into virtuous cycles of peace and prosperity. The guiding premise is that all bad things go together, as do all good things.

For most of the period after the collapse of the Berlin wall, the concentration of the world's civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa at least lent the myth of security and development some superficial plausibility. Even during this period, however, it should have been evident that low development and conflict were unlikely to remain so tightly correlated. Historically, large-scale violence has been a universal and therefore arguably necessary feature of the transition to capitalist modernity, among early and later developing societies alike (Moore 1967; Cramer 2006); and historically, also, for the majority of the twentieth century nothing even close to a positive relationship between high development and peace existed. Indeed, if anything the relationship was negative, with the industrial powers of Europe, the United States (US), the Soviet Union and Japan being the leading practitioners and exporters of war.

These historical patterns alone undercut the cosy assumption that under-development and violent conflict are natural bedfellows. But the Arab Spring and its aftermath have completely blown it apart. Since 2011, large-scale civil violence has rocked Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Libya,

Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Palestine and Yemen – all, with the exception of Palestine and Yemen, being middle-income countries with largely urban and quite highly educated populations (and Palestine would fit this description too, were it a state). These conflicts, in turn, have reversed a long-term downturn in the worldwide incidence of civil war (Pettersson and Wallensteen 2015). Economic dislocation was of course an important factor behind these uprisings and ensuing violence, including impacts resulting from economic liberalisation (as in Syria: Dahi and Munif 2011; Hinnebusch 2012) and the global financial crisis of 2007–8 (Dahi 2012). But they cannot be explained by such economic factors alone, much less by 'low development': they were fundamentally political in their causes and aims, rooted in the political structures and contradictions of incumbent regimes. Regionally and globally, economic development continues apace – however disfunctionally in many states – but this is not translating into greater social or political peace. The correlation between low development and conflict has, in short, clearly been broken.

Myth number 3: that there is an alternative rentier path of development
Rentier state theory provides an important counter-argument to the above, essentially suggesting that the Middle East's modern development path, though deviating from the standard liberal model of development, has nevertheless been determined by economic forces in a quite predictable way. In the classical liberal model, growing economic productivity in society unleashes political change, as the state, fiscally reliant as it is on taxation, becomes hostage to demands for representation. In the rentier variation of this model, by contrast, the state has a high degree of fiscal autonomy from society, courtesy of its access to international rents – whether from hydrocarbon or mineral production, transit fees, international aid, or global investments. As a result, rentier theorists claim, such states are less reliant on taxation, are not so vulnerable to demands for 'no taxation without representation', and are in turn far less likely to develop strong democracy movements or democratic institutions. On the contrary, the theorists claim, such states assume an autonomy from and power over society, are essentially 'distributive' rather than 'productive', and thus become characterised not just by deepening authoritarianism, but also by patronage, clientelism, and the construction of powerful internal security apparatuses (for classic statements, see e.g. Beblawi and Luciani 1987). From this perspective, there is thus a natural correspondence between high hydrocarbon production and export dependence on the one hand, and illiberal politics on the other. The Middle East's supposedly exceptional development path can be summed up in a single three-letter word: oil.

The attractiveness of this theory lies in its parsimony and superficial empirical plausibility. It provides an easy way of explaining, for instance, why the Gulf emirates have achieved such rapid economic development without political liberalisation, and have become home to such striking juxtapositions of modernity and tradition. Simultaneously, it also functions as the exception that proves the rule, in effect assuming and affirming the myth of unilinear development discussed above. Yet for all this, rentier state accounts of Middle Eastern development are

deeply flawed. Rent-dependent states, including oil-producing ones, have always been characterised by a wide variety of political systems and forms, from the liberal democratic (e.g. Norway), to the centralised authoritarian (e.g. the Gulf emirates), through to the chaotically and violently decentralised (e.g. Nigeria). And context-specific historical and political factors explain these differences, not the simple formula of access to external rents – just as also applies in relation to the 'developmental state' (see e.g. Kohli 2004).

Moreover, as developments since 2011 have shown, the supposed authoritarian 'resilience' (Anderson 1991) of the Middle East's rentier states is a myth. Libya, a classical authoritarian rentier state, has collapsed into civil war with little prospect of reconsolidation. Neighbouring Egypt, by contrast, has displayed striking 'authoritarian resilience' – indeed, an authoritarian return – despite its much lighter dependence on external rents. The resilience of Bahsar al-Assad's regime in Syria owes little to oil production, because most of this has been lost to the opposition. And the Middle East region as a whole, which for so long was characterised by retarded political development, but nonetheless regime durability and 'stability', is clearly no longer thus. The reason is clear: Middle Eastern states are not following a single or set development path, not even one that is determined by hydrocarbon resources (Beilin 2012).

Myth number 4: that fragile statehood is the main institutional cause of violence

The institutional corollary of the thesis that low development causes violent conflict is the claim that weak, failed or fragile statehood does too. The United Kingdom (UK)'s first National Security Strategy summed up this view well:

> In the past, most violent conflicts and significant threats to global security came from strong states. Currently, most of the major threats and risks emanate from failed or fragile states. A failed state is one whose government is not effective or legitimate enough to maintain the rule of law, protect itself, its citizens or its borders, or provide the most basic services. A fragile state is one in which those problems are likely to arise (UK Cabinet Office 2008: 14).

Although the term 'failed state' has since fallen out of favour, the concept of 'fragile state', which is now preferred, does not constitute a significant departure from it – as the above quote makes clear. Today, state 'fragility' is understood as the central institutional conflict-development problem, and state 'resilience', its opposite, as the solution; but both are essentially understood as being about (actual or potential) state weakness.

Putting to one side the fact that, historically in the Middle East, the concept of 'resilience' has been applied to many authoritarian rentier states that have imploded; and putting aside also the frequent circularity of fragile state reasoning – fragile statehood contributes to violence, and we know which states are fragile because they are home to high levels of violence – the broader problem with the focus on weak or

fragile states is that it is utterly inattentive to, and obscures, the abiding centrality of state actions and state power in practising, facilitating and otherwise causing political violence. The fragile state thesis boils down, in essence, to a claim that deficits of state capacity, legitimacy and authority, and the absence of the state in 'ungoverned spaces', underpin internal violence. But such deficits are typically accompanied by, and a consequence of, the powerful presence of state and state-backed forces, and their preparation for and resort to violence. In countries from Colombia to Sri Lanka to Sudan, it is not simply the weakness or fragility of the state that has been the problem, but the combination of internal legitimacy deficits (and not nationwide: only within certain regions, or among certain groups) and state militarism and repression (Stavrianakis and Selby 2013). Geopolitical dynamics – state-on-state diplomatic and economic support, plus the training and arming of state and paramilitary forces – are of course a key element in this. So far, so obvious. Indeed, the only thing that is surprising here is that contemporary conflict–security discourse, obsessed as it is with state 'weakness' and 'fragility', continues to be so blind to these issues.

Nowhere illustrates this better than the contemporary Middle East, where the post-2011 upsurge in political violence has been state, military (formal and informal) and geopolitically dominated. Here we must mention: the violent repression of the initial Arab Spring uprisings by military, security and police forces in most of the region's states; the overthrow of democratically elected regimes; the aerial bombing and mass displacement of populations not only in Syria, but also in Gaza, Iraq, Libya, Turkey and Yemen; renewed regional geopolitical machinations (which have involved, for instance, the Saudi state waging war directly in Yemen, while fighting local proxies in Syria and supporting the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt, all as part of its struggle for regional hegemony with Iran; and Turkey facilitating the rise of Islamic State (IS), while waging war against its own Kurdish population and using its Syrian refugees as a bargaining chip with Europe (Reuters 2016)); and, for all its supposed 'anti-interventionism', the West's wide-ranging military involvement in the region, as indicated by the fact that the US currently has military forces based in at least ten Middle Eastern states (see e.g. Heritage Foundation 2015: 103–4, whose list of eight does not include Israel and Turkey), and that the UK continues to arm the region's states, contravening the 2014 Arms Trade Treaty (Wintour 2014). It is hard but to conclude, given all this, that regional and international state actions and state power are the central motor of political violence in the contemporary Middle East. Yet no one would guess this from the language of state fragility.

Myth number 5: that environmental scarcities are an increasingly important contributor to conflict
A further recurring if secondary theme in contemporary conflict-development thinking is the belief that environmental pressures are an increasingly important backdrop and contributor to conflict. Population growth, combined with rising consumer demand and the ceaseless intensification of resource exploitation, is without doubt

placing growing pressures on land, water and other 'ecosystem services'; and for many, the inevitable upshot of this is mounting societal and international competition over scarce resources, increasing vulnerability to environmental shocks, and in turn proliferating impacts on livelihoods and stability. Global anthropogenic climate change is widely identified as an additional concern, one that will – or may already be – be acting as a 'threat multiplier' to conflict in some of the most unstable parts of the world (CNA Military Advisory Board 2007). This thesis, far from marginal, has found its way into the national security strategies and development policies of most Western states, and United Nations (UN) bodies have widely adopted it too (see e.g. Selby and Hoffmann 2014b). Moreover, it is invoked more than anywhere else in relation to the Middle East, and to Syria in particular. The Syrian civil war, so the story goes, was in part sparked off by a severe climate change-induced drought that caused mass internal displacement, growing pressures on host communities, and in turn political protests, repression and war (Femia and Werrell 2012; Kelley *et al.* 2015). For its proponents, Syria is only the most conspicuous example of a broader trend and offers a glimpse of what is to come as the planet steadily warms.

Again, there is without doubt much superficial plausibility to this thesis, buttressed as it is by fears about the very sustainability – the resilience – of our resource- and energy-intensive global hydrocarbon civilisation. And yet, it has shortcomings. For one, there is no consistent or reliable evidence of environmental pressures and shocks significantly contributing to any recent mass political violence. Quantitative studies are deeply divided on the issue, and their findings – whether positive or negative – are in any case mostly statistical artefacts (Selby 2014). The 2003–5 war in Darfur, which was described as the 'first climate change war' (Mjøs 2007; Mazo 2010: 73–86), was, it is now widely acknowledge, nothing of the sort (Selby and Hoffmann 2014a). And the evidence that climate change, drought and ensuing migration played a significant contributory role in Syria's civil war is frankly derisory: among other problems, there is no evidence at all that drought migrants were either heavily involved in, or were targets of, any of Syria's early protests (Selby and Hulme 2015).

Such case evidence aside, there are broader reasons why environmental pressures do not inexorably translate into or exacerbate conflicts. Local environmental resource 'carrying capacities' are not set by nature alone, but also by technology and society, with new understandings and new technical interventions repeatedly making new resources available (in relation to water, for example: from far-away surface sources, to groundwater, to recycled wastewater, to the sea). And environmental resources are, in economic and political terms, of generally declining relative importance. Land and water, for example, are used above all for agriculture; and the relative decline in the economic and political value of agriculture, as shown by its generally declining contribution to GDP and employment, and the increasingly urban bases of political regimes, means that the economic and political value of water is in turn declining (Selby 2005). Such counter-tendencies make environmental conflicts less likely, not more.

Myth number 6: that countries need to pass a number of milestones on a democratisation pathway

The twists and turns of political transformation in Arab countries where revolts have occurred, such as Egypt and Tunisia, profoundly contest Western theories of democratisation. Many of the earlier theories assumed that countries emerging from authoritarian regimes needed to achieve a number of milestones to make the bridge from democratic transition to democratic consolidation (Rustow 1970). Many more recent studies suggest the contrary, however. For instance, Carothers' study of twentieth-century regime changes in seven regions of the world contests a series of assumptions about democratic transitions: that regime change necessarily shifts towards democracy; that democracy evolves through phases (from breakthrough to transition to consolidation); that elections are of determinative importance; that elite pacts are crucial to the arrival of new governance strategies; and that democracy- and state-building are mutually re-enforcing endeavours (Carothers 2002). Carothers suggests that countries typically assume political pathways and outcomes that are in the 'grey zones', involving all kinds of configurations of power that do not fit into pre-conceived democracy-promoting models.

Yet since 2011, faith in a linear pathway to democracy has continued to inform the policy prescriptions of most Western academics and policymakers. This was very much captured in the language of 'democratic transition' that characterised Western policy debates in 2011–13. In practice, this concern with 'a transition to democracy' became heavily associated with processes of holding and monitoring elections. Rather than seeing elections as one of many important proxies for the people's expression of voice, they became a synonym for democracy itself. For example, after the Muslim Brotherhood came to power in Egypt in 2012, citizens continued to express their voice through – among other means – demonstrations, marches and sit-ins to protest against economic hardship, monopolisation of political power, and the absence of personal and public safety.

Concurrently, the revolutionary forces never stopped proclaiming that 'the revolution is ongoing'. Ali Bakr shows in his article in this *IDS Bulletin* that the Muslim Brotherhood's assumption of power did not herald the adoption of progressive pro-social justice policies in Egypt, a finding that parallels Dalacoura (2016)'s comparison of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Al-Nahda's policies in Tunisia. Rezk captures the sentiment in 2012, showing how citizens' high aspirations that the government that assumed power after the ousting of president Hosni Mubarak (1981–2011) would be pro-poor and pro-youth were disappointed. Rezk argues that the replacement of Mubarak's crony entourage with yet another business elite, this time affiliated to the Brotherhood, plus the governance challenges that the new leadership faced, led to widespread dissillusionment and fuelled the angry protests that resulted in the collapse of Mohamed Morsi (2012–13)'s government in June 2013.

Yet much of the Western academic and policy analysis from that period focused on elections as the appropriate pathway by which revolutionaries should endeavour to achieve their goals, citizens express their voice, and elites challenge the new configuration of power (Carothers 2013; Lynch 2012; Ottaway 2013; Stepan 2012). Democracy, in such a narrow, linear framing, was reduced, in the eyes of one Egyptian analyst, to a 'boxocracy' (Ezzat 2013). The outcome of framing democracy from a Western perspective produced new disconnects in understanding why people joined a mass uprising in 2013 in even larger numbers than in 2011.

A new round of legislative elections took place in Egypt in December 2015–early 2016, and once again the ballot box proved to be redundant in capturing the pulse of the citizenry in terms of the changing political preferences of populations across time. Ten years earlier, former US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice praised the 'democratic transition' in Iraq where citizens had participated in three national elections (CNN 2005). Elections were once again used as a proxy for democracy, even when they entailed high levels of violence and produced highly exclusionary outcomes for parts of the citizenry. Clearly the privileging of elections as a proxy for citizen voice can be dangerous and disconnected from contexts in which people are resorting to a myriad of ways of expressing their agency, both violent and non-violent. Whatever the political predicament of the Syrian civil war, let us hope that building an inclusive, stable political order is not reduced once more to confusing a 'ballotocracy' for democracy.

Myth number 7: that more humanitarian aid will contain the Syrian refugee crisis

At the top of Amnesty International's eight-point plan to address the global refugee situation is 'continuous, sufficient and predictable funding for refugee crises'. In Amnesty's view 'all humanitarian appeals for refugee crises must be fully funded, in addition to providing meaningful financial support to countries that host large numbers of refugees to help them provide services to refugees and their host communities' (Amnesty International 2015). A major conference held in London in February 2016, hosted by the UK government, urged wealthy countries to commit to increase aid for the Syrian humanitarian crisis (see Deane, this *IDS Bulletin*). It is unquestionnable that funding is urgently needed to address humanitarian needs, but ultimately there is a need to understand that the humanitarian regime is deeply flawed in fundamental ways.

How geopolitical interests systematically trump the wellbeing of civilians lies at the heart of the redundancy and sometimes harm associated with humanitarian policy. Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, Western actors have time and again prioritised geostrategic interest over humanitarian policy, even when humanitarian disasters could have been mitigated or addressed in a way that would have benefitted the populations in question the most. Former president of Finland and

Nobel Peace Prize winner Martti Ahtisaari argued that the Western powers failed to engage with a Russian proposal in 2012 for Assad step aside as part of a peace deal because they were so convinced that the Syrian president was about to be toppled. At that time, around 7,500 people had been killed in the Syrian conflict; by early 2016, the number was more than 470,000 (Borger and Inzaurralde 2015; Barnard 2016).

A high-level official for a multilateral agency that was managing one part of the relief operation in Syria at the time said that in 2012 he had proposed to Western powers that the humanitarian aid effort should focus on resettling Syrians who were fleeing the war zone in parts of the country where there was no fighting. He explained that investing in income-generating opportunities and expanding the capacity of local education and health systems in the non-war zones would have been far less traumatic for them than to become refugees outside their country. However, he said that the Western donors would hear none of it because they feared that investing in regime-held territories would strengthen Assad; and besides, they were confident that it was only a matter of months before he was gone.

The Syrian regime has unquestionably committed atrocities that amount to crimes against humanity; however, the point here is that the execution of a foreign policy premised on Assad's overthrow rather than a political settlement has not only led to a serious threat to the territorial integrity of the country – parts of which are under IS control – but also the escalation of a humanitarian disaster unprecedented since the Second World War. At a civil society conference that was held in parallel to the London conference, the director of advocacy group The Syria Campaign, James Sadri, said:

> Donors are being asked to give [US]$9bn and not a penny of that will reach the most vulnerable people in the besieged areas. That's the elephant in the room. If the biggest UN aid operation in history is happening while people are starving to death something is fundamentally wrong (Wintour and Black 2016).

The problem is not only that geostrategic priorities trump a people-centered policy, or that the humanitarian regime needs to be well funded, but that it also needs to be fundamentally reconfigured. In this *IDS Bulletin*, Dawn Chatty argues that in establishng refugee camps and channelling assistance through these the humanitarian regime only reaches a minority of displaced and dispossesed people, a situation that the UN has acknowledged in its estimates that 'over 70 per cent of the Syrian refugee flow across international borders is self-settling in cities, towns and villages where they have long-established social networks. Many refuse to register as refugees and so are "invisible" to aid agencies.' Chatty also notes that in the neighbouring countries that are hosting the majority of Syrian refugees – Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey – the message that participants in the research conveyed was clear: self-settlement was far better than encampment.

In many of these surrounding countries, some Syrian families have social networks that they can rely on to access income-generating activities to survive temporarily until they can return home. The policy of containment in camps that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) manages in Jordan has led to the increased impoverishment of Syrians as it has deprived them of opportunites to earn a living or rely on their networks outside the camps. The refugee containment process was so unpopular with refugees, notes Chatty, that UNHCR early on resorted to separating extended families to minimise the prospects of protest, waiting until it was dark to allocate tents to them in different parts the camp.

The application of humanitarian blueprints in Syria based on experiences from other parts of the world has rendered aspects of the aid administration entirely disconnected from the lived realities of the refugees. The Syrians fleeing the crisis are part of a complex ethno-religious, middle-income region of the world, yet the humanitarian operations have assumed they have the same background and needs as, for example, refugees in sub-Saharan Africa, whose social and economic profile is very different. Chatty argues that if the humanitarian regime had listened to the priority needs that dispossessed Syrians expressed, it could have adopted measures that made a meaningful difference. Undoubtedly some humanitarian actors have listened, but Chatty's analysis shows that where Western humanitarian assistance programmes were set up as they were in Jordan and Lebanon, they were disconnected from Syrians' needs and priorities – which is not surprising, because they were rarely ever consulted.

Shelley Deane's article in this *IDS Bulletin* on Syria's lost generation notes that the international humanitarian regime has failed to address the educational needs of the 5.4 million children inside Syria, of whom 2.1 million are not in school; and, '[of] the 1.4 million Syrian refugee children in Syria's neighbouring host states 50 per cent are not in school.' Deane identifies several factors that have contributed to this, such as state incapacity to absorb large numbers in host countries, boys dropping out of school (to work to earn a living) and girls also (to marry, relieving their families of an additional mouth to feed and to protect the girls' honour by having a second family that is concerned for their safety and security).

Generations are losing out on schooling, in stark contrast to the pre-war education system where 93 per cent of children in Syria were enrolled in schools. Informal educational opportunities and standardised curricula, language and leadership training are all needed to address the educational gap. However, educational services are piecemeal, sometimes inaccessible and often ill fitted to the needs of Syrian children. Moreover, international support for young people to enrol in higher education is absent, because it is deemed a low priority for humanitarian aid interventions, which focus more on what they perceive as the 'basics'.

Myth number 8: that, following the Arab Spring, people's agency has been defeated

Against the backdrop of civil wars (Libya and Syria), IS occupation (Iraq, Syria), threat of famine (Yemen), severe encroachments on freedoms (Egypt, Turkey), the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict (Palestine), and strong ripple effects on neighbouring countries (Lebanon), the mood of optimism around the 2011 'Arab awakening' has waned. In Western media, academia and policy circles, talk of a perpetual 'Arab Winter' (*The Economist* 2016; Hinnebusch 2012) has replaced the Arab Spring rhetoric. As Jessica Winegar has written in a powerful and reflective piece, the Western media currently portrays the region as 'just one miserable homogeneous place of violence, terror, religious fanaticism and authoritarianism'. And yet, she adds, 'what is missing in these portrayals is the fact that in an area of the world with 350 million individuals spread across nearly 25 countries, there is not one story. In fact, there are positive events everywhere' (Winegar 2016).

A number of complex reasons account for the absence of nuanced representations of the multiple forms of positive agency that Winegar speaks of, and the implications are grave. The negation of the agency of the multitude has a serious bearing on our understanding of pathways of change, the pulse of the citizenry, and the dynamism and myriad faces of resistance and defiance. Underpinning the negation of some forms of citizen agency is a narrow focus only on those forms of activism that directly contest the authority of regimes and employ accepted modalities of resistance (especially movements that press for democracy by holding protests and marches).

In contrast, when citizens repeatedly organise around issues of economic wellbeing and personal safety by blocking roads, refusing to leave government premises until their grievances are taken seriously or standing silently in front of their syndicates and unions, holding placards with their demands, these forms of contentious politics are often dismissed as irrelevant to processes of political transformation. For example, before the January 2011 uprising in Egypt, much of the literature spoke of the inertia that characterised Egyptian political culture – despite being at a time when people were publicly and collectively defying norms of compliance and subservience (Tadros 2012; Ali 2012). If we examine the plurality of expressions of dissent from Syrians' protests in the refugee camps in Atimeh on the Syria–Turkey border, to secondary students protesting over educational policies in Egypt, we find forms of political engagement that are fluid, dynamic and may have unexpected ripple effects.

A second important factor contributing to the negation of citizen expressions is normative: when citizens protest against regimes that Western democracy 'experts' and academics have deemed to be bad, their agency is celebrated; whereas when citizens rise up against regimes that they consider to be illegitimate, but which in the eyes of the West are 'democratic', then the citizens are either condemned or made

invisible. Irrespective of the outcome of the uprising of June 2013 against the Egyptian regime, people had in effect gone out in the hope that, by bringing down a president who had failed to deliver on his promises, they would bring an end to their deteriorating circumstances. Clearly, the political configuration of power that emerged was hardly conducive to the achievement of the 2011 January uprising's calls for 'bread, freedom and social justice' – and so much less so the highly authoritarian regime that holds power now.

However, it was a people's uprising that reinforced Egyptians' belief that they need not acquiesce to a ruler they did not want. Yet because the 2013 uprising occurred against a ruler who came to office through procedural democracy (elections), the way that many represented the revolt against the Muslim Brotherhood emphasised that it was anti-democratic and had destroyed any prospect of genuine democracy (Fadel 2014). The same normative judgement is at work when Western experts criticise Egyptians for not pursuing the path prescribed for them; for example, in the claim that 'the problem with Egypt's revolution is not that it is eating its children; instead many of its children are devouring it' (Brown 2014).

A distinct but related myth is that the conspiracy to bring down a democratically elected regime that heralded a unique Islamist democratic experiment in Egypt has ignited Islamist jihadi activism in the region. Such a myth is premised on the notion that by Islamists participating in and gaining victory at the ballot box, there was a genuine opportunity for democratising radicals who would have faith in the system and abandon violence. According to this myth, the sudden overthrow of the Morsi regime catalysed Islamists to pick up arms. Ali Bakr's article in this *IDS Bulletin* points to the increase in violence in 2013 after the demise of Morsi's government; however, its detailed mapping of radical Islamist activism shows that movements began to flourish as far back as 2011. Following the Arab revolts in 2011, against the backdrop of relaxed border controls, the breakdown of the security apparatus and increased political opportunities for activism, radical Islamist movements began to build up their recruits and acquire weapons. In other words, it was not in reaction to the downfall of the Morsi regime that jihadists became active; it was at that critical juncture when society and politics were being re-ordered that radical Islamists sought to instate their own rule and governance.

At a historical moment when counter-revolutionary forces wish to make people's uprisings invisible, it is critically important to resist defeatist narratives that deny the power of the multitude to challenge political orders. The notion of 'prefiguration' is important here. Grounded in anarchist theory, prefiguration refers to 'a political action, practice, movement, moment or development in which certain political ideals are experimentally actualised, in the "here" and "now"' (Van De Sande 2013: 23). Prefiguration offers a lens through which to resist counter-revolutionary narratives by deconstructing them but also by creating

alternative ones. The case of Rojava is not without its weaknesses, problematics and inequalities; however, as Cemgil and Hoffmann describe in their article in this *IDS Bulletin*, it represents a case of experimentation with an alternative social, political and economic order that seeks to establish more participatory, egalitarian forms of governance. By emphasising the power of people's ability to challenge red lines, and to collectively engage in a common struggle of liberation, the idea of prefiguration can help us to 'recognise the value and significance of certain practices which when seen from a 'chessboard-perspective' may not be deemed 'successful' or 'important' or significant at all' (*ibid*.: 238); in other words, one of appraising an action exclusively in terms of its ability to achieve an immediate desired reaction.

The value of prefiguration lies not only in challenging counter-revolutionary narratives, but also in challenging the internalisation of power, empowerment and powerlessness. When citizens see and experience the ability to bring down the status quo through mass mobilisation, and from that, recognise their own power, it fundamentally changes the way they engage with oppression. They may not necessarily always revolt through mass demonstrations and protests, but they can strategically choose means of resistance that allow them to transgress and defy red lines in significant ways.

Akram Alfy in this *IDS Bulletin* exposes ways that youth movements have tactically used violence in Egypt since the January 25, 2011 uprising to challenge the status quo that has been unresponsive to their demands for political and economic reform. He argues that it is not so much the existence of a youth bulge that is a predictor of violent expressions of agency, but a constellation of factors, which include the very high level of education that characterises their profile, that is important. The structural problem that pre-dates the uprising persists to this day: a youth cohort educated to tertiary level is unable to find adequate employment in a context where few channels exist by which to hold the government to account. They are sure to continue to create their own channels to express grievances, even if they do not necessarily resort to violence in the future.

Authoritarianism may reproduce itself through the reconfiguration of discourses and practices that instil terror and oppression. However, when people revolt and bring down political orders, something happens to them and this 'something' needs to be kept alive because it can serve as a perpetual reservoir of resistance. Without romanticising people's power, there is ultimately a need to challenge the myth that people have reverted to complacency, apathy and apolitical engagement, just because they do not do politics the way Western democracy experts expect them to.

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The Syrian Humanitarian Disaster: Disparities in Perceptions, Aspirations, and Behaviour in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey

Dawn Chatty

Abstract Humanitarian assistance coupled with an unsustainable policy of regional containment have only created greater poverty and misery for Syrians fleeing civil war. How this has been allowed to happen on the southern shores of the Mediterranean – where extraordinary social linkages and networks have existed for centuries – lies mainly in the disparities between perceptions, aspirations and behaviour among refugees, practitioners and policymakers in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. This article highlights in particular three such disconnects: the ahistorical approach to engaging with displaced people in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, which has led to the implementation of international blueprints of humanitarian support that are disconnected from people's needs; the imposition of an encampment policy at odds with displaced people's need for temporary settlement enabled through their own social networks; the redundancy of humanitarian practitioners' background and experience in dealing with the particularities of displaced populations in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the failure to build on practices that work.

1 From a refuge state to a Syrian mass exodus

In the 100 years between 1850 and 1950 Syria received several million forced migrants from the contested borderlands between the Imperial Russian and Ottoman Empires. Following three Ottoman-Russian wars between the 1850s and 1880s, more than 3 million forced migrants from Crimea, the Caucasus and the Balkans entered the Ottoman provinces of Anatolia; many continued on their journeys to the Arab regions of Greater Syria. The Ottoman administration established a special commission to address the needs of these forcibly displaced Tatars, Circassians, Chechnyans, Abkhaza, Abaza, and other related ethnic groups.

This 'Refugee Commission' – the first of its kind in contemporary Western history – offered incoming forced migrants agricultural land, draught animals, seeds, and other support in the form of tax relief for

a decade, and exemptions from military service (Chatty 2010). Every effort was made to help these settlers become self-sufficient in as short a time as possible. The administration encouraged integration into numerous ethnically mixed settlements of Greater Syria to promote and preserve the cosmopolitan and convivial nature of urban and rural communities in the late Ottoman Empire. By the end of the nineteenth century, Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Hamid II and his subjects came to regard providing refuge as not only a social and compassionate gesture, but also a religious and moral duty (Chatty 2013).

Then, as the First World War drew to a close, as many as half a million Armenian Christians found refuge in Syria, settling among their co-religionists in Aleppo, Damascus and Beirut. When the modern Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, 10,000 Kurds from Turkey fled across the border into Syria, choosing to escape from the forced secularism of Kemal Atatürk's new Turkey. The inter-war French mandate over Syria saw a continuation of these processes, with waves of Assyrian Christians entering the country in the 1930s, seeking asylum and safety from conditions in Iraq when Great Britain returned its mandate to the League of Nations,[1] having failed to secure peace and security in the country on its own terms.

All these forced migrants were granted citizenship in the new Syrian state. And then in the late 1940s, Syria became a safe haven for over 100,000 Palestinians fleeing the *Nakba*, which was concurrent with the creation of the state of Israel. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the population of the modern Syrian state provided refuge for hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of ethno-religious minorities uprooted from their homelands. Consequently, strong social and economic ties were maintained broadly within the region and throughout the Balkans, Eastern Europe and borderlands with Russia.

A decade into the twenty-first century, Syria has disintegrated into extreme violence, which has triggered a displacement crisis of massive proportions. The speed at which Syria has been emptied of nearly 20 per cent of its population has shocked the world and left the humanitarian aid regime in turmoil as agencies struggle to respond to the growing displacement crisis on its borders.

Each state bordering Syria has responded differently to this complex emergency: Turkey rushed to set up its own refugee camps for the most vulnerable groups, but generally supported people finding their own way and 'self-settling' in rural areas and urban centres; Lebanon refused to allow international humanitarian aid agencies to set up formal refugee camps, assuming that the Syrians would self-settle among 'kith and kin' or use social and economic contacts to find refuge; and Jordan prevaricated for nearly a year, before insisting on the establishment of a massive United Nations (UN) refugee camp in the desert borderland between the two countries. To be fair, all the states neighbouring Syria assumed this would be a short crisis, with the Syrians' return likely in months rather than years.

Turkey and Lebanon initially permitted Syrians to enter as temporary 'guests'. Lebanon closed this door in 2015, while Turkey has continued to allow Syrians to enter the country. Jordan hoped to contain the flow of people seeking refuge far from any urban centre and has insisted that all Syrians that the security services intercept crossing the border must go to the UN refugee border camp at Za'tari. Failing in that it has returned some categories of people fleeing from Syria (specifically, Palestinian refugees from Syria), contrary to international legal principles of non-refoulement.[2]
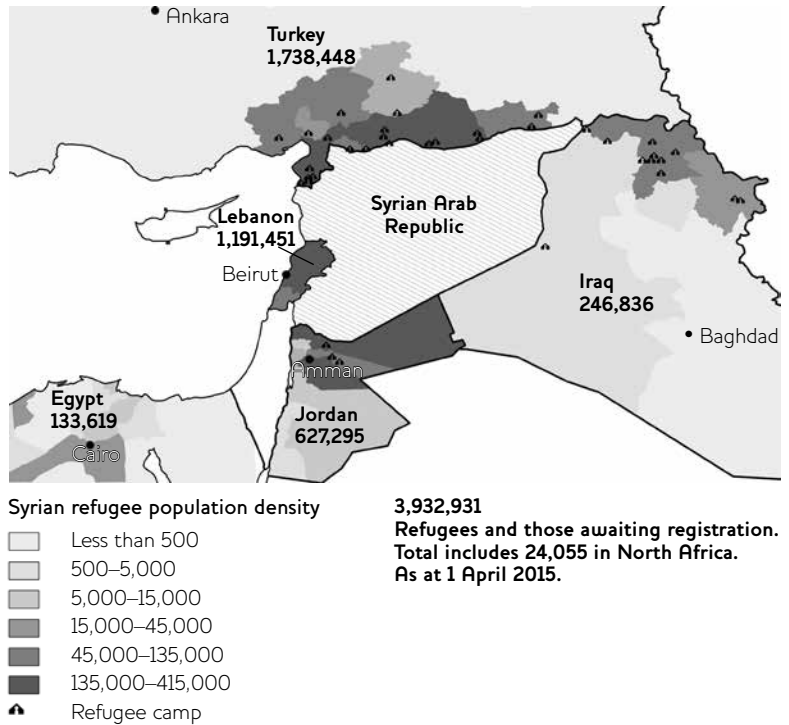
Lebanon and Jordan have not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention that sets out principles and responsibilities of states in providing protection and asylum for those deemed to fit the definition of 'refugee' according to the 1951 Statutes and the 1967 Protocol. And although Turkey has signed the 1951 Convention, it has reserved its interpretation of it to apply only to Europeans who are seeking refuge or asylum in Turkey. Hence, refuge in the region is not 'rights based', but rather is at the mercy of local cultural notions (institutions) of hospitality and duties of generosity. These customs are known – over time – to also raise parallel notions of hostility and parsimony. Hospitality at either individual or state level is never open-ended.

According to UN estimates, over 70 per cent of Syrian refugees who cross international borders self-settle in cities, towns and villages where they have long-established social networks. Many refuse to register as refugees and so are 'invisible' to aid agencies. This population is not served by the international humanitarian aid regime, which is focused almost entirely on the camps the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) set up in Jordan, and on the larger informal settlements in Lebanon; in particular, the Bekaa Valley where the majority of Syrians previously worked as seasonal agricultural labourers.

The UN does not run any refugee camps in Turkey, although it provides some support through partner agencies such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme. This is in part political. Previous crises in the region have been managed through government structures and without setting up refugee camps. For example, with the Iraqi crisis in Syria, the Syrian government insisted that all international aid came through government channels – and not through the few non-governmental organisations (NGOs) permitted to operate in the country – and was used for Syrians and Iraqis alike. Given that Iraqis refused to go into refugee camps – and the Syrian regime did not want to set any up – UNHCR was forced to deal with self-settled refugees and members of their hosting communities on an equal basis, which it did well. However, subsequently that has not been the case with Jordan, which insisted on setting up camps for Syrians – and handing over their administration to UNHCR – fearing that otherwise Syrians would self-settle around the country.

In Turkey, most refugees are clustered in the southern region of the country, including the Hatay, which borders Syria. Some 25–30 per cent

Figure 1 **Syrian refugee density and camps in neighbouring host countries**

Syrian refugee population density

	Less than 500
	500–5,000
	5,000–15,000
	15,000–45,000
	45,000–135,000
	135,000–415,000
⌂	Refugee camp

**3,932,931
Refugees and those awaiting registration.
Total includes 24,055 in North Africa.
As at 1 April 2015.**

Source Redrawn from http://data.unhcr.org.

of the Syrian refugee flow into Turkey is directed into camps. The general management of these Turkish government camps is such that a waiting list exists for refugees who wish to avail themselves of the five-star service that is reputed to be on offer. In Lebanon, informal settlements – often based on pre-existing relationships and 'gang master' (*shawish*) agricultural hierarchies – are proliferating, with accompanying patron–client relationships overshadowing more participatory and transparent management of humanitarian aid. In Jordan, self-settled refugees from Syria are increasingly looking for work as they exhaust their savings. Those that the Jordanian security services find to be working illegally are deported to Syria or sent to the UN-managed refugee camps at Za'tari or Azraq, from which there is no escape other than paying to be 'sponsored' by a Jordanian, or smuggled out, re-entering the liminal state of irregular status.

2 Mass influx, regionally contained?
Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have each established a variety of temporary measures to deal with the crisis. However, in no case have displaced people or host communities been consulted. Discrepancies are rapidly becoming visible and tensions and protests have emerged among host communities, displaced Syrians and humanitarian policymakers. Humanitarian assistance templates created in other regions of the world during waves of crises in the six decades that UNHCR has been operating have not been well received in the region.

Angry demonstrations in Jordan against rules and operating practices in Za'tari camp in 2012 led staff to restrict tent distribution until it was dark, to disperse extended families widely around the massive camp and hence reduce the level of protest. In fact, UN camps have been rejected outright by the majority of the Syrians fleeing the armed conflict, as well as by several neighbouring states.

As time passes and savings are used up, many of these Syrians face impoverishment. Their added immobility and lack of local alternatives are rapidly creating an unsustainable situation that threatens to test the West's preferred 'solution' of regionally containing the crisis. Without significant changes in policy and practice throughout the region, larger numbers of Syria's forced migrants will shortly leave the region in search of protection – albeit temporary – elsewhere. Unable to work or provide their children with an education, they will risk their lives in dangerous sea crossings and exhausting land marches led by people smugglers.

3 Research questions

This study sets out to understand the disparity in perceptions, aspirations, and behaviour of refugees from Syria, members of host communities, and practitioners in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. It also seeks to identify what measures, if any, are regarded as important by the three target communities for return and reintegration in Syria when conditions permit.

3.1 Methodology and methods

The study is based on a multi-site, 12-month qualitative and participatory study, which was conducted between October 2014 and September 2015 in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. Interviews were conducted in Arabic and in English, and interpretation was only required in Turkey when interviewing members of local communities that were hosting refugees from Syria. After selecting initial key informants using a purposive sampling approach, a snowballing technique was used to identify further participants for interview,[3] paying attention to representativeness in terms of gender, class, education, ethnicity and origin. A qualitative and interpretive approach, alongside a participant observation strategy, also defined this study.

The study initiated a consultative engagement between practitioners, representatives of hosting communities and the refugees themselves. It began with in-country recruitment of researchers in collaboration with the facilitating research institutions: the Swedish Institute of Istanbul in Turkey, American University of Beirut in Lebanon, and Council for British Research in the Levant in Jordan. Fieldwork was divided into three phases in each country, each phase one month long: October 2014 in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep, Turkey; December 2014 in Beirut and the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon; and February 2015 in Amman and Irbid, Jordan. Each field trip included exploratory informal and focused discussions, as well as semi-structured interviews with national and international practitioners, self-settled refugees and host community members, as well as refugees in camps.

4 A precarious containment policy and its implications

4.1 Lebanon

Many Syrians in Lebanon who have been displaced by the conflict in Syria do not feel that they are refugees. However, they sense a growing level of social discrimination, especially in Beirut. In addition, they expressed their fear that the Lebanese associate them with a rise in criminality. Many of the Syrians in Lebanon were not new to the country, but had been working there for many years in the construction and agriculture sectors. The conflict in Syria means that many of these workers' wives and children have fled Syria to join men who have been working in Lebanon for some time. They have largely made their journeys in stages, first arriving in Akkar or the Wadi Khalid region in north Lebanon and gradually making their way to join their spouses in the Bekaa Valley, Tripoli and Beirut. Syrian workers fear losing their jobs once it becomes known that their families have joined them, and this contributes to the fear, distress, and isolation many experience.

> My husband came to Lebanon a long time ago, even before the war in Syria. He has been coming over since he was 17, therefore he knows Lebanon very well. He used come and go, stay for a while [working as a carpenter] and then go back to Syria. In 2011 he was in Lebanon; then the situation was very bad in Syria, so I came to Lebanon… my husband had a job and we stayed at his boss's house. Back then I couldn't go back to Hama. My husband had no intention of bringing me to Lebanon, for him it was settled that he worked in Lebanon and I stayed in Syria. But after all the explosions in Hama, I couldn't protect my kids. I decided to come and stay in Lebanon. My husband is always afraid he might be fired [if the children get into any trouble] (Reem, Beirut, 2014).

Arbitrary curfews – illegal under national and international law – in over 40 municipalities have meant that many Syrians are afraid to go out at night, work overtime or mix in any way with the Lebanese population. For many skilled and unskilled Syrians in Lebanon, the curfews have meant that older children and adolescents are taken out of school to work during daylight hours with their fathers.

> My son should be in ninth grade, but he works in a supermarket now. But people tell me that it is a waste that my son is not in school. He will have no future without education. But our situation is very bad, I really want to send him to school, but at the same time we are in deep need and of his financial help (Layla, Beirut, 2014).

In the Bekaa Valley, Syrians who have no savings work for very low wages to provide their families with food. This has created hostility among local Lebanese who see Syrian workers as a threat to their own livelihoods, which has resulted in increased social discrimination and vigilantism.

Many Syrians, despite their long association with Lebanon over decades and often close kinship ties, feel frightened and cut off from Lebanese

society. Although a number of international and national and local NGOs operate in Beirut and the Bekaa Valley to provide basic needs, there is little interaction with Lebanese host communities. Very little evidence emerged from the interviews of host community involvement in any 'survival in dignity'[4] activity on an individual basis; NGO activity was limited to more 'distant and distancing' charity work or local civil-society efforts in Beirut that middle-class Lebanese and Syrians resident in the country organised.

UNHCR's very slow response in providing cash assistance to the most needy and vulnerable Syrians in Lebanon has led to large numbers of women and children begging in Beirut, something that Lebanese generally scorn and regard with little sympathy. UNHCR has expressed concern over the rise in begging and has identified it as a 'negative coping strategy', but UN agencies have made little effort to understand how this could be altered through changes in humanitarian policy and practice. Many refugees have exhausted their savings and have no opportunities to work. Thus, street begging, which is preferred to asking for charity, becomes the only way for people to feed their families.

The consociational[5] shape of government in Lebanon, and the long period during the crisis when there was in effect 'no government', led to a period of paralysis in the UN humanitarian aid system. Thus, effective relief programmes for the poorest and most vulnerable Syrians – such as cash transfers – were very late in getting started, which resulted in an exponential rise in begging and other negative coping strategies (for example taking young children out of school to work, moving into buildings unfit for human habitation, and relying on former agricultural gang masters to be the interface between the UN humanitarian relief system and refugees themselves).

All these factors, with the close ties and often extended family networks among the very poor across the two countries, have led to significant social discrimination and an unwillingness or inability – at local level – to help Syrians with basic health and education needs. The lack of education opportunities for nearly 50 per cent of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon weighs heavily on their families. Some may pick a young family member to be smuggled out of the region where employment or education may be possible.

4.2 Jordan

Most Syrians regard Jordan's initial response to the humanitarian crisis and mass influx of people from the Der'aa region of Syria into the country as open and generous. Most of these Syrians had kinship ties in northern Jordan or well-established social networks, and the hosting of this initial influx was regarded as hospitable. However, over time the Jordanian government has restricted access to the country and actively prevented some from entering (e.g. young single men) and returned others (e.g. Palestinian refugees from Syria).

> At the beginning you had a refugee crisis with a security component and it has become a security crisis with a refugee component. So in the early days it was 'these are our brothers' and so the natural generosity has now give way to more suspicion about who these people are and the security cared is played all the time now (Senior international practitioner, Amman, 2015).

A discrepancy has emerged between what local media widely report – that Syrians are a burden on the Jordanian economy – and what policymakers and practitioners feel is actually occurring. The host community in Jordan is bombarded with information about the negative influence of Syrian refugees in the country, but studies are emerging that do not back this up. Many policymakers believe that Syrians contribute far more to the Jordanian economy than is reported or spoken of in society. Some point to an International Labour Organization report[6] that suggested that unemployment of Jordanians had not risen since the start of the Syrian crisis, but actually dropped somewhat following the opening of 200 Syrian-owned factories, which employed an estimated 6,000 Jordanians.

> Syrian refugees are skilled craftsmen, especially carpenters, we all know that. Jordanians are not skilled carpenters. Syrians are not taking jobs from Jordanians; but they may be taking jobs from Egyptians. They are working informally, but that puts a lot of stress on them because they can be arrested and deported if they are found out (Senior Jordanian policymaker, Amman 2015).

Some social discrimination is aimed at Syrians in Jordan, but it is muted compared with that in Lebanon. Jordanians are quieter about negative social attitudes they may hold. This may be associated with tribal custom and general conceptual concerns related to the social requirement to show hospitality to strangers.

However, Jordanian sensitivity to the presence of Palestinian refugees from Syria has led to draconian surveillance to identify such refugees, a dragnet that often pulls in non-Palestinian refugees from Syria. Those found to be working illegally are either deported across the border – if Palestinian refugees from Syria – or sent to the Azraq or Za'tari camps, which creates greater mistrust and suspicion of the host government among refugees.

Jordanians generally recognise that their country benefits from international aid from for refugees and that a significant percentage goes into direct government projects to assist Jordanians; for example, between 2016–19 a joint US-Jordanian project will spend US$1bn on infrastructure development and the construction of 50 high schools for Jordanians. But despite the growing recognition of the contribution refugees in Jordan make to the economy, this is not being translated into policy changes.

Many Syrians feel pushed into either working illegally and facing deportation if caught, or making the decision to leave Jordan.

Education opportunities for refugees are limited, and many Syrian children can only attend second-shift schools with inferior curricula and reduced hours. Some Syrians consider the situation in Jordan so dire that they are preparing to return to Syria rather than live in what they consider 'inhuman conditions' any longer. According to Andrew Harper, a senior UNHCR humanitarian aid practitioner in Jordan, by September 2015 at some points nearly 200 Syrians a day were returning to Syria (Naylor and Luck 2015). Many travel through Syria to Turkey in the hope of finding a way to Europe where they might be able to work, send remittances to their families and educate their children.

4.3 Turkey

Syrians in Turkey come from a variety of backgrounds and social classes. Many Syrians are concerned with the negative images of 'dirty' and 'uncouth' Arabs that middle-class Turks commonly express. Furthermore, Syrians have remarked that many Turkish observers have difficulty differentiating between the general Syrian refugee population and the *nawaar* (Gypsies).[7] The Syrian crisis has displaced Gypsy communities in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, and they are commonly seen begging on the streets of Istanbul and elsewhere. Largely unrecognised, the armed conflicts in Iraq and Syria have disrupted the peripatetic and seasonal economy of the Gypsies of south-west Asia, who have gravitated to Turkey for its greater security.

Recognition of the needs of Syrian refugees was widespread among members of host Turkish communities. But they and Syrian refugees themselves widely condemned begging. In the words of one interviewee: 'I don't like to give money to beggars because it just encourages them' (Turkish practitioner, Istanbul, 2014).

Lack of communication and poor understanding of the situation of Syrians led to demonstrations, arrests and the deaths of around a dozen Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees in October 2014. Many Turkish citizens felt that greater transparency on the part of the government over what Syrians were entitled to would have relieved a critical situation and the growing discrimination. Many thought that the government was giving Syrian refugees salaries; others felt that Syrians worked for lower wages – their Turkish employers did not have to pay taxes because the Syrians were not 'on the books' – and this was driving out unskilled Turkish workers, who had no safety net when they lost their jobs to Syrians.

Widespread support in the third sector was especially noticeable among established NGOs, and Sufi-based civil-society organisations, rather than religious ones, which mainly provided hot meals and community-supported accommodation. In Istanbul as well as Gaziantep, it was common for neighbourhood public kitchens to provide free meals and bread to the poor, as well as refugees living in the area.

My husband came first and then I joined him eight months later with our baby. At first we went to Mersin, but my husband couldn't find

a job. When we ran out of money we came to Gaziantep, because the Syrian Interim Government was here. We figured there would be more jobs here. So we came here and two months later we met this nice man who found a job for my husband and rented us these two rooms. Our neighbours gave us some mattresses and a TV to watch Syrian television. There is also a mosque nearby where I go and the people there give me diapers [nappies] for the baby, bread and daily hot meals, as well as supplies of sugar, pasta and oil (Hala, Gaziantep, 2014).

Lack of a common language may have divided people at other times, but in the present crisis language seems to be less significant. For unskilled work, which is largely what Syrians are engaging in, language is not a barrier. Professionals and skilled workers, however, have found that it is not language but accreditation that is a barrier to working. Many have been unable to practise their professions, in particular doctors and health-care specialists until they have proved that they qualified outside Syria. But in other cases, being *very* different seems to have bred greater sympathy and general support at the local community level.

In Turkey, lessons learned have been more widely implemented in response to critical events, such as the October 2014 demonstrations and criticism of the government's lack of transparency. According to an International Crisis Group report in April 2013, international experts had described the camps that Turkish emergency relief organisation IFAD has set up since in 2012 – without the assistance of UN experts or their camp templates – as 'five-star'.[8] These settlements are open and refugees may enter and leave on a daily basis. Absences of more than three weeks at a time are not tolerated, however, because of the long waiting list of Syrian refugees.

Interviews in Turkey took place before the government in January 2015 announced a law to issue Syrians with formal identity cards and provide temporary protection, including rights to health and education opportunities and permission to apply for work permits. But it was clear that Turkey was far more humane and practical in its approach to the mass influx of Syrian refugees than Jordan or Lebanon, and social discrimination was at its lowest; and this despite a language barrier that does not exist in Lebanon or Jordan.

Members of Sufi-based organisations said that it was a religious and ethical duty to provide refuge for Syrians in their country. Much of their activity has permitted a form of local accommodation in Turkey, which has not happened in Lebanon or Jordan, despite the closer linguistic and social ties. Social cohesion has been strong, which bodes well in the event of the local integration of Syrians in Turkey, or as a friendly and supportive neighbouring state if refugees ultimately return home, depending on the political solution that finally emerges.

5 Disconnects, redundant development models and ripple effects

The disparity in perceptions among refugees, members of local hosting communities and practitioners is especially pronounced in Lebanon and Jordan, where the international humanitarian aid regime is the most active.

5.1 Humanitarian practitioners and the Syrian refugee population profile

Many young international staff have no experience of the region, some coming, for example, from a single previous assignment in Africa. The cosmopolitan nature and generally high levels of education and skills of many of the Syrians they encounter come as a surprise. The engagement of UN humanitarian frameworks – an architecture of assistance – is built on templates developed over the past four decades, largely among agrarian and poor developing countries. Thus the populations these young international practitioners are used to dealing with tend to be largely uneducated and unskilled. Treating them as powerless victims of a catastrophe and setting out the rules for receiving assistance generally goes unchallenged.

Such policy and practice does not fit easily into the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean among a refugee population that is largely educated and middle class, and people determined to maintain their agency, who prefer, for example, to receive cash assistance, rather than food aid. The disbelief with which young international aid workers respond on learning that Syrian refugees are selling their food parcels, and the aid workers' perception of 'ingratitude', can only be explained in terms of this cultural misunderstanding. They expect refugees to be passive recipients of aid, and when they are not the aid workers respond negatively towards their efforts to do what they know is best for their families. Without a serious effort to make humanitarian 'solutions' fit the Middle Eastern context, success will continue to be muted at best and damaging at worst.

5.2 Temporary protection, not resettlement

It has become clear to most humanitarian aid workers that that self-settlement is emerging as preferable to encampment. Encampment was seen as creating conditions for local accommodation, and potentially a return and re-integration into Syria's many social communities. Lessons learned from Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1992–95 war support this position (Blitz 2015), when large numbers of Bosnians were offered protection in Europe, and were widely dispersed among local communities rather than being enclosed in refugee camps until the crisis was resolved. Self-settlement and dispersal throughout Europe on a temporary basis – until conditions for return were right – meant that more countries stepped forward to take this temporary population. The UK alone took over 75,000 Bosnians in one year and dispersed them across its cities.

There is a need for local community drop-in centres in the region that offer opportunities for non-formal education and technical training. Practitioners and refugees regularly suggested skills development,

psycho-social support and language instruction as measures to help local accommodation and provide a lost generation of young people with a future. Policymakers and humanitarian aid practitioners referred to lessons learned from the practice of setting up drop-in centres in Syria for Iraqi refugees as exemplary (Chatty and Mansour 2012). Opportunities for education for young Syrian refugees have not been made widely available, despite numerous studies pointing to gaps, all of which has left the UN slogan 'No lost generation' no more than that: just a slogan.

Temporary protection, not resettlement, is the main aspiration for those who have been forced to flee Syria: to be able to work and educate their young people until they can eventually return to Syria. The temporary protection afforded to nearly 1.2 million Bosnians in Europe in a time of crisis is an example of what the European states can do if they have the will.

5.3 What are the alternatives?

It is noteworthy that Turkey, which has not requested assistance from UNHCR, seems to have managed the process of providing assistance without undermining refugee agency and dignity. Largely working alone, with local staff drawn from the civil service, as well as the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority of the Prime Minister's Office (AFAD) and the main quasi-official Turkish NGO IHH, Turkey has managed the Syrian refugee crisis with sensitivity and concern.

The separate social and political and migration histories of the populations in Turkey and the countries of the Levant have obviously contributed to the disparities in perceptions, aspirations and behaviour among refugees, host community members and practitioners in each of the three countries. If humanitarian policy's starting point was to appreciate which displaced populations have relocated to which parts of the Middle East since the 1850s, policymakers and practitioners would understand to some extent the nature of population movements from Syria today, as different groups seek to move to where members of their communities have relocated, and capitalise on these ties to survive.

That the Turkish government has refused to allow the UNHCR to have a significant or major role in Turkey, which is not the case in Lebanon and Jordan, has also contributed to some of the disparities noted in this study. Whereas Turkey maintained a locally developed response to emergencies through its own national management of refugee camps for Syrians, Lebanon and Jordan could not and thus faced having to accept or reject the internationally developed humanitarian aid template UNHCR proposed.

Global templates for humanitarian assistance, built on experiences in very different contexts and among populations of significantly different make-up, are not easily integrated into Middle Eastern concepts of refuge, hospitality and charity. The close social ties and networks of Syrians in Lebanon and Jordan, but not in Turkey (with the exception of the Hatay), have meant that the initial generosity of relatives hosting

refugees in a wide social network has more rapidly given way to hostility and discrimination, unlike the situation in Turkey where fewer Syrians had social networks and hosts accepted them based on a religious and ethical sense of duty to look after strangers.

Although Syrians, historically, have accepted wave after wave of forced migrants from the Balkans, the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia, they have no experience of creating camps. Most of the several million forced migrants who entered Syria between the late nineteenth and early twenty-first centuries were encouraged to self-settle and disperse themselves throughout the country, relying on social ties, faith-based charity – particularly from Christian and Sufi associations – and support, in the first instance. Encampment was rejected in favour of small-scale, local assistance and refuge. This aversion to encampment was also fed by the profoundly disturbing example of numerous Palestinian refugee camps, which the UN set up in their midst over the course of more than six decades.

6 Final reflections

Across the board, what emerges is that history matters and that humanitarian templates created in other parts of the world cannot simply be laid down in this complex ethno-religious, middle-income region of the world.

Historically, Syria has been a haven for displaced people fleeing wars between the Imperial Russian and Ottoman Empires, for Armenian refugees following the First World War, then Kurds, Assyrian Christians and later Palestinians. It is ironic that Syria should now be experiencing a mass exodus of its own population, seeking refuge beyond the country's borders.

Many of the differences in attitudes and perceptions described in this article can be linked to Syria's historic social ties and political relations with Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. In addition, the disparity in perceptions among policymakers, practitioners and host communities is widespread, but not equally so in the three countries. Many refugees and practitioners described steps that the UN and other international organisations could take to improve conditions, halt a potential mass exodus from the region, and create conditions on the ground for future return and reintegration in Syria.

The present situation is unsustainable. Lebanon and Jordan, and even Turkey, cannot cope with such high numbers of refugees – currently over 3 million – for much longer; international assistance is insufficient to provide refugees with survival in dignity; and local social networks, as well as local organisations, cannot afford to help feed and clothe larger numbers without support. For example, if the UK were to take the same number of refugees relative to it population as Lebanon, it would accept at least 20 million refugees from Syria (instead of the 20,000 that the government proposes to take over the next four years).

Without a dramatic change in international humanitarian aid policy and programming people will resort to mass flight from the region, by any

means necessary, to secure survival in dignity (the opportunity to work to feed and educate their families until they can return to Syria), which they cannot access in the region. The Russian bombing campaign against opposition forces and the Islamic State (IS), alongside the Syrian regime's barrel-bombing of civilians and IS gains in the countryside, are leading to greater outflows of Syrians, many of them going directly to Europe.

The danger continues to be that as long as the discrepancies in perceptions and aspirations among refugees, humanitarian practitioners and policymakers in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey are not addressed, more Syrians will risk their lives making irregular movements to Europe in search of survival with dignity.

Notes

1 The League of Nations was founded in 1920 shortly after the First World War as an intergovernmental organisation committed to maintaining world peace.
2 The return of alleged refugees to their states of origin is commonly referred to as *refoulement*. International treaties explicitly prohibit this practice; for example, Article 33 of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.
3 Interviewees' names have been changed to preserve their anonymity.
4 UNHCR uses the phrase 'survival in dignity' to mean being able to access basic necessities such as food, shelter and education for children.
5 Consociationalism is a stable democratic system in deeply divided societies that is based on power-sharing between elites from different social groups. In Lebanon it occurs between numerous ethno-religious communities.
6 See www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_242021/lang--en/index.htm
7 Also referred to as Romani, Rom and Dom.
8 See www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/225-blurring-the-borders-syrian-spillover-risks-for-turkey.pdf

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Syria's Lost Generation: Refugee Education Provision and Societal Security in an Ongoing Conflict Emergency

Shelley Deane

Abstract Education policy is uniquely placed to address the soft security concerns of refugee resettlement, with educators equipped to recognise, react and respond to the unique education needs and welfare of the Syria's next generation. An appropriate education policy response to the refugee crisis can reduce the risk of stigma, isolation, intra-community tensions, marginalisation and even radicalisation. The protracted nature of the Syrian conflict has directed international donors' attention to the 'lost generation' of school-age Syrian refugee children. Governments, international agencies and foundations at the fourth Syria donors' conference in London (Supporting Syria and the Region) pledged to fund education projects and programmes to bridge the education gap. This article addresses the status of formal and informal education in Syrian refugee host states. The article examines the factors that shape formal, non-formal and emergency education provision, and addresses accelerated learning and best practice provision to help the next generation of Syrian refugees thrive.

1 Introduction

Education, described by Aristotle as a refuge in adversity, can be part of the problem or part of the solution in conflict and post-conflict transitions. Since the beginning of the Syria crisis in 2011, education has become a societal security issue. A generation of Syrian children have had their formal education suspended. The protracted conflict in Syria has displaced over 6.6 million people and created 4.5 million refugees, of whom 2.1 million are children. The war has rendered 18 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom 8.1 million are children.[1] Of the 5.4 million children in need of education inside Syria, 2.1 million are not in school. Of the 1.4 million Syrian refugee children in Syria's neighbouring host states, 700,000 are not in school.[2] The protracted nature of the Syrian conflict has directed international and local organisations' attention to the 'lost generation' of school-age Syrian refugee children.

Education policy is uniquely placed to address the societal security concerns of social cohesion, child protection and refugee resettlement. Similarly, educators are in a position to recognise, react and respond to the unique education and welfare needs of Syria's next generation. By executing an appropriate education policy response to the refugee crisis the risk of stigma, isolation, intra-community tensions, marginalisation, and even radicalisation can be reduced. To that end governments, international agencies and foundations have funded education projects and programmes to address the education gap and secure support for communities caught between humanitarian emergency aid provision and the need for long-term development support. For example, in 2013 the No Lost Generation (NLG)[3] initiative was created to support and coordinate Syrian refugee host states' national education responses, and to bridge humanitarian and development responses to the crisis. At the fourth United Nations (UN) Syria pledging conference in London in February 2016,[4] donors promised that by the following year every Syrian refugee child would be offered a place in school.

This article addresses the status of formal, non-formal and informal education[5] in Syria and the main Syrian refugee host states (Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan) in the context of the promises made at the London conference. The article examines the factors that shape education provision for refugees, including insecurity, neglect of students and children in refugee communities, and often limited and uncoordinated responses of donors and governments, and considers the ramifications for European states planning to host, educate and resettle young Syrian refugees. It starts by providing an overview of the current state of refugee education in Syria and the three main host states, before examining basic, secondary and higher education in more detail. It makes a number of recommendations about how to fulfil the promises made at the London conference, but also calls for the international community to pay far greater attention to the pressing need of Syria's refugees for improved access to higher education.

2 Refugee education in Syria and the host states

2.1 Syria

The war in Syria has crippled all state capacity to build the human capital that is vital for a sustainable post-conflict economic recovery. In Syria itself, the impact of the war on education provision was immediately measureable. In 2011, the Syrian Department of Education purchased 6,386,000 one-per-child textbooks for schools. By 2013, the number of books purchased had dropped to 2,378,000.[6] The textbook figures show the speed at which school-age children were displaced. According to a 2015 UNICEF report, one in four Syrian schools had been damaged, destroyed or procured for military use (UNICEF 2015a). Some 80 per cent of educators remaining in Syria are women.[7] Often untrained, these women are teaching 2 million students using alternative learning modalities, accelerated learning programmes and an alternative 'curriculum B' for children who have missed out on elementary education. School-age children experience

multiple displacements, continuous exposure to violence, and economic exploitation during successive waves of population movement.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees include doubly displaced Palestinians, Kurds and Iraqis, as well as Syrians, migrating first in search of safety, then to neighbouring states and, more recently, in increasing numbers to Europe, in search of safety, sanctuary, education and health provision. Syria's neighbouring states of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, in addition to Iraqi Kurdistan have absorbed the greatest number of refugees, and attempted to educate refugees in double and sometimes triple school shifts, with mixed results. Regional fears of conflict contagion have escalated insecurity in poorer border areas in neighbouring states, with limited access to rudimentary education, and escalating host community–refugee tensions. The varying education responses of host states demonstrate the role of education in societal security provision.

2.2 Turkey

Turkey shares a 911km border with Syria, and at the beginning of the crisis instituted an 'open door' policy toward Syrian refugees. As a result, Turkey in February 2016 was hosting an estimated 2.6 million refugees (registered and unregistered), out of the total 4,718,279 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR. In 2015, since the beginning of the refugee crisis 159,000 Syrian refugees had been born in Turkey. Of the 452,598 refugees of school-going age, Turkey made education provision for 310,000, and committed to enrolling 460,000 Syrian refugees in education by the end of 2016 (Erdogan 2015).

While Turkey's Ministry of National Education operates under a temporary protection mandate, and has eliminated administrative barriers for Syrian refugees to access the education system, Turkish language instruction is an obstacle for Arabic-speaking Syrians. Temporary education centres in Turkey use Arabic as the language of instruction based on a modified and limited Syrian curriculum, taught by Syrian volunteer teachers. A professional development and support programme for teachers has trained 7,000 Syrian volunteer teachers on child-centred protective and interactive methodologies, psychosocial support and classroom management. The Turkish government prohibits payment of Syrian teachers; instead, standardised incentive schemes exist for Syrian volunteer teaching.[8]

The volunteer status of Syrian teachers is one of the obstacles education-focused international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) face. Similarly, donors' insistence on determining the syllabus taught to refugees hinders the ability to coordinate education for refugees across Turkey; education providers lament the fact that nine different syllabi are in operation in Turkey. Despite these efforts, since 2013 the number of refugees excluded from education has increased; many child and adolescent refugees are unaccompanied, showing a demographic shift in the refugee community in Turkey, where women

and children are over-represented as young men leave for Europe (Royal Institute of International Affairs 2015).[9] As a result of these obstacles, Turkey calculates that 50,000 Syrian refugee children are in need of child protection, and better integration mechanisms are needed for Syrian children in Turkish schools (UNICEF 2015b).

2.3 Lebanon

In Lebanon 50 per cent of 6–14 year olds are in formal education in public and private schools. Of the 755,000 refugees in need of education, 377,000 (Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese returnees from Syria) are targeted for support, 158,000 refugees have been enrolled in public schools, with provision made for 200,000 (UNHCR 2015).[10] The challenge of meeting the needs of refugees lies in existing public school provision, which the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) acknowledges. Its Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) plan is an attempt to meet this challenge. Official MEHE figures state that 30 per cent of Lebanese children attend public schools, although this overestimates the actual number of Lebanese children in public schools.

Lebanon's languages of instruction (Arabic, French and English) compound the learning challenge for the small minority of Syrian refugees currently in formal education. In Lebanon, English and French are taught as second languages, and the language of instruction for maths and science is either French or English. In Syria, English and French are taught as foreign languages rather than second languages. Limited public education provision and language challenges notwithstanding, Lebanon's education provision for Syrian refugees imposes ever-increasing strains on the resources of the state.

To address this demand, 239 public schools currently operate in double shifts, with Lebanese children attending school in the morning and, where possible, Syrian refugees attending in the afternoon, at a cost of US$600 per child, funded by the international community. Increasingly overworked teachers grapple with problems of language of instruction and broader security protection issues concerning refugee children. Lebanese Education NGOs have wisely rejected informal (and unpublicised) proposals that some INGOS have proposed to institute triple shifts, which would require refugee children to go to school in the evenings and place even greater demands on Lebanese teachers.[11]

Syrian refugee children receive subsidised formal education in Lebanon's numerous private schools, and some of the 205 informal settlements across Lebanon provide non-formal education (NFE). Facilities in informal schools are often limited: in one informal settlement 'school'[12] in the Bekaa Valley, where only 36 per cent of refugee children attend school, one toilet serves 250 elementary school-age children, their parents and teachers. However, refugee preferences for informal schools reveal inter-communal tensions, and a response to peer-to-peer violence in double-shift schools. Refugee settlement schools understand that boys, sometimes as young as eight years old, are often

the sole breadwinner for their families, and hence need to work rather than attend classes. Refugee parents' preferences for informal settlement schools that teach a Syrian curriculum stem from a perception that Syrian teachers will understand refugee needs better and will also be less likely to discriminate against refugee children.

Lebanese initiatives to further regulate education for refugees can create unforeseen obstacles. For example, efforts to transport refugees from informal settlements to public schools not only incur transportation costs, but also have an impact on protection perceptions for refugee families. Non-formal schools in informal settlements allow girls to attend classes close to their family residence. Lebanese government proposals to transport refugee children outside settlements to public schools threaten to discourage refugee families from allowing girls to attend public school. In Lebanon, 20 per cent of refugee heads of households are women, who often opt to keep their female children close. By requiring refugee girls to travel a distance to attend public schools, new education initiatives, in turn, have an impact on protection and security concerns for refugee girls and young women.

NFE provision in informal settlement schools in Lebanon serves as a platform for greater education, protection, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) and food distribution provision for refugees. Strict regulation of refugee education provision would require greater coordination of supplementary services to address the needs of Syria's most vulnerable refugees and their host communities in Lebanon's Akkar and Bekka Valley regions. To bridge these gaps, Lebanon has developed an accelerated learning programme to provide children (aged 7–17 years) who have been out of school for more than two years with a condensed Lebanese curriculum, which will allow them to integrate into public education in Lebanon.

In February 2016 Lebanon committed to securing quality education for all children aged 3–18 years with the RACE plan. Under the 2015/16 enrolment campaign, the MEHE has provided formal places for 200,000 Syrian children in public schools. Lebanon is now accelerating its targets to meet the London conference goal to enrol all children aged 5–17 years in education by the end of the 2016/17 school year. Lebanon seeks to provide early childhood education for all children aged 3–5 years. A subsequent plan (RACE II) seeks to go beyond opening the doors of public schools to all children, by ensuring that Lebanese public schools achieve high learning standards through curriculum reform, expansion of access, regulation of NFE, and improved access to youth, vocational and technical training for young people aged 15–24 years. The cost of educational reform for Lebanon is estimated at US$1.75bn over five years.

2.4 Jordan
Of the 635,324 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan, 50 per cent are under 18 years of age, and 50 per cent are women. Jordanian officials

determine that 7 per cent of Syrian refugee children are at risk, and 203,264 are in need of child protection services. In Jordan, only 18 per cent of Syrian refugees live in the refugee camps at Za'tari, Azraq, and Mrajeeb Al Fhood (Supporting Syria and the Region 2016). For Syrian refugee children in Jordan, many of whom come from Daraa in southern Syria, literacy is the greatest education challenge. To meet this need the Jordanian Ministry of Education concentrates its efforts on basic education provision for grades 1–10 (ages 6–15) for Syrian refugees.

According to estimates, in February 2016 130,000 Syrian refugees were in the Jordanian school system, but at least 90,000 were not in school.[13] Public schools in refugee camps operate a double-shift system, and use Syrian teaching assistants to help Jordanian teachers. In cities with large refugee populations, such as Irbid, for example, the double-shift process escalates tensions between Jordanian students attending the 0700–1400 morning shift and Syrian refugees attending the second shift 1400–1700 in the afternoon. Teachers supervise shift transitioning to mediate tensions between the Jordanian host community and refugee pupils, because tensions have been known to escalate into confrontation and even fighting.[14] To accommodate the demands of a double shift, lessons are shorter and teachers work longer hours. The strain on teachers and students is palpable. Teachers note that the education of all of their charges, Jordanians and Syrians alike, is suffering.

Existing legal and admission regulations often prohibit Syrian refugee children from accessing formal education in urban areas where the majority of refugees live. In February 2016, 30,000 Syrian refugee children were attempting to access the Jordanian school system. Successful non-formal and informal education options involving art, play, sport and drama are available, funded by independent charities and INGOs. Similarly, foreign donors often fund vocational training and technology courses for Syrian young people in Jordan, beyond the auspices of the host government.

In emergencies a greater onus is placed on non-formal and informal education, often without ministerial oversight, is a cause of concern for the Jordanian government. The Ministry of Education has made repeated calls for greater coordination and collaboration, particularly in NFE provision for refugees, highlighting the broader issue of education funding and differing donor priorities. The Makani ('My space') informal integrated education system provides numeracy, literacy, English and science classes to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian children.[15] The Accelerating Access to Quality Formal Education plan is the Jordanian response to remedying the education gap for Syrian refugees and vulnerable host Jordanian children. The plan seeks to implement the promise of a place for every Syrian refugee child in formal education in Jordan in 2016/17, and is expected to cost up to US$1bn over three years.

3 Towards a school place for every Syrian refugee

Despite research highlighting the importance of education provision in emergencies, historically it has been a second-order priority in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Conflict-affected states spend far below the recommended levels of national income on education. In 2012, just 3.2 per cent of conflict-affected states' national income was spent on education, when the global average is 5 per cent. Doubling the percentage of young people in secondary education from 30 to 60 per cent has the potential to halve the risk of conflict. When education inequality doubles, the probability of conflict more than doubles from 3.8 per cent to 9.5 per cent, and yet education projects receive only 1.4 per cent of global humanitarian funding. This represents a decrease from 2.3 per cent in 2010. The globally agreed figure for minimum spending towards education in humanitarian aid is 4 per cent which represents a shortfall in education funding of 2.6 per cent (UNESCO 2015).

Moreover, historic education providers (UNICEF, Save the Children) have changed their focus to concentrate on child protection rather than education, because education provision is too difficult to monitor and evaluate in keeping with traditional government donor requirements. For their part, existing education initiatives, such as accelerated learning programmes, basic literacy and numeracy, catch-up programmes, remedial classes, and including the NLG initiative, tend to overlook the long-term strategic and security ramifications of large-scale population displacement.

Donor responses to the Syria crisis have left the provision of education for refugees to the generosity of host state governments. When first tasked with shouldering the education burden of refugees, governments anticipated that UN agencies would assist in covering extra costs (Watkins 2013). In 2016, the UN agencies must not only assist the commendable efforts of the host states in the task of educating refugees, but also help to protect the education systems of the increasingly overburdened host states.

In this context, the February 2016 London conference marked a watershed in international recognition of, and the response to, the refugee education crisis. At the conference, donor states sought to meet the Oslo Summit on Education and Development's call for a global education emergency fund of US$4.8bn (Oslo Summit 2015) to meet the financial challenge to educate children in conflict. By devising new financial instruments, and a new global education emergency fund, donor pledges at the London conference have started to meet the financial response to special envoy Gordon Brown's call to establish the goal of ensuring that every Syrian refugee child continues in education. The international donors' pledges will help support strained host state education ministries, and allow new initiatives to draw on successful NFE initiatives. Created in response to the Syria crisis a proliferation of NFE initiatives operate across Syria and in refugee host states to meet the pressing and widespread challenges that out-of-school children face. NFE initiatives for IDPs in Syria and refugees in neighbouring

states are united by a shared objective to seek equity in education for displaced, disadvantaged and refugee children.

Conflict and dislocation mean that many Syrian IDP and refugee children have no formal education, or prior learning. Formal education provision is unavailable to many refugee children because of issues of supply, cost, certification and access. As a result, unregulated NFE initiatives have been largely successful because the learning support and instruction provided, usually by small local and foreign NGOs and charities, adapts education instruction to the ever-present challenges and testing realities of a refugee child's experience.

Successful NFE programmes are child focused. Most programmes integrate music, art, play, sport or storytelling into conventional literacy, numeracy and language classes to assist children with education and play, many of whom have been or are exposed to conflict and violence and display signs of psychosocial trauma. Children often withdraw socially, while conversely others tend to act out in class. Some students refuse to talk and need to be encouraged to engage in play-driven learning. In one NFE location, when bilingual Arabic-English children's books were being distributed to refugee children, the teacher expressed surprise when a child who had not spoken in class before volunteered to read the book in English to the whole class.[16] Engaging in English rather than in Arabic facilitated a new route to communication.

In addition, NFE programmes also tend to integrate health and hygiene education, often by the simple virtue of housing the most accessible WASH facilities for children. NFE programmes are often housed in buildings or shelters that only offer rudimentary protection from the weather, but children are made to feel at home by painting and drawing on plywood-sheet walls, or in one memorable instance, on the papers covering glassless window frames. Children learn to share limited materials and resources where necessary. In one 'science lab' in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon an instructor explained the principles of momentum, velocity and force with a child's toy car and an elastic band; the children in the instructor's charge were transfixed, as were many of the researchers.[17]

Desks in classrooms are rarely empty and children often sit in fours rather than in conventional twos for warmth in winter. Refugee children regularly cry, but are promptly comforted by their peers and teaching instructors alike. Far greater affection is visible among children and teachers than is the norm in formal education settings. Issues of space and insufficient teaching support often result in children with physical and learning disabilities being educated side by side with their peers.[18] In these instances children often compete to help their more vulnerable friends. In NFE environments children appear to benefit from an unexpected 'bonding through adversity' effect in a way that children in formal education settings do not.

Child refugees often engage in seasonal work, which leads to difficulties retaining male pupils in the formal education sector, which UNHCR student retention figures show. Where schools tend to penalise students for absence, NFE makes greater provision for pupils missing class time.[19] By accommodating absences and working students, NFE adapts to the needs of refugees, making its provision all the more important. One of the criticisms of existing NFE provision in refugee camps and informal settlements is the lack of formally qualified educators and teachers. The majority of NFE educators are female, and while they may not possess formal teaching qualifications, many have attended university only to have their studies cut short by the war.

Among Lebanese education charities, educators are often dual-nationals; many have a Syrian parent, and a Lebanese or Jordanian parent. NFE instructors live in the informal settlements and are refugees themselves. As a result, NFE educators, who are paid *less* than teachers in formal education, are often *best* placed to advocate for the needs of refugee children. In addition, NFE educators can promptly identify gaps and share insights into techniques, mechanisms and processes to best help refugee children. While no resource or vocation is wasted in the NFE sector, successful programmes are often limited by scale and access to resources. As a result, despite their effectiveness, small NFE programmes are often absorbed by larger INGOs that have greater access to funding and, importantly, because donors require a programme delivery infrastructure, which smaller education-oriented NGOs often lack.

Informal education mechanisms, including community-based homework support groups, operate in refugee camps, settlements and urban areas. Well aware that it is not an option to delay education while waiting for development, 18,000 parents in Lebanon share their knowledge and assist vulnerable Syrian refugee children with their homework in their own homes.[20] Community-based NFE initiatives form the basis of emergency education bridging programmes that help vulnerable students to learn, by supporting basic literacy and numeracy for children most at risk. Homework support groups have proved invaluable for improving school attendance rates for hard-to-reach refugees in urban areas.

The Syria crisis has created an education emergency. A flourishing NFE sector has emerged in response. In turn, Syria's neighbouring governments are trying to standardise NFE to create a uniform pathway to formal public education access. For example, as part of the commitment to education of donors at the London conference, Lebanon's RACE plan commits the education ministry to ensuring that all children in Lebanon have access to quality formal and non-formal learning opportunities in a safe and protective environment. The Lebanese government will implement this promise by adopting existing good-quality programmes that work and making sure everyone follows the same standards, regardless of service provider, location, nationality or socio-economic status.

Education ministries are beginning to advocate greater technical and operational coordination between formal and non-formal education, with the aims of ensuring appropriate supervision and monitoring of NFE delivered to children, and validating and accrediting learning achievement in NFE. New oversight mechanisms are being created to effectively authorise, supervise, monitor and coordinate NFE programming with any authorised legal entity providing NFE programmes. In so doing, neighbouring host state governments are beginning to respond to the new education initiatives, acknowledging NFE programming mechanisms and seeking to replicate and formalise NFE provisions.

Lebanon is one of the first of the education ministries in the region to institute new national standards and validation processes for NFE and to introduce regulatory mechanisms to bridge the existing gaps between formal and non-formal education. New proposals for child-focused pathways propose to emphasise early learning and school readiness for children aged 3–5 years, before joining Grade 1 of formal education:

> For children aged 6–15 years, corresponding with the compulsory school age in Lebanon, NFE programming is required to support children to reach a grade of formal education appropriate to their age. For adolescents and youth aged 16–18 years, NFE is designed to either support re-enrolment in formal Secondary or vocational/technical education, or to support young people to reach a minimal level of functional literacy and numeracy (MEHE 2016).

The MEHE seeks to integrate existing NFE programmes as a pathway towards formal public school education for all younger children, and towards vocational training for older children. The new objective of the NFE initiative in Lebanon is to map how children might move through NFE programmes to join formal public education, or for adolescents and young people to move through NFE to further formal education or other learning opportunities.

Effective implementation of these new policies will require greater coordination between education donors and stakeholders at local, regional and national levels, with training and monitoring of NFE programmes. Greater geographical coordination is being considered to ensure provision of spaces in formal public schools (first/second shift and secondary) within a reasonable distance of NFE service points for each child of compulsory school age (6–15 years) and upper-level age (16–18 years) enrolled in NFE programming. The 'School-in-a-Box' initiative[21] provides materials for pupils in public schools, with each child in first and second shifts receiving necessary learning materials.

The MEHE will address long-standing challenges surrounding accreditation to ensure singular standardised child assessments with accreditation; in addition, greater scrutiny of pilot activities and strategies to scale up successful programmes are planned. A series of action plans are scheduled to standardise each of the NFE programmes. These action

plans are designed to create continuity in service provision between NFE and formal public education, so that out of school children can progress through NFE programmes into appropriate grades of formal public schools. Regulatory responsibility – to ensure that all delivered NFE services are of good quality and aligned with international standards, including INEE (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies) standards, and taking into consideration national standards – lies with the host governments. To that end, educators, bureaucrats and institutions alike would welcome initiatives to support further training, and certification of NFE instructors and educators.

Certifying NFE instructors and recognising the qualifications of Syrian teachers working as assistant teachers in Jordan and Turkey would temper the frustrations expressed by well-qualified and experienced Syrian teachers, who must report to sometimes junior teachers in the host state. The frustrations of the Syrian assistant teachers and host community teachers may partially account for the number of violent incidents between teachers and students that NGOs report. It may also account for the numbers of young, disillusioned refugee NFE instructors who decide to seek refuge elsewhere because of the conditions and hardships they face in camps and urban areas.[22]

UNHCR protection and education officers and NGO staff repeatedly referred to instances of teacher violence in classrooms and the need for greater training of teachers to curb peer-to-peer violence and teachers' violence against pupils in refugee classrooms. In addition, they highlighted the need to provide teachers with psychosocial training to assist in the identification of children suffering from post-traumatic stress and manage classroom discipline effectively. Similarly, in interviews and direct observation with teachers in schools, the degree of prejudice and discrimination some educators directed at Syrian children vividly illustrated the cost of conflict and accompanying strain on resources, resilience and inter-communal relationships.[23] A number of NGOs have called for greater teacher training in classrooms to help teachers better manage students with post-traumatic stress disorder. Creating certified education and training opportunities for NFE instructors and Syrian refugee teachers would build community resilience and counter the trust deficit between host and refugee communities.

4 The tertiary education crisis

Education initiatives in conflict and post-conflict contexts typically focus almost exclusively on basic and secondary education; higher education is rarely even considered. The Syrian United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2007–11, for example, does not mention higher education nor does it plan for higher education initiatives (UNDAF 2006). Similarly, tertiary education provision did not feature at the London conference, despite the emphasis on refugee education.

The gravity of the Syria crisis is such that higher education provision for refugees is not a priority for emergency relief, humanitarian

provision or development support. Higher education is also deemed beyond the remit and scope of designated ministries and international agencies. UNHCR is primarily tasked with humanitarian assistance and emergency relief, not development. UNICEF is concerned with the welfare of children and women, and UNESCO is mandated to address the quality of education provision rather than building schools. Combined, these agencies, in association with the World Health Organization and UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, could coordinate the higher education response in the longer term, but there is currently little such collaboration.

A related problem is the absence of reliable information on refugee higher education needs, because very little attention is paid to the higher education and training needs of refugees. Tertiary education information does not guide the allocation of resources and mandates across international organisations tasked with addressing emergency relief. Among humanitarian service providers in the host states, there is little understanding or knowledge of the size, need or distribution of Syrian refugees aged 18–24, many of whom have had their university studies interrupted.

According to the first higher-education survey research that began to address some of these issues, which the International Institute for Education (IIE) conducted in April 2013 in Za'tari camp in Jordan, humanitarian aid and higher education officials said that there were no university students at the Za'tari refugee camp (Watenpaugh and Fricke 2013). But for every two Jordanian teachers in Za'tari, there is approximately one Syrian assistant teacher. Syrian assistant teachers are often university students who have had their university education interrupted by the war. The IIE researchers found only 17 students in the camp who were willing to speak to them.

In September 2013 the UNHCR Youth Task Force (YTF), along with the Norwegian Refugee Council, conducted a study to document the number of young people aged 15–24 in Za'tari camp, in response to the possibility of a scholarship programme for Syrian students. The findings showed a total number of 292 tertiary-age students in Za'tari.[24] The figure is far from exhaustive, but nonetheless reflects the number of young people with skills in law, languages, English and teaching accessible in Za'tari through the activities of the YTF.

There are important reasons why tertiary refugee education should receive greater international attention and support than it does presently. First, higher education is critical to the building of human capital. The long-term future of Syria lies in the ability to regenerate its human capital and encourage its now displaced and refugee population to return home once the conflict ends. Human capital affects growth directly, and indirectly when working in conflict-affected environments. Education can improve legal, economic and political institutions, which are conducive to growth. Individuals with tertiary education typically

earn higher incomes than those who begin work immediately after completing secondary school. The London conference reiterated the strong correlation between tertiary education returns, training and work-based learning, and the quality of legal, economic and political institutional factors.[25] The better the institutional environment, the greater the productivity of highly educated people; fostering higher returns in schooling encourages more capable people to complete tertiary education. This in turn creates momentum for human capital accumulation, and consequently for growth (EBRD 2013). Syria's human capital currently resides with its refugee diaspora, rendering higher education provision for talented refugees an imperative for Syria.

Secondly, higher education provision and training can support an existing security platform that provides the university as a semi-public place of assembly for students, and as a platform for mitigating tensions, and a mechanism for security protection. Higher education provision can begin to map the numbers and needs of Syrian refugee students and academics, and act as a bellwether for measuring the societal impacts of refugees and host communities. In shaping state and non-state actors' responses and responsibilities, higher education provision creates scope for identifying policies that bolster the resilience of states, refugees, INGOs, agencies and host communities. Moreover, education and appropriate skills training provide supporting or resilience mechanisms for mitigating the risk and effects of conflict as well as of economic recession. States with a higher education base are more resilient to political and economic shocks. Higher education combined with sufficient training provision can counter the destabilising influences of conflict-affected economies.

There is also, thirdly, an important gender dimension to higher education. Syrian women outnumber men in tertiary enrolment, though this trend is not reflected in employment figures. High fertility rates, limited affordable child care, cultural norms that require the permission of male family members before accepting employment, the mismatch between female skills and the demands of the labour market, and gender-based gaps in remuneration, shape women's participation in the workforce. Where possible, women are more likely to secure paid employment in the public sector than the private. Where impossible, women are more likely to leave education to marry early, and are more susceptible to gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and early pregnancy. Greater education provision for women mitigates early marriage and early pregnancy. Redressing the scarcity of women teachers among Syrian refugee communities is necessary to harness a greater role for women in the provision of education and harness the capacity of education in the interests of child protection and security.

From the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Syrian students have expressed a desire to complete their studies abroad, in other Arab states, the United Kingdom or the United States. However, without access to UNHCR-administered DAFI programme[26] and similar scholarships,

visa requirements and costs were deemed to be prohibitive. The refugees who are seeking to return to education that are most at risk lack access to stable resources and are struggling to meet their basic needs. For more fortunate refugee students currently in tertiary education in Jordan and Lebanon, access to external sources of funding is usually found among family members in the diaspora. For refugees without financial support from diaspora family abroad or Syrian diaspora change agents options are limited.[27] Without external support, skilled students are subject to exploitation. For example, criminal gangs in Lebanon and Jordan coerce and co-opt students with chemistry backgrounds to engage in drug production. Creating opportunities for skills-based academic training for refugees is critical for the refugee generation. Postponing training and scholarship decisions in the short term increases the likelihood that Syria's refugees may become part of a permanent diaspora in the long term.

The need for language and vocational training is particularly strong. Among the Syrian refugee population of tertiary age in Lebanon, urban and rural, accelerated language courses are the most pressing need identified after surveying scholarship donors and providers across Lebanon (Brehon Advisory n.d.). Language courses are in equal demand for Syrian students in Turkey and Jordan. The provision of language courses is prohibitive due to course costs, travel restrictions and costs, and, critically, space for classes. All existing school and learning-friendly spaces are occupied in urban areas, because the majority of schools have second shifts of secondary school classes to accommodate Syrian refugees late into the evening.

Pearson Education and the British Council provide online English language and literacy programmes, as well as online British Technology and Education Council national diploma courses in their 'passport for work' initiative,[28] which allows students to take a series of modules to gain an internationally recognised qualification (IPPR 2013). Documentation requirements that restrict refugees from accessing university courses can be addressed by taking coursework-based diploma courses. Teaching refugee students skills that they can use for a trade or profession is increasingly problematic in Lebanon and Jordan without complementary legislative changes to allow refugees greater access to work. Online courses and virtual mechanics courses are innovative alternatives for refugee students. Greater access to online academic courses and training programmes, such as technical and vocational education and training courses (Oxford Refugee Studies Center 2014) democratises knowledge and access, and signals the beginnings of an 'education passport' opportunity for refugees whose physical movements are restricted by law, licence or finance.

5 Conclusions
In conflict-affected states, education is a means of socialisation and identity development; education is critical for inclusive post-conflict state-building, and the absence of education is often instrumental in narrow ideologically driven and exclusive nation-building efforts.

Typically, refugee children in conflict crises spend at least 17 years in exile, often missing out on essential formal education. Conflict and prolonged dislocation negatively affect literacy rates. The unprecedented exodus of people that the Syrian conflict has displaced will resonate beyond the next generation if initiatives fail to address the escalating instability and associated crises of a generation of children and young people with limited literacy, language and formal education. Any education initiative to fill the knowledge gap must encourage greater provision for institutional learning and acceptance of the refugees among host communities.

The diminishing numbers of young male Syrian refugees finishing school, coupled with the lack of appropriate educational and foundational skills provision, contributes to the regional employment crisis. Syria's human capital – defined as the accumulated stock of education, knowledge and skills – is dislocated, dispersed and currently virtually unaccounted for. Syria's protracted conflict undermines efforts to build the human capital that is vital for future economic sustainability.

The long-term education, employment and security ramifications of, in effect, losing a generation of Syrians is well understood. Yet, coordinated 12- and 15-week accelerated NFE learning programmes can enable refugee and conflict-affected students to bridge the learning gap and flourish in formal education. Equally important to long-term education provision is the need for a similar pathway for refugees to access tertiary education. Accelerated certification recognition, visa provision and language training will not only help individual refugees pursue their interrupted education, but would also help foster globally recognised accreditation by facilitating greater academic exchange between higher education institutes in the region, and overseeing the development of regionally and internationally recognised degrees.

In short, the education deficit among Syrian refugees will undoubtedly have profound negative impacts for economic growth and regional security in the future. Addressing this deficit is not only a duty in and of itself, because education is a fundamental human right, but, crucially, the provision of high-standard, good-quality education is also of critical importance to the building of a post-conflict Syria, and the long-term stability, security and economies of its neighbouring states.

Notes

1 See Syria Humanitarian Response Plan 'Overview 2016', www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/syria; and Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2016–17 (3RP), www.supportsyrians. com (accessed 4 February 2016), which draw on figures from https://data.unhcr.org.

2 Figures from the Education Working Group, Supporting Syria and the Region conference, London, 4–5 February 2016.

3 See http://nolostgeneration.org/about

4 See www.supportingsyria2016.com

5 Formal education is defined as the traditional structured system of education guided by a curriculum, leading to a formally recognised credential, found in primary and secondary schools. Non-formal education is organised with or without a curriculum and refers to educational activity that takes place outside the formal education system. Informal learning operates without a formal curriculum.

6 Interview with global publisher 2015.

7 Figures from Syria All-Party Parliamentary Committee briefing, Palace of Westminster, Supporting Syria and the Region conference, London, 5 February 2016.

8 Education Working Group, Supporting Syria and the Region conference, London, 3 February 2016.

9 Refugees' in Syria's Neighbours, Exploring Policy Response, Roundtable, Chatham House, RICS, London, 4 December 2015.

10 November–December 2015 Monthly Educational Sectional Dashboard UNHCR http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/working_group.php?Page=Country&LocationId=122&Id=21 (accessed 4 February 2016).

11 Interviews with Lebanese education charities, MED Dialogue, Rome, 10–12 December 2015.

12 In Lebanon, unregistered informal schools are not referred to as 'schools.'

13 Jordanian education charity official, Education Working Group, Supporting Syria and the Region conference, London, 3 February 2016.

14 Interviews conducted during school visits, Al-Qadeseyeh school, Irbid, Jordan, November 2014.

15 Education Working Group, Support Syria, London Conference, 3 February 2016; see also www.unicef.org/jordan/overview_10143.html.

16 Author's bilingual book distribution to refugees with Brehon Advisory and monitoring and evaluation review with informal school teachers, May 2015.

17 Author's bilingual book distribution to refugees with Brehon Advisory, December 2015.

18 Of the 72 public schools in Lebanon rehabilitated in 2015 to meet safety and WASH needs, only seven schools are equipped to accommodate children with special needs.

19 Interviews with UNHCR staff and empirical evidence note that young males are conspicuously absent from schools.

20 Repeat interviews with UNHCR education officers.

21 This is a UNICEF initiative in origin, but is run with UNHCR; see www.unicef.org/supply/index_40377.html

22 Refugees and aid agency staff expressed these opinions, lamenting the return to Syria of refugees who were contributing to their NFE programmes. When Syrian assistant teachers returned to Syria, students suffered the loss of the teacher and took time to adapt to a new assistant. Interviews with NGOs in Jordan working in Za'tari camp, 10 November 2014.

23 Author interviews conducted over three years and school visits between 2013 and 2016 in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

24 Author interviews with NRC staff Amman, January 2014 and Za'tari camp education officers, November 2014.

25 European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Meeting, Supporting Syria and the Region conference, London, 4 February 2016.

26 The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI) Scholarships for Refugees. In 2015 134 Syrian Refugees were awarded DAFI scholarships. See www.unhcr.org/40dbee984.pdf.

27 Interview with Kingsley Aikins, Diaspora Matters, 5 October 2015.

28 https://tr.pearson.com/en/work-passport.html

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The 'Rojava Revolution' in Syrian Kurdistan: A Model of Development for the Middle East?

Can Cemgil and Clemens Hoffmann

Abstract As the civil war in Syria continues, in the territory of Rojava – in Kurdish, 'the West' – the northern Syrian Kurdish political movement is attempting to implement 'libertarian municipalism', based on the thoughts of United States (US) anarchist Murray Bookchin. Since the withdrawal of Syrian regime forces in 2012, the movement has consolidated significant territorial gains as a US ally in the anti-Islamic State (IS) struggle, while simultaneously securing Russian support. Viewed with suspicion by Turkey, Syria and Iraqi Kurdistan, the geopolitical conditions of Rojava's emergence are its greatest impediment. This article analyses Rojava's model of rule and socioeconomic development, and its theory and practice in the context of the civil war, and regional Middle Eastern and wider global geopolitics. It reflects on Rojava's place and meaning for contemporary geopolitics in the Middle East, and considers the territory's prospects, discussing its transformative potential for an otherwise troubled region.

1 Introduction: locating Rojava among many alternatives

The current global financial, regional geopolitical and environmental crises, are all thought to coincide and express themselves in the most vicious forms in the contemporary Middle East. Historically, hydrocarbon developmentalism, rentierism, recurrent crises and conflict have characterised the region. Authoritarian militarist-bureaucratic rule through clientelist networks, fuelled by oil rents re-invested in arms purchases, has long characterised the whole region. This entrenched militarist authoritarianism is exacerbated by the effects of large top-down hydro-civilizational projects (irrigation, dam building), bloated bureaucracies, and neoliberal policies that have led to new forms of land appropriation and environmental degradation, all of which have contributed to the region's problematic 'development' template.

Despite this declared regional specificity of the Middle East, alternative, critical concepts of development and governance are frequently conceived at the global and universal levels (e.g. Radcliffe 2015). They

start by developing alternative macro-policies that are subsequently implemented through national centralised governments, which turn them into local social realities. 'Sustainable development', but also more radical movements such as 'de-growth' (e.g. D'Alisa *et al.* 2014) and similar concepts, while offering to re-think the parameters of global growth and development, do so within established global macro-political settings where institutionally supported notions, notably those of the World Bank or International Monetary Fund, are located in − rather than on top of − a geopolitically fragmented system of nation states indispensable to the formulation and implementation of policy alternatives.

National, centralised states act as interlocutors of a globally formulated developmental 'consensus', as well as implementing it. Similarly, states are important fields of struggle, though alternatives are still developed within national confines. Looking at development in holistic and geographically expansive terms, and changing policies to reflect where power actually lies in the state, is certainly imperative. But there is also a more problematic element in this dominant strategy: by changing developmental notions, strategies and policies in the current universal structures, most alternatives also emulate and, thereby, reproduce, top-down approaches. Even 'participatory development' (e.g. Cooke and Kothari 2001) depends on hierarchically organised national–territorial developmental states and the international organisations they form as the interlocutors.

This article will present and interrogate a yet more radical departure from the developmental mainstream, relating its abstract formulation to its lived practice in a peculiar geopolitical setting: that of a local, anti-authoritarian, anti-hierarchical and communitarian approach, as well as its current social practice in the northern Syrian Kurdish enclaves, or cantons, of Rojava. Based on the theories of Bookchin, a US thinker frequently labelled 'eco-anarchist', the Rojava model is a radical departure from the hierarchical global growth regime. This 'democratic confederalism' or 'libertarian municipalism', entails elements such as community-based, cooperative production and trade as social ecology, radical gender equality, and local forms of direct democratic political rule.

The following study is based on secondary research into the foundations and realities of Rojava, using personal accounts, reports, academic articles and journalistic sources. It will first set out the ideological and philosophical foundations of this revolutionary project in Bookchin's work, before elaborating on the historic and geopolitical conditions of its emergence. It will then provide an overview of the social structure and lived reality of this political and socioeconomic project. It will close by arguing that the very conditions of the project's emergence − the contemporary crisis-ridden geopolitical conjuncture − are at the same time the greatest threat to it, not so much externally but due to the potential internal contradictions of a militarised society.

2 From Bookchin to Öcalan: democratic confederalism and the Rojava 'revolution'

This alternative project of development and democracy owes its intellectual sources and political inspiration to Bookchin. It was Bookchin's social historical theory that inspired the intellectual and strategic transformation of the Kurdish Liberation Movement (KLM) after imprisoned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan read his work. Like Bookchin himself, Öcalan was disillusioned with the orthodox tradition of Marxist-Leninist party organisation and underwent a series of transformations even before he was imprisoned (Üstündağ 2016).

The PKK reflected these changes in a series of congresses in the 1990s and 2000s, and changed its orientation and strategies accordingly from a separatist–nationalist movement to a democratic autonomist and democratic confederalist movement (Güneş 2012). Akkaya, Jongerden and Şimşek (2015) described it as a transformation from rebellion to reconstruction. Surprisingly though, this intellectual and strategic transformation of the KLM did not materialise in Turkey, its birthplace, but in neighbouring Syria, following the outbreak of civil war in 2011. The Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Syrian affiliate and sister organisation of the PKK, seized the opportunity to implement Bookchin's ideas in Rojava.

Bookchin's theoretical contribution to studies on ecology, development, freedom and citizenship, among other areas, consists of a diverse, sophisticated, yet at times incoherent and factually unsubstantiated (White 2008) body of ideas brought together in a series of volumes.[1] The central thread, however, is clear: disillusioned with vulgar versions of Marxism and what Bookchin calls 'lifestyle anarchism' (Bookchin 1995), he sets out to offer a sweeping social and ideological history that specifies 'hierarchy' almost as the source of all social, political and ecological evils. A concept broader than all other forms of domination, be they the contemporary state, class domination, or human domination over nature, hierarchy is also antecedent to these ills of society. Freedom, then, consists of overcoming these hierarchical relations and establishing relations based on 'equality of unequals', social complementarity, and access for everyone to an irreducible minimum of needs that they themselves define (Bookchin 1982).

Abolition of social hierarchy will also result in repairing the 'metabolic rift' (Foster 1999) that Marx declared 'irreparable' under capitalism (Marx 1981: 949). Marx attributed the separation of human beings from nature to the rise of capitalism, which resulted in soil exhaustion and the impossibility of bioregionalism (i.e. producing crops locally and sustainably for decentralised markets) in the context of expanding urban centres, industrial production and their ever-increasing demands on nature, and argued that this was an irreparable rift under capitalism. While in agreement, Bookchin saw capitalism only as one manifestation of domination, that is class domination, among others such as gerontocracy

and patriarchy, and accordingly believed that human domination of nature was the result of social domination in general and could be done away with only when social hierarchy was completely abolished.

While Bookchin is unwilling to suggest a determinate way to bring about this large-scale social and environmental change, he traces historically and proposes theoretically what he calls the 'legacies of freedom' that we inherited from 'organic societies', which knew no hierarchy and had an 'ecological sensibility' as well as an intuitive and practical knowledge of freedom (Bookchin 1982). Distinguishing between ancient Greek participatory democracy and Roman republicanism (Bookchin 1987: 43), Bookchin argues that the republican model with its representative system slides into a de-socialised elite rule, and creates professional rulers who govern, rather than administer (Bookchin 1982: 129) in an exclusive political space (Cemgil 2016). To socialise the political and to politicise the social (Üstündağ 2016), Bookchin argued for direct democracy starting at the most local level, building up a confederation of libertarian municipalities that are, just like members of 'organic societies', interdependent and cooperative. The representative state in its current form, 'absorbed' administrative social functions and made itself 'as indispensable as an organising *principle* for human consociation' (Bookchin 1982: 127), becoming a major source of domination (Cemgil 2016).

Direct democratic participation entails the social administration of production and need determination as its corollary. Social administration of production requires a localised, decentralised economy, scaled down to 'human dimensions' (Bookchin 1982: 344), with various libertarian municipalities cooperating if they decide to do so. While decentralisation enhances direct democratic participation it does not necessarily exclude the possibility of forms of local social hierarchy, and Bookchin is well aware of this. In any case, democratic processes might generate hierarchies as well. That is why he proposes a confederation of libertarian municipalities, in the final analysis, in the belief that a municipality that generated domination would be checked by others, besides internal democratic checks and balances (Biehl and Bookchin 1998: 108).

A democratised economy and polity also allow for the determination of needs of the community by the democratic processes of the community. Rather than being expressed in objective categories, those involved also determine needs. The democratisation and de-centralisation of social administrative functions that we now call economy, and scaling it down to human dimensions, would also reduce dependence on hydrocarbons through de-industrialisation, without dismissing the possibility of interdependent self-sufficiency.

Among Bookchin's primary aims in writing these numerous treatises on domination was the concern to offer a social ecology that re-constructs human–nature relations. Organic societies, for Bookchin, did not see nature an externality to be controlled. The emergence of institutionalised hierarchy and social domination, however, also resulted

in the emergence of the notion of dominating nature. The language of domination of nature became so strong with the advent of capitalism that even radical critics of capitalism, such as Marx, fell prey to its ideology at times. The mending of the metabolic rift requires a full-scale subjective as well as material transformation of relations, though.

Calls for bioregionalism, decentralisation or autarchy will not by themselves resolve the apocalyptic future that awaits us. Nor will anti-consumerism or de-industrialisation. A full-scale struggle against domination and hierarchy is needed and an ecological society can only be built on non-hierarchical relations. A self-sufficient interdependence within the democratic confederation of libertarian municipalities, usufructory or use-oriented property relations in municipalities, direct democratic policymaking in all areas of social life, as well as a subjective and material transformation in human–nature and human–human relations to erase hierarchy, are preconditions for such transition (Bookchin 1982).

Bookchin insists that if hierarchy and domination are the root causes of all social ills, then a genuine transformation into an ecological, libertarian society must take aim at all of their manifestations. Among primordial forms of domination is men's domination over women, which grew organically, according to Bookchin, but then became institutionalised into a perennial patriarchal domination. Building on Bookchin's social ecology, Biehl (1991) concurred that this primordial form of domination must be destroyed along with all others, and added that women must make use of their full potential by liberating themselves from the trap of the *oikos*; that is, their domestic roles. While these activities have naturally emerged in the form of childbearing and childrearing, women's domination by men originates from women being exclusively associated with these roles. For Biehl, rather than seeking an expanded *oikos* in the *polis*, women should actively engage in liberatory politics in the *polis* (1991: 154), for 'humanity… has greater potentialities than caring and nurturing' (1991: 26).

What most informed the KLM's view on women and their liberation, however, were Öcalan's writings. Öcalan set the liberation of women as the precondition of the liberation of society in general and the liberation of Kurds in particular. Drawing on Bookchin's social-historical account of patriarchal domination and hierarchy, Öcalan suggests that women have the capacity and will not only to participate in and revolutionise the democratic process, but also to create their own institutions to empower themselves. For this purpose, he proposed the notion of *Jineolojî*, the science of woman and life, which aimed to provide an alternative view of social reality from the perspective of self definition and actualisation of woman in social life (Öcalan 2013).

Öcalan first familiarised himself with the work of Bookchin when he was serving a life sentence on the prison island of İmralı in Turkey. Bookchin's work so fascinated Öcalan that by 2005 he was steering the strategic orientation of the KLM towards democratic confederalism

(Jongerden and Akkaya 2013). Building on Bookchin's work, Öcalan saw capitalism, the nation state and patriarchy as the root causes of all social and ecological problems under conditions of capitalist modernity. A social revolution, for Öcalan, must do away with these three elements of capitalist modernity and replace them with democratic modernity.

Along with ethical and philosophical motivations, and his personal disillusionment with Marxist and nationalist positions, one could reasonably claim that Öcalan's adoption and adaption of Bookchin's perspective in the case of the KLM was partly due to long-term strategic considerations that in great part stem from the Kurds' social and geographical reality. Having been territorially dispersed among four states –Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran – the Kurds have been fighting these states in a bid to gain independence or autonomy in a federal system. If as nation states these four countries have been responsible for all the Kurds' suffering, reasoned Öcalan, why would the Kurds want to establish yet another source of domination? Democratic confederalism was the solution not only to the problems of Turkey's Kurds, but also a larger blueprint for a democratic Middle East, a region rife with conflict, suffering, oppression and poverty (Öcalan 2011).

3 History and conditions of possibility of the Rojava revolution
In the case of Syria, post-colonial statist development started with the Ba'athist regime and its socialist experiment during the 1950s, intermittently removing the old class of notables from power (Hourani 1981; Khoury 2003). With the opening, or *infitah*, of the 1970s, the elite composition changed and started to include the 'old bourgeoisie' again, without, however, fundamentally altering the conditions of a rentier economy, including all of its socio-political contradictions (Perthes 1991). None of these transformations created the potential for change or the conditions for Kurdish emancipation (Perthes 1995). It was not until the breakdown of the Syrian regime in 2011, first politically and then geopolitically, that such conditions arose. These have now established a considerable remit of action for the armed Kurdish movement in the north of the country.

Historically, the Syrian Kurds were hostile to the Ba'thist regime, having repeatedly experienced 'Arabisation' (Arab Belt policy) and marginalisation, which maintained the region's underdeveloped agricultural status. Agricultural production was kept artificially low yielding. It concentrated on producing staple food crops, especially wheat and beans, underutilising a fertile area that had been deliberately developed as a 'bread basket', using landless Kurds as cheap labour (Flach *et al.* 2015: 244). In the river valleys, especially along the Euphrates, the regime's hydro-civilisational mission included higher-yielding cultivation, settling Sunni Arabs where economic opportunities were higher.

The valleys are now mostly dominated by IS, providing it with food security and taxes. Although all land has been subject to large-scale reform and nationalisation since the Ba'athist socialist coup in 1963, the rural population in general and Kurdish landless workers in particular

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have benefited very little from any of the developmental ambitions of the rent-seeking Syrian state (Perthes 1994). However, rich Kurdish landlords, similar to their counterparts in Turkey, were co-opted, becoming urbanised regime loyalists in the process.

Neoliberal reforms opened Syrian markets to cheap imports, which undercut local production and led to job losses and depressed wages. The overuse and degradation of land and water resources also caused rural poverty. The resulting rural–urban migration led to a swelling of Kurdish neighbourhoods in the larger cities. In Aleppo, in particular, rural migrants started working in low-skilled and poorly paid jobs in catering or construction, while property prices soared due to the inflow of capital. In reaction to the 2011 uprisings that followed these drastically deteriorated social conditions, Assad initially planned to implement political reforms, but could not in the face of the old Ba'athist militarist regime, which clearly preferred violence, fuelling the armed rebellion in return. After the structurally invested brutality of the regime escalated the conflict, the preceding neoliberal reforms, having generated the revolutionary potential in the first place, were frequently overlooked in favour of over-simplified conflict analysis through the prism of 'social media' (Howard and Hussain 2013) or 'climate conflict' (Werrel and Femia 2013).

Unsurprisingly, the Syrian Kurds were part of the uprising at an early stage, having already suffered large-scale killings during the so-called 'Qamishli Revolts' (Gambill 2004; Noi 2012: 18) in 2004. In an attempt

to limit the number of fronts it was engaged on, the regime successfully appeased the Kurds by granting them unprecedented citizenship rights. More importantly, having identified rebel groups that had formed around army defectors, the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA), as the main enemy, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in 2012 withdrew from the Kurdish majority areas in the north.

This tactical retreat was based on the idea that a poorly equipped Kurdish force would be easily defeated and was thought to be tolerable as an interim placeholder, especially if kept in check by opposing groups, notably IS. Exploiting its own geopolitical momentum, IS went on to brutally occupy vast tracts of Kurdish majority areas in the north, reaching the limits of its expansion in Kobanê during October 2015. Over time, however, the fortunes of war changed, not only in favour of IS, but also the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and associated Women's Protection Units (YPJ). All warring insurgents were left with an array of weapons, some of them heavy. The Kurds even started to get air support from the US-led anti-IS coalition, whereas the SAA became overstretched, which motivated not only Iranian military support but also a last-minute Russian intervention in 2015 and, increasingly, direct Turkish military action against Syrian Kurdish forces and their allies in February 2016, using long-range artillery.

What appeared as a negotiated retreat by the regime also left the Syrian Kurds and their relations with other opposition forces in dire straits, exacerbating a long-standing distrust between the Kurdish and 'Arab', or Sunni population due to Ba'athist 'divide and rule' policies. The YPG's acceptance of a *de facto* ceasefire offer from the regime contributed to allegations that it has collaborated with the regime (Atassi 2014). Although Rojava is not a regime priority for the moment, it shows little willingness to accept *de facto* autonomy as an unintended consequence of a tactical retreat indefinitely, as frequent skirmishes between the YPG and the remaining regime forces around the SAA bases in al-Hasake and Qamishli make clear, as well as the barrel-bombing of YPG-held areas in Aleppo.

Similarly, relations with the rest of the opposition are multifaceted. Cooperation with the self-declared FSA units from the so-called 'Euphrates Volcano' (Burkan al-Firat) coalition proved effective in and around Kobanê, whereas there is open hostility and military confrontation between the YPG and a variety of FSA-labelled forces north of Aleppo. It was in the context of the liberation of Kobanê from IS between October 2014 and January 2015, that the US-led anti-IS coalition developed strong military cooperation with the YPG and associated forces, whereby the YPG called in US airstrikes on military targets it identified on the ground. Having consolidated this successful cooperation over 2015, it led to an unprecedented campaign to recapture northern Syrian territory from IS. The most recent iteration was the US-sponsored formation of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in October 2015, which went on to occupy Tishrin Dam

in December 2015, with the active involvement of US special forces. The SDF is a multi-ethnic force under YPG leadership, which continues to repulse IS in areas where Kurds are not the majority population, to secure local support and to counter claims of Kurdish ethno-nationalist territorial expansionism (e.g. Amnesty International 2015a, 2015b).

Naturally, the geopolitical position of a new and in many ways revolutionary social formation in the complex environment of the Syrian civil war is difficult to summarise concisely. It ranges from open battle with IS, enmity towards Turkey, and ambiguous relations with the FSA and the regime, to a tactical alliance with the US and, more recently, Russia. After Turkey shot down a Russian military jet over an alleged airspace violation in October 2015, reports of Russian diplomatic and military support for Syrian Kurdish forces emerged (Idiz 2016).

The origins of the uprising itself have conditioned the more intricate regional geopolitics. From the start of the uprising in Der'aa in 2011, the Syrian opposition, with a strong support base among the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood, cultivated relations with Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Turkey, in particular, identified the Brotherhood as an ideal vehicle for its regional ambitions. The Alawite majority Syrian state class invited military support from its historic allies, Iran, Hezbollah and, to a lesser extent, Iraq.

The wider regional confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which is frequently couched in sectarian terms, also came to bear on the civil war. These rivalries are also embedded in global geopolitical relations, with Russia and China opposing regime change, whereas the West, and the US in particular, have clearly formulated Assad's departure as a policy goal, by force if need be. This also informs their support for those forces in the region and on the ground in Syria that share common goals.

A second defining regional element is Turkey and the northern Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG)'s opposition to Rojava and its political and territorial-military consolidation. As opposed to the process of Kurdish quasi-state-building in northern Iraq (Natalie 2010), Rojava had vastly different socio-political conditions attached to its emergence. They also follow different political visions, reflecting deeper divisions in the Kurdish movement.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) dominate KRG-controlled northern Iraq, competing for trans-regional Kurdish leadership with the PKK (Natalie 2015: 148), which reflects not only geographical, but also political divisions between the revolutionary Marxist-anarchist ideology of the PKK,[2] following the political agenda of Öcalan and Bookchin, working towards socio-political transformation and the hierarchical-tribal developmental ambitions of the KRG.

Although some of these deeper, historical and political differences have been temporarily put aside during the joint struggle against IS (Gruber 2015), there are other core reasons for the different

Territorial control in the Syrian civil war: situation on the ground January 2015
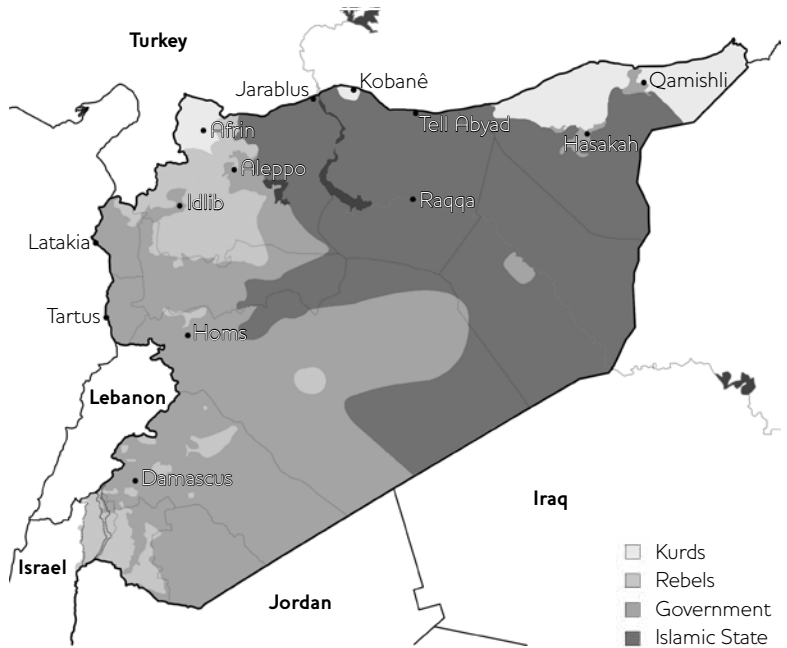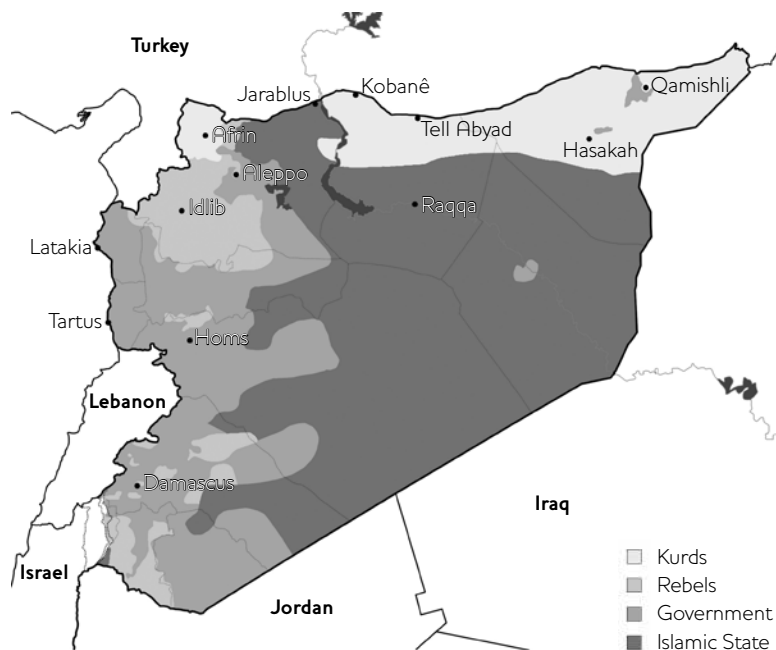

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developmental trajectories. First, after the 1991 Iraq invasion a long process of Kurdish empowerment started with the help of no-fly zones and Western aid, culminating in creation of the KRG. Unlike Rojava, this did not happen in isolation and therefore bears the marks of more conventional pro-Western state-building (Soderberg and Phillips 2015), having been subjected to a much stronger involvement of the international community and its conventional vision of development, starting with the international humanitarian relief operations in the wake of the 1991 US-led invasion and the establishment of the no-fly zone.

This hierarchical, hydrocarbon- and, eventually, construction-dominated path under tribal authoritarian rule is at odds with the Rojava model, and has led to Rojava's isolation, while confirming Bookchin's assumptions about the socially corrosive effect of the oil economy in the KRG's case. There is also a 'Turkish embrace' of the KRG leadership and Turkey's insistence on a form of development in line with its anti-PKK geostrategic and commercial interests, which centre on exporting Turkish construction business.

However, the most formidable geopolitical obstacle is probably Turkey itself at its own current contradictory geopolitical conjuncture (Hoffmann and Cemgil 2016). Apart from a general opposition to any Kurdish bid for autonomy or outright independence in any of the neighbouring states, Turkey's own Kurdish peace process, which the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) initiated in 2013,

Territorial control in the Syrian civil war: situation on the ground January 2016

Source Redrawn from original by Dilek Gürsoy.

broke down in the wake of a series of bomb attacks on Kurdish party offices and rallies during the 2015 Turkish general election campaign. In particular, a suicide bomb attack on pro-Kurdish youth in the border town of Suruç on 20 July 2015, which killed 33 activists, led to the murder of two police officers, allegedly at the hands of a PKK youth organisation. These events initiated a renewed military campaign against the PKK in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq, including intense urban clashes and the large-scale loss of civilian life.

In light of these Turkish domestic developments, initially favourable contacts between the Turkish government and the PYD quickly turned into hostile relations, in line with Turkey's domestic confrontation. After officially declaring both PYD and YPG 'terrorist organizations' in 2015, Turkey launched a military campaign in February 2016 in response to YPG's territorial advances in northern Aleppo province. In part because of domestic Syrian-Kurdish politics, the KRG has closed ranks with its long-standing ally, maintaining a *de facto* embargo over Rojava. Given that all regional US allies also oppose the territory, it has somewhat curtailed open US military support for YPG and SDF forces.

4 Rojava's reality: a socialised polity and economy

Rojava comprises three cantons as administrative units: Cizîrê in the east, Afrîn in the west and Kobanê in the middle. While Rojava takes theoretical and political inspiration from Bookchin's work, this is not a case of a 'to the letter application' of a theory, for much is determined

by the reality on the ground. During the initial phases of the Rojava revolution, first the FSA then IS controlled the territories between Cizîrê and Kobanê, and Kobanê and Afrîn. This territorial non-contiguity partly explains the separate organisation of these cantons.[3]

In line with the theories of, Bookchin and Öcalan, the Rojava Autonomous Administration (RAA) went through a barrage of institution-building to implement democratic self-administration and confederalism, a form of stateless democracy (Kolokotronis 2014), without directly confronting nation states militarily. This involved the establishment of the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM), an umbrella organisation composed of constituent groups in Rojava. However, the PYD is the prime mover and the socio-political force behind the movement. Despite wartime conditions, the PYD sought to establish direct democratic institutional mechanisms, especially at a local level, from neighbourhoods and streets to the larger bodies in the cantons.

This attempt to socialise governance and politicise social life generated working committees at local level that directly participated in decision making (Küçük and Özselçuk 2016). These institutions are crucially based on a co-chair system, with one male and one female filling all posts from the local to the confederation level. To ensure that no professional political and military elites emerge, key positions are rotated unless this poses an immediate risk. Furthermore, from neighbourhood to canton level, all-female parallel institutions are established so that the deep-seated patriarchal patterns do not disempower women, even in gender-equal settings, and women look for solutions to their own problems and needs themselves.

Besides gender-egalitarianism, the RAA pays utmost attention to representing ethnic and religious groups institutionally in the Rojava Constitution – called the Social Contract of the Rojava Cantons – and in assemblies and committees, as well as canton governments. The opening sentence of the Preamble of the Constitution reads: 'We, the people of the Democratic Autonomous Regions of Afrîn, Cizîrê and Kobanê, a confederation of Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, Arameans, Turkmen, Armenians and Chechens, freely and solemnly declare and establish this Charter.'[4] Notwithstanding this recognition of the multi-ethnic composition of Rojava's population, interethnic relations remain tense. Decades of hostility and mistrust among these different communities are not easily overcome, especially considering the Ba'athist regime's forced displacement of Kurds alongside other discriminatory practices that favoured Arabs.

The continuing transfer of social-administrative functions from the state to the society has ensured the spread and reach of the democratic process. The judicial system is a case in point. Inspired by Bookchin's abovementioned notion that justice is only a bad replacement for freedom, the Rojavans created justice and peace committees to act on behalf of neighbourhood assemblies – that is, the commune – to deliver

'social justice' (Ross 2015). That the neighbourhood assemblies and peace committees act in a capacity similar to courts of peace or first instance testifies to the expansion of the principles of direct democracy to what one would usually consider technical matters.

Cases that these committees cannot resolve are referred to people's houses or women's houses, whose function is to address the needs of the local population in areas ranging from economic coordination to domestic violence. The high overall rate of case resolution by committees, houses and assemblies indicates the penetration of this practice among the population. More serious criminal offences, such as murder, on the other hand, are referred to more institutionalised courts.[5] Despite these institutional advances over the Ba'athist Mukhabarat (security intelligence)-led justice system, the RAA has faced criticism for prolonged detentions and unfair trials (AI 2015a, 2015b).

Another state function that has been transferred to society is defence and security, both internal and external. Responsible for external defence, the YPJ and YPG act as a people's self-defence force rather than specialised military units detached from society. Their members were initially recruited from the local population on a voluntary basis, and they received basic training from more experienced armed members. In response to the more forceful IS threat since 2014, the YPJ and YPG have become increasingly institutionalised, and even introduced conscription.

Asayîş, or Internal Security, is responsible for internal policing and is also composed of voluntary elements who report directly to neighbourhood assemblies. External and internal security organs are not only staffed by the people themselves, but also report to their democratic bodies unmediated by a representative state, which serves to 'unmake' the state (Üstündağ 2016) that, according to Bookchin, detaches these security institutions from their social functions and from society.

Although militarisation may not usually be considered an emancipatory act, this unmaking breaks the monopoly of a de-socialised state over means of legitimate violence, creating the conditions of a re-socialised and democratised defences. This ensures that security forces are not placed over and above the members of the society as bearers of authority; rather, the compassionate and close relations between YPJ and YPG troops and the larger population demonstrates the socialised nature of security (Üstündağ 2016).

Socialisation of defence, however, has not been a smooth process. Amnesty International (AI) strongly criticised the YPJ and YPG for razing the houses of people they suspected of having helped IS and forcibly displacing them (AI 2015a), and the Asayîş for arbitrary detentions (AI 2015b). The RAA countered that IS was operating in its territory, and although it acknowledged wrongdoing by Kurdish forces, these were isolated and had to be placed in the context of war against IS (AI 2015a).

The YPJ, as an all-female army, has also served to emancipate women in an otherwise extremely conservative society where patriarchy is still a strong undercurrent in social life, despite the huge steps the KLM has taken in Turkey and Syria. As paradoxical as this may sound, and despite contrasting experiences in the US military and elsewhere (D'Amico 1996), crucial differences exist between the YPJ and the other instances of women taking part in war-making. First, the most obvious reason is that by joining the YPJ (or PKK in Turkey), women free themselves from patriarchal bonds and get control over their own lives. The alternative for most would be to get married at a relatively early age and suffer patriarchal domination for the rest of their lives.

Since the 1990s, when the KLM in Turkey saw the emergence of a strong Kurdish Women's Movement that challenged and even transformed the KLM from within, Kurdish women increasingly came to play important roles in public life, especially through the legal and illegal organisations in the KLM, such as the pro-Kurdish, left-wing People's Democratic Party (HDP) in Turkey, the PKK, and the Group of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK), as well as affiliated non-governmental organisations in Turkey.

Now this can be seen in Syria, as well, through ideological and political education. Second, unlike the cases of the Israeli, US, Canadian or French militaries, where women serve alongside men, in the case of the YPJ they are organised as a separate force with female commanders. Where patriarchy is still a strong force in society, even the presence of men in the same organisation with women may hinder the uncovering of the full potential of women. Third, and in a more direct policing capacity, the YPJ fights directly for women's rights; in the words of commander Nesrîn Abdalla:

> Until now, armies were created exclusively by men with patriarchal thinking, so they had only two tasks: to defend and win power. But we are an army of women… We do this not just to protect ourselves, but also to change the way of thinking in the army, not only to gain power, but to change society, to develop it… we had to organize ourselves properly in order to deal with the feudal thinking (Sputnik 2016).

Along with the state, the market is seen as a major source of hierarchical social domination (Cemgil 2016). Concurrent with the transfer of state functions to democratic self-administration bodies, socially reproductive functions are also transferred to society to ensure democratic control over the economy. This 'social economy', in turn, is further democratised through decentralisation and cooperative production, avoiding Soviet-style centralisation and state planning. As with the emergence of the overall political project, geopolitical conditions determine the nature of socioeconomic transformation.

Although the KRG-imposed embargo, political and economic isolation are major constraints for the political economy of Rojava, which lead

to shortages of goods – especially of medicines – and increase prices, they can also be seen as an opportunity, facilitating the transfer towards local, sustainable production. The decentralised assembly structures are geared to react to the conditions of the embargo and relative isolation, maintaining food security, public services and other basic needs using local, municipal governance structures, generating what can be called 'economic communalism' through cooperatives. The assemblies' economy commissions deal with all issues relating to production, and exist alongside commissions for women, politics, defence, occupation, education at all levels of the democratic self-administration (Biehl 2015; Ayboğa 2014b). Nonetheless, the necessities of a war economy have compromised the development of this social economy.

Although 'development' has partially been adopted as a discourse, overarching 'goals' such as subsistence, autonomy, locality and sustainability remain core pillars of Rojava's social economy, with cooperatives at the centre of this localised, 'subsistence-plus-x' production, (Biehl 2015). Not entirely anti-market, price caps are nevertheless imposed as an important tool to avoid food speculation and maintain subsistence (Yeğin 2015). The declared aim of this democratic economy is to keep surpluses within local communities, maintaining the long-term ecological sustainability of production and democratised access to resources over short-term exhaustion of resources for investor profit.

For the time being, the socialisation of land has been circumvented to avoid any form of hierarchical enforcement as a practice. Despite this, there is a general ideological tendency towards the socialisation of land, not least due to historically low Kurdish land ownership in the region. Land, water and energy are seen as public goods, which assembly-led municipalities manage and control (Flach *et al.* 2015: 258). Historical circumstances have prevented a strong social contradiction, because the expropriation and transformation of Syrian state land, which accounts for around 80 per cent of arable land in Rojava, allows for plenty of scope for transformation towards cooperative structures after the regime's departure made this land available. This not only follows ideology, but also the need for crop transformation and diversification away from the large, quasi-colonial, Ba'athist monoculture and monocrop production.

Parallel structures continue to coexist, nonetheless, with private companies, cooperatives and assemblies all cooperating in the production process. Just as the national state and local autonomy are meant to co-exist peacefully, so too are capitalist and cooperative production: 'Private capital/property is not forbidden but it is put to work for the communes/cooperatives' (Yılmaz 2014), complementing one another. Private landowners and refinery owners charge commercial rates and the assemblies have no ambition to expropriate those holdings, trying to integrate them into the current war economy instead. A question remains over potential post-war collectivisation, however. Hence, the model is not 'anti-private property', but puts private property to communal use, bringing together democratic

self rule in democratic assemblies with company owners and members of the relevant commissions (Biehl 2015).

Many large landowners were co-opted into the social and war economy, rather than confronted. Conversely, their production is not export- and world market-oriented but meets local demand in line with the requirements of the assemblies. This, then, also constitutes a major difference compared to the Turkish-Kurdish regions, where Kurdish feudal lords were co-opted into a regime of 'pacification through export-oriented industrial agriculture' in southeastern Turkey, which was not ecological, and did not provide secure employment or, from a 2016 perspective, peace. In Rojava, 30 per cent of agricultural profits from cooperatives go to the assemblies for the maintenance of public goods, while 70 per cent remain with the producing cooperatives, frequently made up of the families of fallen fighters (Flach *et al.* 2015: 258). Individual families can only get access to land in exceptional cases, avoiding the formation of landed vested interests.

While advantageous in terms of social transformation, specific challenges emerged from being a peripheral, primary commodity producer, with little to no processing capacities, located in non-Kurdish majority areas not under the control of Rojava, further west in the country. Wheat could not be turned into flour, crude into diesel and so on. Some of these issues have been addressed; for example, by building mills (Flach *et al.* 2015). Currently, however, around 70 per cent of production goes into the war effort, making long-term planning and the transition to a peaceful society difficult. Neither crops nor ownership transformation are complete, despite the transformation having begun with the emergence of Rojava in 2012; for example, by supplying seeds to newly formed cooperatives. In this sense, the model gets closest to what Bookchin hoped any future ecological society would have: a use-based or quasi-usufructory property regime.

Ideologically, as well as practically, the imperative for all production is Rojava's food security, or better yet, food sovereignty. This requires, first and foremost, rapid diversification and, at a later stage, crop rotation mechanisms as part of ecological agriculture. Under the Ba'athist regime production was purposively kept low value and dependent on industrial means, leaving most surplus value-adding processing to areas with stronger loyalties to the regime in the south and west.

Agricultural production is regionally specific throughout the cantons, which presents challenges to complete self-sufficiency. Whereas Cizîrê was historically forced to specialise in food staples, Kobanê und Afrîn cultivated mostly olives and fruit. The latter two have indeed achieved high levels of self-sufficiency, but in the fertile Cizîrê region, artificially developed as a Syrian bread basket, parts of the former state lands have been turned over to vegetable production for the local market. Food production beyond subsistence levels, such as animal husbandry, is still underdeveloped and dependence on imports persists, which allows importers to monopolise the market (Sulaiman 2015).

Other non-agricultural elements include craft (important for reconstruction), commerce and manufacturing, organised in associations similar to guilds. This, typically, includes soap and olive oil production, construction, textiles, shoes, marble quarrying, and hospitality. Manufacturing remains decentralised, maintaining rural and semi-urban livelihoods, as well as their non-industrial character. Unlike localised subsistence agriculture, these sectors are most likely to develop an interest in ending their isolation, because imports and exports are high risk and require payment of large bribes to enemy forces.

Although much of Bookchin's work is dedicated to questions of urbanity and ecology, property development has not taken on a central role in Rojava's economy so far, though rebuilding, especially in Kobanê, has been considerable. The sector has started to evolve in response to the demand for living space in the relatively peaceful Kurdish areas, and increasing migration by non-Kurdish urban middle classes, especially from Aleppo into Afrîn (Yilmaz 2014). The resulting price hikes were offset by a construction boom, partially a consequence of lifting regime constraints on building height. An increase of two storeys can now be done at relatively low cost and cooperatively. However, a lack of available finance restricts construction.

Given that all borders of Rojava are in effect sealed, the *de facto* embargo also encompasses access to financial markets and institutions. This also means, however, that foreign direct investment cannot disrupt local organic and social ecological development. Aid and donations from outside, partly from international solidarity networks,[6] but also from wealthy Kurdish landowners in Turkey, still reach Rojava. Low-level finance is nevertheless needed and village banks have developed, but finance capital and interest charges are strictly banned, leaving Rojava as a primitive cash economy.

Despite the focus on local subsistence-level production, energy resources remain a central, if potentially controversial resource in Rojava. Originally, the Syrian Kurdish areas around Cizîrê accounted for 50–60 per cent of petroleum production; however, as with wheat production, refineries in other parts of the country carried out processing. Like water, Rojava considers all oil to be a public good. Cooperatives have been founded for local diesel production, which is important for heating, transport, electricity production, and not least military purposes.

It suffers, however, from the primitive methods used to refine the crude, which in turn reduces the life spans of engines and generators. The demand for spare parts is difficult to meet in an isolated economy. Although the Syrian Kurds have taken the greater portion of oil wells from IS in eastern Rojava, the inability to refine oil in large quantities, let alone to market it internationally, has led to environmental problems with oil spills (*Russia Today* 2016). In the meantime, discussions on the future of oil exploitation continue inside and outside of Rojava's self-governing structures. The discussion around potential oil exports and revenue distribution, remains abstract as long as the realities of the

embargo persist. Developing a hydro-carbon economy would also be in direct contradiction with Bookchin's social ecological thinking.

The discussion on how to implement the 'social economy' and its 'social ecological' foundations is in full swing. It has partly been realised in the form of cooperatives built on old state land, diversified production in Rojava, socialised oil profits and, in turn, increasing levels of autonomy in line with the ideological foundations outlined above and in reaction to the geopolitical realities of the KRG-imposed embargo. Much of the social economy remains characterised by the necessities of the war effort though. For example, military commanders, rather than assemblies, take some decisions to meet short-term needs of units engaged in fighting. Not only does this consume ecological resources, but the situation also allows 'old' structures to survive and may jeopardise the project of social transformation.

5 Conclusion and outlook for Rojava

The constraints Rojava must contend with range from the embargo and open Turkish aggression to the internal contradictions of potential hydrocarbon development. The geopolitical conditions of Rojava's emergence are the defining contradiction this conclusion focuses on. The territory's role in the anti-IS coalition and, subsequently, the fallout from the confrontation between Russia and Turkey worked in the northern Syrian Kurds' favour. However, this success itself, Rojava's more prominent geopolitical role, and the continuation of a strong militarist element in its social experiment, which arose out of necessity and ambition, could constitute a severe limitation to the territory's success.

First, internally, even if a peace and accommodation of Syrian Kurdish autonomy were reached, demobilising and transforming a society that has gained not only its freedom from domination through military means, but which has also transformed itself under the catalytic conditions of hierarchical militarism itself, will be major tasks. A central contradiction in the project is that the main target of this attempted social transformation, hierarchy, is also deeply wedded to the condition of its emergence through a necessary militarisation under conditions of armed struggle. This is a general problem, but also one that affects other core aims of the project, namely women's emancipation and social ecology, which are wedded to the militarised processes of state formation.

Whereas women's emancipation hinges on their participation in the armed struggle as a viable alternative to the continuation of patriarchy, the relationship between radical democracy and ecology, well developed in Bookchin's theory, may be compromised by some of the more conventional dynamics of state formation and development. In particular, the promise of oil wealth beyond local consumption, generating cash flows through exports, remains a potential breaking point, socially as well as ecologically. Reports of current oil spills to maintain infrastructure are worrying signs in this regard. Even less radical steps, such as organic farming, in the form of crop rotation and

sustainable seed policies, are compromised, in this case by the practice of domestic (petro)chemical fertiliser production in the name of self-sufficiency, or food sovereignty at times of war.

If Rojava's assemblies are serious and wish to avoid not only the environmentally but also socially destructive effects of hydrocarbon exploitation, use and rent-extraction, they will have to leave considerable wealth in the ground to avoid the very hierarchies they aim to destroy. During the current armed conflict, however, a hydrocarbon-based war economy and mass food production are imperative. Those necessities of a society fighting an existential threat coincide, if not clash, with the delicate task of generating a new social project. In sum, the main condition that would allow Rojava to emerge (i.e. the geopolitical conjuncture), is also potentially its most severe limitation, not so much externally or territorially, but in terms of the process of its own social genesis.

Despite these potential breaking points, it is notable that this transformation is happening in a region where there is little hope. Conventional diplomacy or even military interventionism appear to be incapable of overcoming a structural crisis in the Middle East and its inter-state, post-First World War order. The conflict lines have become more than complex, leaving observers puzzled and policymakers contending with impossible choices. The socio-political experiment of the Syrian Kurds and its practical implications have mapped out the potential for transformation, if only in abstract terms. The social reality of being elevated from landless agricultural workers to a military force that the US and Russia support at the same time is nevertheless specific and historically conditioned. In other words, the fertile ground for Bookchin and Öcalan's ideas, namely the absence of vested interests and historically grown power structures in the Kurdish regions, is the result of years of deliberate under-development by various Ba'athist regimes.

These social conditions cannot be expected to exist in the same form elsewhere. Partly for this reason, we are sceptical about the 'model' character of the Rojava revolution and the potential for direct emulation elsewhere, although some of the progressive thinking on democratic self-governance, ethnic inclusiveness, feminism and social ecology could provide positive contributions to the discussions about the future of Syria and the Middle East at large. Given the continued tendencies towards ethnic homogenisation and hierarchical authoritarianism elsewhere in Syria and the wider region, the survival of Rojava nevertheless provides therefore a glimmer of hope for victims of the political breakdown of the modern Middle East.

Notes

1   In particular, see Bookchin (1982, 1986, 1987).
2   The PKK is one of many regional Kurdish parties committed to the radical democratic objective of establishing democratic confederalism in Kurdistan. It is organised under the Group of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK), an umbrella organisation that

brings together the PKK in Turkey, PYD in Syria, Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) in Iran, and Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (PCDK) in Iraq, as well as numerous civil-society organisations.

3   It must be noted that when Tall Abyad (Girê Spî in Kurdish) was liberated from IS and became an administrative unit of Kobanê, Cizîrê and Kobanê cantons became territorially contiguous, though Afrîn remains isolated to the west of Kobanê, with IS- and Jabhat al-Nusrah-controlled territories lying between. The SDF has been conducting operations from Afrîn in a push to remove Al-Nusrah elements in-between.

4   For a full English translation of the Constitution of the RAA see Çiviroğlu (2014).

5   A comprehensive description of the Rojavan justice system can be found in Ercan Ayboğa (2014a).

6   Given the highly effective embargo regime, conventional donor communities do not provide aid. Private anarchist, left-wing, but also liberal-humanitarian organisations provide financial and sometimes also direct physical help with the reconstruction effort. For example, see Plan C www.weareplanc.org/blog/rojava-solidarity-cluster-opening-statement/.

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A Panoramic Perspective on Islamist Movements in the Middle East

Ali Bakr

Abstract This article discusses and analyses the landscape of Islamist movements in Egypt using a network approach, and showing where connections lie between different movements across North Africa. The article unpacks the centripetal forces that bring Islamist movements together in 'uber-ideology coalitions' and the moments where centrifugal forces serve to divide and splinter movements. The article challenges the mainstream narrative on Islamist movements and violence in two critical ways. First, contrary to analysts' forecasts of a 'post-Islamist age', one of the ripple effects of the Arab Spring was the revival and proliferation of Islamist movements on a grand scale. Second, the article challenges the discourse that attributes the rise in radical militancy almost exclusively to the obfuscation of democratic politics through the emergence of counter-revolutionary forces. Rather, it argues that the Arab revolts created the political and security environment that allowed radical Islamist movements to flex their muscles.

1 Introduction

The state of Islamism (political Islam) in Egypt is of particular importance for the region and global politics. It is the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood, the oldest and most significant Islamist movement to call for the establishment of an Islamic state governed according to the Shariah, and from which sister movements were established across the world. It is also home to some of the most well-established jihadi movements, which have strong links with other movements across the world. Finally, its geostrategic position means that it has served as a central node in relation to other Islamist movements in Palestine, Libya and North Africa and Syria.

Many analysts and observers believed that the Arab uprisings marked the beginning of the end of religious-inspired violence, or jihad, in the Middle East and particularly the Arab world, believing this strain of violent thought to be on its way to obsolescence (Bakr 2012a). It appeared to them that the peaceful Arab revolutions in Egypt,

Tunisia, Libya and Yemen had proved the failure of jihadi thought, having achieved in such a short time what jihadi groups had failed to accomplish over three decades: namely, the overthrow of Arab regimes. But shortly after the uprisings had toppled the regimes in those countries, setting loose a new wave of jihad perhaps even fiercer than in the past, this analysis proved questionable.

Conditions in the region have fostered the rise of jihadi groups and, in turn, religious violence. Unlike the wave of jihad in the 1990s, all indications are that the current upsurge is a long-term development with substantial staying power. The article argues that the positioning of the Islamist movements in Egypt after the January 25 revolution of 2011 not only affected the situation domestically, but also had spillover effects in Libya and Gaza, and the region more broadly.

The article is organised as follows: the first part presents a typology of Islamist movements after the January 25 revolution, with a particular focus on three key players: (1) the Muslim Brotherhood; (2) Salafi groups; and (3) the jihadi and *takfiri*[1] movements. The second parts examines how, following the ruptures that led to the ousting of regimes in countries such as Egypt, the movements responded with flexibility to collective action. On the one hand, possibilities existed for post-ideological alliances; and, on the other, at times divisions and splinter movements became quite pronounced. The third part examines in more depth the various movements' relationship to violence, examining in particular a number of dynamics: the centripetal forces that led Salafi movements to join jihadi movements, the factionalism that affected jihadi movements and the ideological regression among some movements that led them to abandon violence as a means of achieving political ends. The final section (3.7) examines the fluidity and dynamism of jihadi networks across borders.

2 Typology of Islamist movements after the January 25 revolution

The typology presents the categories and self-identities used within Islamist movements, with the qualifier that in many cases ideological essence and political thought overlap, even if they follow distinct organisational orders. One cannot understand religious violence after the January 25 revolution in Egypt without also understanding the changes the revolution wrought on Islamist movements. The uprising pushed many Islamist groups into the political process; as they sought to reach the seat of governance, these movements often deviated from their hitherto peaceful courses of action and took up violence to reach this goal.

Since the January 25 revolution, the alignment of Islamist movements in Egypt has shifted more quickly than ever before in their history. For decades, this map was static and well defined. Even allowing for the ideological revisionism of groups such as the Jama'a al-Islamiya and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), discussed below, changes were minimal and gradual, allowing close study and a full understanding. In contrast, the most recent shifts are so rapid that it is more difficult to track them and identify their strategic and programmatic implications.

2.1 The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is by far the largest and oldest political Islamist organisation in Egypt, and played a leading political role after the January 25 revolution. The Brotherhood is also the best able to maintain its organisational cohesion in the face of challenges, largely because members have been ideologically inoculated to contain the impact of dissension. The term 'ideological inoculation' refers to the group's inculcation of a particular intellectual and jurisprudential doctrine that, for members, makes the Brotherhood synonymous with Islam and vice-versa. Any deviation from the group constitutes a deviation from Islam.

This process of indoctrination insulates the Muslim Brotherhood against the impact of splits and schisms. The group has therefore produced an extensive literature that entrenches the duty of working within the confines of its community and preserves it from discord or division. To do this, the Brotherhood applies to itself scriptural texts that enjoin the unity of Muslims and discourage divisions in the community, and furthermore upholds the principle of obedience to its leadership. A juridical and intellectual framework that enjoins and protects the larger brotherhood of Muslims thus protects the movement also, and its literature valorises enduring membership and discourages rebelling against the group or leaving it.

The Muslim Brotherhood's programme, teachings and literature are thus filled with scriptural citations that confirm the importance of allegiance to the general guide and proscribe going against the group. The following prophetic hadiths are illustrative: 'He who dies without having sworn an oath of allegiance dies a pre-Islamic death'; 'God's hand is with the community of believers'; 'Hear and obey, though you be in the charge of an Ethiopian slave'; 'He who obeys my commander has obeyed me.' These and other texts have been employed in indoctrination to build the Brotherhood and ensure its continuity without dissension. Followers are made to believe that dissent against the movement is dissent against Islam itself, because the movement represents the faith. In practice, it makes it very difficult for followers to separate themselves from the movement.

Several features distinguish the Muslim Brotherhood from other Islamist movements: its strong organisation, its members' facility with politics and party work, and its experience with legislative elections, by which it has developed the ability to make partisan alliances and become adept at the electoral process. The Brotherhood is also able to mobilise the Egyptian street, a result of long years of outreach. Moreover, Brotherhood members have integrated themselves into most of the country's institutions and sectors.

In the post-January 25 revolution stage, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to bring all Islamist organisations under its wing, bringing all the groups that had grown out of the Brotherhood back into the fold to integrate

them into the organisation's broad, popular base. Brotherhood members were ordered to let their beards grow long, making it difficult for the average person to distinguish a Brother from a Salafi and creating an external similarity among all Islamist groups. The Brotherhood also took part in rallies in Assyout, Cairo and Minya, welcoming the return of the Jama'a al-Islamiya.[2]

The Muslim Brotherhood's mode of action after the revolution included maintaining the secrecy of the movement, despite the fall of Mubarak's dictatorship, refusing to compromise to resolve internal generational conflict, and refusing to discuss fully integrating women by giving them the right to compete or vote for internal positions in the movement, although the notion of providing security and protection for the movement's women had become obsolete. In its political practice, the Brotherhood chose the worst model, preserving a hierarchal structure, while establishing a political party as its political arm but without allowing it independence. The Brotherhood rejected party founders who were not Brotherhood members whom its leaders across the country had vetted, and it only offered membership to those people selected it had selected. This meant that the party was not a genuinely popular party, but rather the Brotherhood party.

Finally, the Muslim Brotherhood allied itself to Salafi movements and used them to reclaim legitimacy and build a new, massive popular base. It also used the Salafis to gin up fears about a rejection of constitutional amendments, in particular Article 2.[3] In return, the Brotherhood turned a blind eye to the Salafis' actions, even adopting some of their slogans and declaring that voting for the amendments was a religious duty. Members hung up banners to this effect in Alexandria and preached it in their mosques before later trying to disown these actions and confirming their differences with the Salafis, perhaps in response to the shocked outrage of the political and cultural elite. Hence, relations with the Salafis went through various stages of centrifugal and centripetal engagements.

Immediately after the January 25 revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood sought alliances with the Salafis, seizing the political opportunities of strengthening its core constituency and the legitimacy of the Islamist movements' political platform. However, the Salafi branch that sought to engage in politics and formed al-Nour party resisted attempts to bring it into the fold, concerned that the Brotherhood would try to dominate all the other Islamist factions. Moreover, the Salafis became a political liability as elites exposed their 'uncivil' forms of engagement, and the Brotherhood sought to distance itself from them.

As is shown below, the phase under the presidency of Mohammed Morsi (July 2012–June 2013) saw various moments of collaboration (to counter the non-Islamists), as well as times of confrontation (when the Salafis felt they were insufficiently represented in power-sharing arrangements). Periods of collaboration and confrontation foreshadowed the period after Morsi's ousting.

2.2 The Salafi movement (the Salafi umbrella)

The religious movements brought together under the Salafi rubric have many intellectual and juridical disagreements, but they are united by the general pillars of Salafi thought such as holding fast to the Holy Quran and the Sunna (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammed), purifying Islam of all untrue doctrine or practices, striving for the application of the Shariah, the creation of an Islamic state, and the reinstitution of the caliphate in the Islamic world. The Egyptian Salafi movement, or what could be called the Salafi umbrella, has undergone the most radical shifts of any Islamist movement since the January 25 revolution.

Prior to January 25, the Salafis were also united by their non-participation in politics and party work. Indeed, some Salafi groups believed that all political work was prohibited, and even if they had wished to undertake it, they could not have done because of the restrictions the regime of president Hosni Mubarak (1981–2011) had imposed on them. In short, there was virtually no political participation by Salafi movements prior to the revolution.

Salafi movements as a whole did not initially support the January 25 revolution and therefore did not take part in the protests and demonstrations in the early days. This was due to the nature of Salafi ideology and thought, which prohibits rebelling against a Muslim ruler in any way, even through protests. When the protests escalated, however, individual Salafis began to take part in demonstrations. But Salafis who participated in the revolution did so as individuals, not as part of a collective. Most Salafi sheikhs opposed the revolution and participation in it, and many even issued fatwas to their members. Gradually, however, and as the Egyptian army maintained its neutrality, then protected the demonstrators and refused to fire on them, some Salafi leaders went to the square to take part in the sit-in. They were still a minority, but individuals' participation increased day by day.

The winds of change the revolution ushered in also touched Salafi movements, sparking off an intellectual revolution. Salafis soon rushed headlong into politics. Even those movements that prohibited political action and participation did not prohibit others from taking part or condemn them for it, and soon they too joined the political fray. Salafis engaged with politics from all directions, joining and creating parties, but their political presence was the clearest when they mobilised the street to vote for proposed constitutional amendments.[4]

Salafi movements engaged in fierce competition against other political forces who opposed the amendments, mobilising all their forces: individuals, leaders, sheikhs, and preachers of all stripes. It was the first time in the history of the movement that it had been so involved in politics, and soon after the referendum, some Salafi movements began to announce their future plans. The EIJ announced that it had formed the Safety and Development Party (Al Rafat wal Tanmeya). The Jama'a al-Islamiya declared it too would be creating its own party, and the traditional Salafi movement founded al-Nour; other Salafi parties followed.

What is remarkable in the Salafi turn to politics is the speed of the intellectual transformation involved. Such shifts usually take some time, but the Salafi movement transformed its position on political participation in a few months. In so doing, it began addressing issues it would never have broached in the past, given their incompatibility with Salafi thought and doctrine, such as citizenship, Coptic rights, the rule of law, the civil state, and the regeneration of religious discourse. However, Salafis' doctrinal stances remained by and large far more conservative than those of, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood.

Since the 2013 revolution, Salafism has become an umbrella movement that comprises innumerable Islamist groups that follow the Salafi programme and doctrine, abjure violence, and do not participate in politics, such as Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya, the Shar'iya Association, and the post-revisionism of the Jama'a al-Islamiya and the EIJ, as well as traditional Salafis. Indeed, in the period from 2006 to 2010 the Salafi camp came to encompass nearly all religious movements in Egypt, with the exception of the Muslim Brotherhood, some small *takfiri* groups, and the Sufi orders.

Drawing a typology of Salafi movements after the January 25 revolution is a complex endeavour due to the numerous, but overlapping schools of thought. But, in general, there are two types of Salafi movements in Egypt.

Traditional Salafis
Also known as scholarly Salafis, these include Salafi schools and sheikhs in Alexandria, Cairo and Mansoura, as well as independent preachers such as Mohammed Hassan, Mohammed Hussein Yaqoub, and Mahmoud al-Masri. Traditional Salafis fall into three types:

(a) **The Salafi Call.** Growing out of student activism in the 1970s, the movement took on an organised form in 1980 when young Salafis formed a quasi-federation for preachers; they later called themselves the Salafi School. After several years of grass-roots work, they renamed the organisation the Salafi Call, after it spread all over the country and won hundreds of thousands of followers. They were also known as the Alexandria Salafis or Academic Salafis.

(b) **Movement Salafis (Ultra-Salafis).** While the Salafi Call was establishing itself in Alexandria, in Cairo's Shubra neighbourhood a group of young Salafis formed another movement, calling themselves Movement Salafis. They have virtually the same programme as the Salafi Call (the Alexandria School), but go further by declaring individual rulers unbelievers if they do not rule by God's revealed law, and they preach this in their sermons. They believe that participating in elected bodies is prohibited because these are governed by something other than God's law and put a man-made constitution above God's law, which is unbelief. These are ideas they held prior to the January 25 revolution.

(c) Independent Salafis. An extension of the old Salafi trend in Egypt, represented by numerous groups and associations since the early twentieth century, such as the al-Hidaya Association, led by Sheikh Mohammed al-Khidr Hussein, which called for observance of the Sunna and countering harmful innovations. Its members are concerned with adopting external markers of their adherence, seen in clothing, beards, hair, and the headscarf. The movement does not believe in collective, organised action. Individual leaders became immersed in politics after the January 25 revolution, but not under an institutional umbrella.

Salafi-oriented movements

These comprise numerous Islamist groups that are Salafi in doctrine and belief, but not in their organisation and operations; they have their own ways of working, and independent outreach and preaching styles. They include:

(a) Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya. Which has one of the largest networks of charity organisations and advocates Islam as a comprehensive system that governs all aspects of life.

(b) The Shar'iya Association. Founded in 1912 by Sheikh Mahmoud Khattab al-Subki as the Shar'iya Association for the Cooperation of Those Working with the Quran and Muhammad's Sunna, the primary objective of the association at the time of its establishment was preaching and guidance, calling for compliance with the Sunna and countering innovations, and supporting cooperation and social solidarity among the people. The association has 350 branches throughout Egypt.

(c) Jama'a al-Islamiya and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. The Jama'a al-Islamiya emerged in the 1970s in the permissive climate that president Anwar Sadat (1970–81) fostered. At the time, it comprised members of what would later become the EIJ, which split from the Jama'a after 1981. The Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ engaged in a comprehensive revision of their ideological foundations from 1997–2005 onwards, an experience unique to Egypt and these Islamist groups. With the adoption of this revisionist thought, the Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ left the jihadi movement and joined the Salafi camp, being naturally inclined to the Salafi programme and doctrine; once they had given up the armed struggle, they became like other Salafi movements in Egypt. After the revolution, these groups experienced an ideological relapse, as they took a clear turn towards violence, in theory and practice, particularly after allying with the Muslim Brotherhood following its removal from office.

To conclude, Salafi movements of all kinds underwent an atypically rapid ideological shift, entering politics from all directions, despite having declared the political process illicit in the past. They did this without advancing any proof of the permissibility of political action

as they had once offered hundreds of proofs for its prohibition. This raises questions and doubts about the transformation, leading observers to believe that Salafi movements see the post-revolution phase as more akin to a war – and war is deception, as the hadith has it (Nasera 2011).

If Salafis do not fight this war, they will have wasted a valuable opportunity to see the implementation of Islamic law, establish an Islamic state, and move closer to achieving the cherished dream of a greater Islamic state under the caliphate. Salafi movements may have joined the political process out of what they viewed as legitimately exigent circumstances. This is also what led Salafi movements later to turn to violence; they viewed the use of violence as a legitimate necessity, in much the same way that they viewed engagement with politics.

Jihadi and *takfiri* organisations

A number of jihadi groups emerged in force amid the security vacuum that followed the January 25 revolution. Founded in the Sinai Peninsula, these organisations grew and expanded during Morsi's tenure. The president turned a blind eye to them, which led to an explosion of jihadi activity in Sinai (Bakr 2012a). The groups are united by their goal of overthrowing the Egyptian regime and attacking Israel with force of arms. Although there are not many of them, the groups are influential and can deal painful blows to the Egyptian regime and Israel.

The *takfiri* groups' thought leads them to declare society as a whole an infidel society. They therefore consider the ruler to be an infidel along with others who deny certain religious teachings. They even go so far as to declare anyone who does not hold the ruler to be an infidel to be an unbeliever. From there, they consider the general population to be unbelievers, seeing them as content with unbelief or refusing to condemn it. *Takfiri* thought in Egypt is not widespread. Indeed, it is always in sharp conflict with society, which utterly rejects its weak premises and logic, its extremism, and its deviation from Egyptians' generally peaceful disposition.

Nevertheless, *takfiri* groups are dangerous insofar as they resort to violence and sanction bloodshed and attacks on property, particularly against what they view as infidel state institutions, Copts, and police and security personnel. In general, *takfiri* groups believe that their noble ends justify the means, but they cannot easily find purchase in Egyptian society, due to the absence of strong organisational links between their members and the lack of a hospitable location in most of the country.

Jihadi groups pursue violence against the 'secular' apparatuses controlling the state, to defeat them. These include groups such as Ansar Beit al-Maqdes, Ansar el Jihad and Jeish al-Islam. Their aspiration was to establish a separate emirate in Sinai by first eliminating the army and police presence, then taking over the judiciary and the main institutions of the state as a pathway to taking over the country. A faction of these groups initially opposed this plan, but after Morsi's overthrow they

considered violence against the regime as a natural outcome. These groups espouse a *takfiri* ideology and believe in armed violence as a means of establishing an Islamic state. They also claim that anyone who does do not follow their ideology is an infidel.

The relationship between jihadi groups and these apparatuses is one of mutual war, with each side attempting to defeat and eliminate the other to implement its political and intellectual project. Regardless of jihadi groups' differing programmes and political and ideological references, other factions, movements, or groups will always declare them non-believers or not Islamic enough, opposing them either with violence or fatwas declaring them infidels.

The most significant jihadi and *takfiri* groups in Egypt now, particularly in Sinai, are:

(a) **Al-Tawheed wal Jihad.** An extremist, violent jihadi group, it is closer to the *takfiri* school than the Salafi thought most jihadi movements embrace (Bakr 2012b). This organisation was responsible for bombings in Taba and Sharm al-Sheikh in 2004 and 2006. Almost all its members are natives of Sinai, and they rely on weapons left over from wars and other campaigns in Sinai. The group has maintained strong links with several Palestinian factions such as Jeish al-Islam (originally known as Jeish al-Fatteh) led by Mumtaz Daghmash. They received military training in Gaza, and many used tunnels to reach the Gaza Strip, where they trained in weapons and explosives. A few Palestinians joined the group and trained members to use the explosives deployed in the Sinai bombings. The organisation has curbed its activities substantially following an Egyptian security crackdown after the bombings.

(b) **Ansar Beit al-Maqdes.** A jihadi, Salafi organisation, it seeks first and foremost to threaten the Israel and its Zionist supporters worldwide by various means, including bombing gas pipelines between Egypt and Israel and firing rockets into Israel from Sinai. The organisation comprises Egyptians and Palestinians, most of whom are adherents to al-Qaeda's line of thought. The group has distinguished itself through its ability to undertake successful bombings of the pipeline; for example, on 9 December 2014. It has been reported that some Palestinian organisations maintain ties with the group and supply it with money and weapons, as well as expertise, advice and military training (Amer 2014). It is a relatively new organisation compared to Tawhid and Jihad. Other nationalities besides Egyptians and Palestinians are joining the organisation, raising numerous questions about the group and its emergence at this critical juncture.

(c) **Ansar al-Jihad.** Ansar al-Jihad in Sinai is an al-Qaeda franchise. First appearing in the media after al-Qaeda announced Ayman al-Zawahiri's leadership on 16 June 2011, it emerged out of the Egyptian revolution and the attendant security vacuum and loss

of control over Sinai. The organisation is largely composed of Egyptians from Sinai and other provinces, but it has been reported that former members of the EIJ joined after escaping from prison during January 25. Ansar al-Jihad in Sinai seeks to establish an Islamic emirate in Sinai, with Islam the sole basis of legislation. To achieve this goal, it is attempting to expel the army and police from Sinai and take over all security offices. It also sought to pressure the Egyptian government into cancelling the Camp David Accords and intervene to end the siege in Gaza.

Ansar al-Jihad has carried out successive bombings of the gas pipeline to Israel. The group in July 2011 attempted to set fire to the second-largest police station in Arish, when some 200 masked attackers gained control of the station using advanced weapons (rocket-propelled grenades, grenades and automatic weapons). Army and police forces countered the attack – the first of its kind in Egypt – and the clashes left five people dead, including one police officer and one military officer, and 19 seriously injured. That month the group also attacked the Egyptian Border Guard, and in August carried out a bomb attack in Eilat in southern Israel, which killed eight Israeli soldiers.

3 Religious movements' turn to violence in the transitional phase: causes

Several changes after the January 25 revolution clearly had an impact on Islamist movements' relations with one another. These fostered a rapprochement between movements that in the past had strong disagreements, which was achieved by forging new alliances that went beyond doctrine and programmes of action to become post-ideological alliances. These shifts also gave rise to a new strand in the Islamist movement – a third way – as some jihadi movements embraced revisionist thought and renounced violence, but without offering a clear picture of the new path and programme they would pursue, which would enable observers to understand how they would engage with relevant or new issues. After the revisionist process, these movements did not join other existing groups (Salafi movements or the Muslim Brotherhood), remaining separate but without a distinct ideology to identify them.

The most dangerous shift has been the intellectual apostasy seen in some movements that had embraced revisionist thought and abandoned violence and terrorism. Under the rise of the Islamists, these movements reverted to their earlier ways, using violence, even if somewhat covertly, in inflammatory speeches, though some members engaged in open violence.

Transformations in the region have also brought some movements to prominence at the expense of others. Large swathes of Salafis in some areas of the region have turned to jihadi thought. This shift outpaced the migrations from the jihadi camp to the Salafi camp, which had taken a substantial period of time, indicating perhaps that the turn to violence is easier in the region than the turn away from it. The jihadi umbrella also benefitted from the rise to prominence of al-Qaeda in the region after the Arab revolts, in particular al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

and Ansar al-Din, and in East Africa al-Tawheed wal Jihad. Other Salafi movements in the region joined them, especially from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. The dominant voice began to shift from Salafi circles to more jihadi ones, as was the case in Tunisia. In Egypt this was also apparent in the Salafi discourse around the time of the 2011–12 elections, when former vice-president and head of the intelligence service Omar Suleiman[5] stood for president and members of the Jama'al-Islamiya threatened him with violence if he ran for office.

A significant consequence of these shifts is the sharp divisions they have created in the ranks of jihadi organisations across the region. Jihadi groups have witnessed so many splits in their ranks that divisions have become an endemic feature. One jihadi group may split into two independent groups because of disagreements and soon enough each new group is plagued by its own divisions, leading to a proliferation of organisations. The fragmentation within the ranks of the jihadi movements is due to several factors, the most important of which is the power of influential leaders who gain popularity among the people to convince them to split from the mother movement.

The reasons for this are differences in thought and ideology. For example, if within the movement a group emerges that considers there to be a deviance in thinking that needs addressing and the leadership refuses on the basis that it is unchangeable, a splinter emerges. This explains the emergence of groups such as Ansar al-Jihad, Majles Shura al-Mujahedeen, Ansar Beit al-Maqdes, Jeish al-Islam and al-Tawheed wal Jihad. It creates an air of competitiveness among the different splinter groups rather than complementarity, as each group tries to show the rest that it is more active and more 'jihadist' than the others. This splintering not only means that acts of violence occur more often, but that it is more difficult to enter into negotiations because they will not necessarily agree on the same position, and representatives of one group may not be entitled to speak on behalf of other groups. It also means it is more difficult to control them.

3.1 Post-ideological alliances
Political Islam emerged after the fall of the caliphate in 1924 with the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, followed by the birth of other movements. Since then a state of hostility has prevailed among these groups due to ideological and doctrinal differences, which at times has led some groups to declare others infidels. Often these movements have waged fierce battles against one another, particularly among the three main Islamist camps in the region: Salafi movements, jihadi movements and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The enmity between Islamist groups is stronger than their enmity towards non-Islamists because it is based on doctrinal disagreements, each movement seeing itself as the possessor of the absolute truth and the true representative of Islam, with the others as distorted versions of Islam. The latter are thus more dangerous to Islam than liberal or

nationalist movements, which do not claim to be Islamic. Battles with non-Islamists are not difficult; they can easily be defeated by turning the dispute into a religious battle. But other Islamist movements wear the same cloak of religion and speak the same language, with the same logic; they are therefore a much more formidable enemy because they use the same weapons.

After the Arab revolutions, however, many Islamist movements drew closer together, and formed strong alliances, despite sharp ideological differences. These were post-ideological alliances, partnerships that disregarded ideological differences to achieve common interests. 'Coalitions above ideology' were formed because movements found that when pressed, political and financial interests require joining forces irrespective of ideological differences.

One of the most well known of these alliances was the National Coalition to Support Legitimacy, which was announced on 27 June 2013, three days before the 30 June uprising. The Coalition brought together the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jama'a al-Islamiya, remnants of the EIJ, and several Salafi movements as well as political parties.[6] The Coalition is significant because it brought together various political forces who had major ideological differences with the Muslim Brotherhood.

In addition, an alliance was created between the Muslim Brotherhood and some jihadi and *takfiri* organisations in Sinai, which had previously declared the Brotherhood and Morsi to be infidels, adding that there was no difference between Morsi and Hosni Mubarak: both were unbelievers who did not rule by God's law.

These alliances were based on common interests that went beyond ideological tenets. Islamist movements recognise two types of differences, those that are unbridgeable and those that allow for a diversity of opinion. The first type precludes any alliance or even cooperation between the two differing groups, while the second does not. In general, the disagreements between allied movements were of the first type, for they were primarily based on ideological and doctrinal disputes. To achieve their common interests, however, these movements disregarded doctrine to conclude a post-ideological alliance.

These alliances played an important role in feeding the violence in Egypt in the transitional period. They put all movements on the same side as violent jihadi groups, joining together to support the Muslim Brotherhood. While the jihadi movements played a larger role in the violence, other allied movements supported and aided them, which had not been the case in the past. Given this support, the violence of jihadi groups was even more extreme. The Brotherhood managed to create these alliances for the first time in the history of Islamist movements by allowing the presence of militant groups in Sinai, and turning a blind eye to their access to funding and arms, in return for their supporting the Brotherhood in office and defending it.

The post-June 2013 situation indicates that these alliances are spreading. Islamist movements have discovered that post-ideological alliances are the shortest path for the biggest gains, leading them to place interests and political and material benefits above doctrinal and ideological principles. Examples include AQIM, which has included a number of Salafi groups that were previously enemies. This suggests that the network of such alliances may spread in the coming period, which will have serious ramifications for the entire region.

3.2 The Muslim Brotherhood and the turn to violence

The Muslim Brotherhood is fundamentally a political, religious outreach organisation that relies primarily on public action, and it is therefore unlikely that the Brotherhood will go entirely underground. The danger, instead, is that it will establish a secret apparatus to undertake violent operations the organisation does not wish to claim, much like the secret organisation it established in the past. This move carries many risks, however, and in the past had dire repercussions for the group. The Brotherhood appears to have realised this and is therefore unlikely to take this step, especially when it has an alternative: namely, relying on the jihadi organisations with which it has allied itself, especially during Morsi's presidency, as well as depending on Hamas.

As the revolution moved forward, the Brotherhood and its Islamist allies were thrown off balance and rushed towards violence. They began by threatening and attacking opposition demonstrations, but then took several confused steps to address the crisis. The non-Islamist movements' ability to mobilise such large groups of people caught them by surprise, and the Brotherhood leadership found it difficult to agree on the best course of action to take. Some called for a general jihad as the only way to prevent Morsi's overthrow, others for peaceful protests to ensure that the movement's projected commitment to non-violent democratic engagement was upheld.

In the end, they pursued a number of sometimes apparently contradictory tactics. For one, they mobilised their supporters in force in an attempt to balance out opposition forces, portraying matters to their supporters as a conflict between Islam and secularism, while trying to present the battle on the ground internationally as a coup against legitimacy. Mobilisation was in full force, bringing supporters from Upper Egypt, the Delta and all over Cairo, assembling in Nahda Square to coincide with pro-Morsi demonstrations in several governorates. This came after the Brotherhood issued a 'general alert' to defend legitimacy. At these demonstrations, supporters brandished clubs and bladed weapons, and performed military exercises to terrorise citizens. This was a clear sign of impending violence (Ghoneam 2013).

In this charged atmosphere, when demonstrators attempted to storm the Brotherhood headquarters in Muqattam the Brotherhood responded with violence. Eight demonstrators were killed in the clashes and 70 more injured (*Al-Arabiya* 2013). They captured a Brotherhood

sniper, who said that 250 people were on top of the headquarters armed with shotguns and automatic weapons. On the evening of 2 July, the Brotherhood sent out armed groups in the capital to attack local residents, in an attempt to sow violence and foment unrest in various areas of Cairo and the governorates. The objective was to prompt Gen. Abdel Fatah el-Sisi, the head of the armed forces, to retract his decision and keep Morsi in office, out of fear of sparking off a civil war. Sit-ins at Rabia al-Adawiya and Nahda Squares also brought violence with them. After protesters refused to leave the squares, security forces used force to disperse them, which led to violent confrontations on 14 August; 632 people killed, including eight police officers, 1,492 injured, and around 800 arrested. The National Council for Human Rights pointed out that while protesters had fired first, the police's response was excessive and out of proportion (*ahramonline* 2014).

The crisis was the worst the Muslim Brotherhood had experienced in its long history. For the first time, it found itself out in the cold because of its use of violence. Long accustomed to confrontation with the state, the Brotherhood had derived a sense of victimhood and persecution, and it was one of the primary reasons that many Egyptians sympathised with it.

Although the crisis proved too big for the leadership and its capacities, the Muslim Brotherhood maintained its organisational cohesion, because it was protected ideologically in the minds of its members. The Brotherhood has a singular ability to maintain internal cohesion and counter divisions because its thought has focused on equating the group with Islam and vice-versa in the minds of its members. It draws on Quranic verses and hadiths that prohibit going against the larger community of Muslims, and applying these texts to themselves, thereby leading individual Brothers to believe that deviating from the Brotherhood's teachings is tantamount to deviating from Islam.

In addition to this internal cohesion, the Muslim Brotherhood enjoys sympathy among sections of the people, especially in Upper Egypt. Nevertheless, its turn to violence has given rise to several severe crises. First of all, it can no longer mobilise support as in the past due its declining popularity in the street, particularly in the Delta. This has become apparent in the poor attendance at Brotherhood demonstrations since the June 2013 revolution, many of which numbered only in the hundreds. Moreover, its organisational performance has been weakened by the arrest of active leaders who could make important and strategic decisions, leaving the leadership to those unable to deal with current challenges. This has led to haphazard decision-making and an inability to define a clear vision for the current phase.

Finally, although the cohesion that has been built into the Muslim Brotherhood over its long history makes it unlikely that that the group will collapse or fragment into smaller entities, circumstances since mid-2015 may have a greater impact and foster increased divisions in the group's ranks. The Brotherhood suddenly finds itself confronting

millions of Egyptians after taking up violence to achieve its goals, contradicting three decades of claims to have definitively renounced violence. Internally, a leadership struggle is taking place. Many young members would like to challenge the movement's leaders, but are waiting until the current crisis passes.

Any predictions about the future of the Muslim Brotherhood, and how to engage with it or integrate it into society therefore depend on the consequences the current crisis has for the organisation and if it resorts to the use of further violence. In any case, the cost of surviving the crisis of violence will be very high indeed.

3.3 Third way movements

Since the late 1990s, the Arab region has seen a wave of unique ideological transformations, as numerous jihadi movements renounced violence in what became known as the revisionist wave.[7] Thousands of former jihadis or their sympathisers turned away from jihadi thinking and were persuaded of the failure of the jihadi enterprise the movements promoted. These transformations were a process of self-criticism aimed at these organisations' former concepts and ideological assumptions, as well as the practices that accompanied them, and it involved establishing new ideological foundations and priorities that differed from the previous priorities and inevitabilities (Fiqqi 2010).

The movements that engaged in this process were thus left without an identity. That is, they had no particular intellectual orientation or defining features that would permit one to identify their ideological underpinnings. In turn, it became difficult to categorise them among the major Islamist movements in the region – the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi trend – because when they abandoned their old ideas as part of the revisionist process, they did not adopt a new way of thinking that could ground them or define their programme and objectives. They thus became 'third way' groups of unknown identity and indeterminate ideas, which raised many questions about their aims and future.

Several organisations in the region underwent this process, holding no distinct ideological features, most notably the Egyptian Jama'a al-Islamiya. The group unilaterally declared a ceasefire in 1997 before announcing a wholesale revision of its thought, conduct and organisational structure in 2002; the Jama'a eventually produced 25 books detailing the revisionist process. It was followed by the EIJ, some of whose leaders began the revisionist process in prison, led by Sayyed Imam al-Sherif, the author of *The Document to Rationalize the Jihad in Egypt and the Islamic World* and *The Exposure*.[8] Despite the general support for the revisions within the EIJ in Egypt, the group was not as successful in its transformation as the Jama'a al-Islamiya, with some leaders outside Egypt continuing to reject the entire process. After the revisions, the Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ became third way movements because they had not offered any alternative programme of thought (Al-Khateeb 2008).

The danger third way movements pose is that they have no specific identity or clear intellectual framework that would permit an understanding of their current orientation and future plans, particularly because movements such as the Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ have become clearly opportunistic, power-hungry organisations, looking for political and economic gains by any means. Without an ideological framework to govern their actions, they wait for the moment to ally themselves with another movement that will enable them to achieve these gains. Moreover, some have resumed their use of violence, among them members of the Jama'a and EIJ. Indeed, another danger of third way movements is that they are liable to (re)turn to violence at any moment.

3.4 Ideological apostasy

In the wake of the relatively peaceful Arab uprisings, many researchers believed that jihadi movements in the region were on the wane, especially because the uprisings were preceded by the revisionist process undertaken by many jihadi movements, starting in Egypt with the Jama'a al-Islamiya and followed by the EIJ, the Islamic Fighting Group in Libya, the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front, several Salafi movements in North Africa (particularly Mauritania), and leaders of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

A the beginning of the Arab Spring, several former jihadi movements that had embraced revisionist thought engaged with the political process, which they had previously boycotted and declared prohibited. In Egypt, jihadi movements vied to establish new political parties, with the Jama'a al-Islamiya forming the Construction and Development Party, and the EIJ creating the Safety and Development Party.

Despite the move to renounce violence and enter the political fray, an ideological relapse or retreat has been evident. Some of these movements have begun to reconsider the bases of the revisionist thought that led to their renunciation of violence, such as the prohibition on taking up arms and rebelling against the ruler. Jama'a al-Islamiya leaders in Egypt, for example, allowed taking up arms in self-defence against an unjust ruler and to rebel against him. Members of these movements again took part in violence. Many members of al-Qaeda in Sinai (Ansar al-Jihad) are thought to be former members of the EIJ, and Jama'a al-Islamiya leaders appealed to the Egyptian government during the uprising in Libya against Muammar Gaddafi to permit the group's youth wing to join fighting there.

This act of ideological apostasy by jihadi groups opened the door to the return of violence, which soon began to grow out of control and has contributed to a spike in religious violence in the country, which has manifested itself in attacks on Coptic Christians, churches and Sufi shrines. In fact, in 2016 two types of jihadi movement exist. The first, including the jihadi organisations scattered across the Sinai, are those in the region that continue to practise armed violence and seek to use it achieve their objectives. The second group, however, is more

problematic and more dangerous: jihadi movements that engage in armed violence after having embraced revisionist thought. We are thus faced with a wave of religious violence due to this ideological apostasy that is spreading day by day.

3.5 The shift from Salafi thought to jihadi thought

The shift from Salafi to jihadi thought is one of the most dangerous seen in Islamist movements since the Arab revolutions, particularly in Egypt during the transitional period. Jihadi movements in the region have expanded into a 'jihadi umbrella' at the expense of what used to be the largest Islamist umbrella movement prior to the Arab Spring, the Salafis. The Salafis had expanded when several jihadi groups turned to the Salafi programme of action and ideas based on religious outreach, disseminating the faith, the oneness of God, a desire for religious knowledge, and an absolute prohibition on armed struggle. Indeed, non-violence is the most significant feature that distinguishes the Salafi movement from the jihadi movement.

The shifts within the Jama'a al-Islamiya and the EIJ after the revisions were the most renown expression of the move from the jihadi to the Salafi umbrella. After the January 25 revolution, however, a shift in the opposite direction took place, as Islamists moved out of the Salafi camp and into the jihadi camp. This move was rapid, far outpacing the gradual transformation from jihadi to Salafi. This indicates that the turn to violence might be much easier than the turn to peace.

When al-Qaeda in Sinai emerged, it attracted numerous Salafis to its ranks. Jihadi movements such as the Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ that had embraced revisionism also began to change their rhetoric after January 25, moving closer to a jihadi discourse. Indeed, from time to time, Jama'a al-Islamiya warned of its potential to take up violence again (for example, as mentioned above, when Omar Suleiman announced that he would run for president). Many Salafis also turned to violence, reflected in the demolition of shrines in numerous areas and attacks on Coptic churches.

Increased jihadi activity at the expense of Salafi activity has repercussions for the region. It has grave security consequences: jihadis have successfully carried out major operations that threaten the security of entire countries and their territorial integrity by taking control of certain regions and imposing their rule, as was the case in Sinai immediately after Morsi's overthrow. They can also inflict major casualties in the ranks of those fighting them. Attacks lead to capital flight and impede production; some directly target tourism in areas where it is vital to the local economy. Moreover, state facilities have been attacked and destroyed,[9] entailing major economic losses.

At the same time, these groups' activities have serious political ramifications, insofar as they aim to overthrow all regimes in all states in the region, including those that describe themselves as Islamic, with

the goal of establishing a caliphate through jihad and armed action. Meanwhile, the relationship between the jihadi and Salafi camps is inversely proportional: when one grows, the other shrinks. Current conditions indicate that the jihadi camp is expanding at an exponential pace, which may have serious consequences for religious violence in Egypt.

3.6 Jihadi factionalism

Immediately before the Arab revolutions, jihadi groups across the region were on the retreat, and virtually none were active in Egypt. Paradoxically, the Arab Spring, a series of peaceful uprisings that were thought to mark the beginning of the end for jihadi movements in the region – and maybe the world – actually inaugurated a new jihadi wave, stronger and more active than the wave of the 1990s. Subsequently, however, jihadi movements experienced numerous splits in their ranks, to the point that factionalism has become a defining feature of the movement. For example, following the Arab Spring, al-Tawheed wal Jihad emerged out of AQIM in 2011, and then 'tanzim al mouq'eoon bel dema'a', which came into being in December 2012, led by former AQIM leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Also to splinter off from AQIM is Ansar al Shari'a in Yemen which became an independent movement with its own ideological and tactical features. Meanwhile, in Egypt Ansar Beit al-Maqdes split from Ansar al-Jihad, and Kat'aeb al Forqan subsequently split from Ansar Beit al-Maqdes.

Divisions occur in jihadi ranks for various reasons, but the most significant factor is the presence of an influential figure who attracts followers, which leads to a schism, having persuading those around him to break off from the parent organisation. The causes of division can be ideological or doctrinal. One group in an organisation may believe that some doctrinal shortcoming must be addressed, while the leadership does not deem it a shortcoming, believing that doctrinal frameworks are sacrosanct. In turn, the dissenting faction splits off with a new ideology, usually composed of the old body of thought with a layer of new ideas, under a new leadership.

Divisions may also occur for political reasons. One faction may believe that it will not achieve its political interests inside the organisation and therefore splits off to pursue these interests. Personal factors also play a role. Someone who aspires to leadership may see this as his natural place, from which he will carry out major operations that the current leadership cannot. He therefore breaks off and establishes a new group, setting himself up as leader and attempting major operations, to prove to others that he is worthy of the leadership and was right to splinter off.

Factionalism will have major negative consequences and lead to an increase in religious violence. Relations among jihadi groups in general, and particularly splinter groups, are competitive: when one jihadi group undertakes an operation, another (splinter) group will attempt an even bigger operation to prove that its members are more devoted and fervent supporters of Islam and the jihad. Factionalism also leads

to the proliferation of jihadi organisations, making it difficult to control or negotiate with them, or even bring them together to agree on a position. This in turn makes it difficult to engage with and confront these organisations in the short and long term. The greater the number of splinter groups, the greater the proliferation of acts of terrorism and violence.

3.7 Regional ripple effects

Three types of Jihadi movements are present in the region that have become particularly active since the Arab Spring, most of which subscribe to al-Qaeda's thinking. The first is the 'mother' movement itself, al-Qaeda, which Osama Bin Laden established in 1988 under the name of 'the Islamic international front for jihad against the Jews and Crusaders'. It formed out of a number of jihadi forces in various parts of the world, and focused its activities on Pakistan and Afghanistan. The second are branches of al-Qaeda that were formed under Bin Laden's direct instruction. These include al-Qaeda in Gaziret al Arab, which is active in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. While some extend their ideological thinking from the mother movement, they are organisationally separate and do not get their directions or instructions from al-Qaeda. The third type comprises groups that looked to al-Qaeda as a model for jihadi activism, and follow its ideological thinking and way of organisation, but are not formally linked to al-Qaeda, either the mother movement or its offshoots, and were not formed by Bin Laden. These include Ansar al-Jihad, AQIM, Jama'at Ansar al-Jihad in Sinai and al-Qaeda fi bilad al Rafedeen in Iraq.

The map of jihadi movements in the Middle East has changed since the Arab revolts. The fall of the security apparatus in countries in the midst of chaos, the relaxation of many states' border patrols, the circulation of weapons, humans and resources have enabled such movements to thrive in the Arab world. Many of these organisations recognise that this is a moment in the region's history that has afforded them the opportunity to spread and strengthen ties between one another, with a view to establishing an Islamic caliphate based on a model of forming Islamic emirates in land they occupy, as with attempts at establishing Islamic emirates in the south of Sinai, in Tunisia, in Yemen, in Iraq and the north of Mali. This has resonance from one country to another, with ripple effects. The growth of the jihadi movement in Egypt after the January 25 revolution had a ripple effect in activing movements elsewhere. Likewise, the regional crisis that has grown out of Syria, and the situation of jihadi movements in the region, influences the positioning of the jihadi movement in Egypt. What we see is the emergence of an situation that is very much conducive to the growth and strengthening of networks of jihadi groups everywhere.

Notes

1   Those who assume '*takfiri*' thought hold others who do not espouse their version of Islam to be infidels, even if they are Muslim and members of Islamist movements. In the eyes of members of *takfiri* movements, it is legitimate to kill people and take their wealth if they are declared to be *kafir* (infidel).

2   From insider information, it appeared that the Muslim Brotherhood looked favourably on the rallies that the Jama'a al-Islamiya held in February 2013 in support of the Brotherhood and the current administration.

3   Article 2 of the Egyptian constitution since 1977 has stated that 'the principles of Islamic Sharia are *the* main source of legislation.' Before the 1977 amendment to the constitution, Article 2 stated that 'the principles of Islamic Sharia are a main source of legislation'. Following the January 25 revolution, a controversy erupted about whether 'secularists' wanted to revert to the pre-1977 formulation in a new constitution, which would in effect dilute the centrality of Islamic Sharia in governance and legislation.

4   These included easing of the conditions of eligibility for a presidential candidate, full judicial oversight over the presidential elections and clear articulation of the processes representing a roadmap.

5   He was also in charge of negotiations between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood during Mubarak's presidency.

6   These include the Labour Party, the Reform Party, the Watan Party, Arab Unity Party, Raya Party and Islamic party.

7   The revisionist wave encompassed the Jama'a al-Islamiya. In a number of publications, the jihadists denounced violence – but not necessarily in favour of political activities. This ideological revisionism continued up to the January 25 revolution. Subsequently, some of these movements appear to have reversed their positions on violence, as speeches of the late Essam And el Maged and Tarek el Zomor, leaders of the Jama'a al-Islamiya, reflected.

8   These documents are of paramount importance to revisionist thinking on jihad.

9   See, for example, www.masress.com/alwafd/621466 .

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Rethinking the Youth Bulge and Violence

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Abstract The dominance of a generation of combat age, high levels of education combined with high unemployment, failed cities, and the relatively long duration of the transitional period still constitute an appropriate atmosphere for the explosion of a new wave of youth violence in the Middle East. The author takes Egypt as a case study. Egypt witnessed an unprecedented spike in violence following the revolution of January 25, 2011. This article first examines the political violence through the lens of political demography, drawing partly on Henrik Urdal's theses on the impact of demographic factors on the risk of political violence, but more broadly documents and analyses the trajectory of youth movements' involvement with violence in relation to issues of employment, education and urbanisation.

1 Introduction

Several analyses have attempted to explain the growing political violence in Egypt since January 2011, most of them attributing the repeated clashes to political polarisation, economic decline, the security vacuum, the decline of state status and authority, the absence of social consensus, or the intensification of the class struggle. Some analysts have also focused on young people's sense of frustration with the hijacking of the revolution, first by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), and later by the Muslim Brotherhood, and their attempts to reclaim their stolen rights and confront the aspirations of the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition to political and social causes, others have discussed what they see as a shift in the Egyptian character following the revolution, from submission and concession to rebellion and rejection. Writings have addressed the behavioural changes of Egyptians, the emergence of a culture of violence, and the escape from the grip of repression.[1]

In the context of this debate, this article looks at rising violence using political demography, which seeks to interpret political behaviour, including political violence, using demographic factors. The article discusses the nexus between youth cohorts' domination of the population

pyramid, growing numbers of young university graduates, and violence, in addition to the role of urban growth and urbanisation in increasing the risk of political violence. Finally, the article looks at how political instability and the extended duration of the transitional period have also increased the likelihood of violence, as well as other possible factors, such as previous experience of deploying violence as a method of contestation and the organisational structure of youth movements.

1.1 Combat age and the youth bulge

In 2013, the number of young people aged 15–29 in Egypt reached 24.38 million (CAPMAS 2013: 5), in a society where 54 per cent of the population was already under the age of 24. This fact in itself increases the risk of political violence, according to Henrik Urdal and Jack Goldstone.

According to Urdal, youth bulges in a country increase the potential and motives for political violence, especially if they are associated with other factors, such as high youth unemployment, a quasi-democratic system, and a high dependency ratio (Urdal 2006: 609). Goldstone believes that the potential for violence and political change is higher in societies experiencing the second stage of the demographic transition, which brings higher birth rates, lower mortality rates, and the beginning of industrial progress and service provision. This stage is also characterised by a high proportion of youth (aged 15–24) in the population age structure and a growing middle class of educated young people that the labour market is unable to absorb (Goldstone, Kaufman and Duffy Toff 2012: 9).

In political demography, youth bulges signify a high proportion of youth (young people aged 14–25) in the total population, meaning that society is young. If we observe Tsegaye Tegenu, whose definition of the youth bulge in developing countries includes ages 15–29 (Tegenu 2011), then youth in Egypt comprise 29 per cent of the population. This makes the country a good testing ground for Urdal's well-known thesis which posits that societies where youth comprise 35 per cent of the population are 150 per cent more likely to experience an explosion of political violence than countries whose population age structure is closer to developed countries.

In political demography, a youth bulge means that a cohort of combat age dominates the population pyramid, thereby increasing the chances of violence. Eric Neumayer observes that young males constitute the principal bloc of participants in violence, the same view adopted by Samuel Huntington, who found that people who fight other people are largely men aged 16–30 (Urdal 2006: 612).

The character of political violence in Egypt conforms to these hypotheses, as most of those involved in the violence are aged between 15 and 29. The ages of those involved in youth movements that have adopted violence is similar: Ultras football fans are typically aged 15–22, and most members of April 6[2] are aged 18–29, while the age of

Black Bloc members does not exceed 22 (both the Ultras and the Black Bloc are discussed further below). In violent clashes between February 2011 and June 2013, 80 per cent of the injured were aged 15–29, while 70 per cent of the dead belonged to the same cohort.[3]

The relatively high proportion of young people in Egypt has provided fuel to youth movements in recent years, and has increased the likelihood that these movements will resort to violence as the 'combat generation' dominates the field of political actors, a situation reflected in the competition among political blocs to recruit and mobilise the largest number of youth. The demographic rise of this generation comes as it declares its political triumph and its power to settle conflicts at the decisive moment, and for young people, the fastest means of conflict resolution is violence. Nevertheless, we cannot conclude that the youth bulge in Egyptian society is what has driven youth movements to adopt the strategy of violence, or is what has increased the resort to use force to settle conflicts.

1.2 The young combatant: an educated person looking for a job
The massacre at the Port Said stadium on 1 February 2012, in which 72 members of the Ahli Ultras were killed, revealed several facts about these football fan clubs. Most importantly, they are comprised of young men with generally high levels of education. Indeed, most of the victims of the massacre were university students, including some at private universities, where annual tuition ranges from US$5,000–10,000. This came as a shock to many Egyptians, who assumed that these football fans were largely less-educated youth.

Yet, young people with a university degree or who are enrolled in university constitute the backbone of Egyptian youth movements that have used violence. This is also true of the Black Bloc; one of its leaders stated that those involved in this underground organisation range in age from 18 to 23 years old, and are all either university students or graduates.[4] University graduates and students also make up the bulk of April 6.

The Egyptian condition thus contradicts the thesis of many schools of terrorism studies, which in the 1980s and 1990s posited a correlation between low education and violence. It is, however, consistent with modern demographic theories that suggest that higher educational levels in young societies increase the risk of violence.

For Urdal, the spread of unemployment among university graduates provokes feelings of frustration and deprivation among a large segment of educated youth, which increases the potential for violence (Urdal 2004). Brynjar Lia attributes the growth in university education in several Middle Eastern countries to the rise in large cohorts of educated youth not absorbed by the labour markets in these countries, thus fostering a climate ripe for the recruitment of these youth into radical and violent organisations (Lia 2005). Similarly, Jack Goldstone posits that the likelihood

of violence by large youth groups increases with higher levels of education. He believes that an exponential increase in the numbers of educated youth helps foster a climate for political change, as the most educated youth are at the forefront of political violence in periods of political change. Richard Braungart supports the thesis by noting that unemployment in any society weakens the legitimacy and stability of the political system, which creates an environment ripe for the radicalisation of young people who have nothing to lose in the struggle for revolutionary gains.

Higher levels of education feed the sense of dissatisfaction among educated youth, who are more ambitious and expect to obtain a better income. In turn, this increases the gap between expectations and the reality of unemployment. Educated youth also have a greater sense of the possibilities of political influence. Thus real or potential unemployment among young graduates or university students increases the likelihood of dissatisfaction, instability and violence.

As for Egypt, according to the World Bank,

> During the last two decades, the evolution of educational attainment in Egypt has been one of democratization of access, particularly at the basic and secondary levels… An examination of three generations of 21–24 year olds, born between 1964 to 1967, 1974 to 1977 and 1982 to 1985, most of whom have already completed their education, shows that preparatory completion rates increased steadily from 43 per cent to 69 per cent and secondary completion rates from 38 per cent to 65 per cent. College completion rates among the same groups have more than doubled from 7 per cent in 1988 to 17 per cent in 2006 (Ersado 2012).

Some 332,776 students graduated from Egyptian public universities and 10,726 from Egyptian private universities in 2011 (CAPMAS 2013: 130–31), while in the same year, 1.7 million students were enrolled in these universities.[5]

The rapid increase in graduates of universities and institutions of higher education coincided with an exponential increase in youth unemployment, particularly among those with university degrees. According to official figures, unemployment in 2013 reached 12 per cent, or about 3.18 million people (CAPMAS 2013: 30). Unemployment was highest among the 20–24 age cohort, at 40 per cent, followed by ages 25–29, at 23 per cent. Unemployment among those with university degrees came in at 32.1 per cent.

These data clearly indicate that substantial numbers of Egyptian graduates have not been able to find jobs, which feeds their sense of frustration and anger at the regime and society. University graduates have positive expectations of jobs, a steady income, and class mobility. According to Dan LaGraffe, this frustration is reflected in heightened social and political alienation, the increased likelihood of instability, and a tendency to adopt radical ideas and behaviour (LaGraffe 2012: 72).

This contradicts the thesis of Paul Collier that posits that poorer, less-educated youth are more likely to join radical, violent organisations because of the low recruitment cost. It should also be noted that high youth unemployment increases the dependency ratio, which, Urdal notes, is a decisive factor for the increased chance of violence in communities (Urdal 2006).

In Egypt, substantial numbers of young university graduates are frustrated by the dearth of job opportunities and their inability to influence the political process and the ruling elite. This frustration is expressed as a generational clash, exemplified in a statement issued by the White Knights football fan club, which noted that the clashes with security were an expression of 'the battle of an entire generation that only asked for a normal life, only asked that it be the master of its own affairs, as they know their affairs best'. The statement noted that security practices against the fan clubs were not exclusively a war on them, but targeted an entire generation of young people who are longing to be rid of the gerontocracy with all its corruption, sordidness and misery.[6]

The commanders in this virtual generational war are educated youth frustrated by unemployment – a substantial youth bloc in the country. In Egypt, youth violence is concentrated in the capital and large cities, especially in the Delta, which is richer than Upper Egypt. This calls for a closer look at the relationship between youth political violence and urbanisation.

1.3 Failed cities and political violence

Violent clashes between protesting youth and security or between competing Egyptian political factions have been concentrated in Cairo and large urban areas. Of the 65 instances of socio-political violence documented by this study, through a systematic review of the daily *Al Masry Al Youm* newspaper from 11 February 2011 to 30 June 2013, 33 took place in the capital. Of the 16 most violent incidents, 12 occurred in Cairo, or 75 per cent.

Dan LaGraffe observes that the danger of failed cities, much like failed states, clearly figures in the academic literature on violence and security. LaGraffe cites a study from the National Intelligence Council noting that the shift from agricultural to service and industrial employment has brought young people from rural to urban areas at dangerously high rates (LaGraffe 2012: 70). The growth of urban areas in recent years in less developed countries has led to heightened pressure for equality and a growing sense of social grievance, making cities more vulnerable to instability. Large cities now hold greater numbers of educated, unemployed youth and are thus a centre for social tensions given wide class and social gaps, which are more visible in urban than rural areas. In addition, cities are closer to the institutions of power, which have a more palpable presence in urban areas. This opens up a space for conflict between angry, frustrated youth and a state unable to realise their aspirations – indeed, often perceived as the primary obstacle to a dignified life.

Egypt offers an exemplary model of centralisation, with 20 million people, or nearly 25 per cent of the population, living in Greater Cairo (the governorates of Cairo, Giza and Qalyoubiya), one of the highest urban concentrations in the world; the population of Cairo alone is approximately 8.9 million, or 13 per cent of the population.[7] According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), approximately 43 per cent of the population of Egypt live in urban areas, while 57 per cent live in rural areas. Urban areas in Egypt are growing at a rate of 1.9 per cent annually (2000–10). With annual population growth less than 1 per cent, this points to the continued migration from the countryside to the city, meaning that cities absorb hundreds of thousands of new inhabitants each year. Meanwhile, rural areas account for 61.4 per cent of all births, compared to 38.6 per cent for urban areas. The number of city dwellers in Egypt rose from 22.5 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2012, an increase of 65 per cent, representing 43 per cent of the total population (CAPMAS 2013: 8).

The availability of educational services and universities in the capital allows it to absorb large numbers of young university graduates, about 30 per cent of its residents according to unofficial figures. According to Richard Cincotta, the migration of large populations from rural to urban areas in Egypt over the last two decades played a contributing role in creating the environment conducive to the eruption of the January 25 revolution. The city offered youth the chance to express their aspirations and frustrations, to interact with the elite and the media, and to step out of the space of familial relationships and primary affiliations to the realm of peer relationships and direct interests (Cincotta 2012).

In this context, Urdal notes that high rates of urbanisation strengthen the correlation between youth bulges and political violence (Urdal 2006: 613). Goldstone explains that high urbanisation rates are associated with increased unemployment among educated youth and economic marginalisation. Rapid urbanisation is reflected in relatively higher rates of poverty and unemployment, two primary factors for youth political violence. Tegenu believes that urbanisation and rapid urban growth are directly linked to large concentrations of youth. He argues that youth migration from rural to urban areas therefore constitutes a primary factor for the increased likelihood of political violence, as urban youth with rural roots have a greater tendency to violence in moments of political instability.

The centrality of Cairo is reflected in the makeup of the youth protest groups under study. The study focused on the most important youth groups at the time (2011–13) and excluded the Islamist groups as they were addressed in Bakr's article in this *IDS Bulletin*. Young people from Cairo account for more than 35 per cent of the members of the Ultras football fan clubs, for both the Ahli and Zamalek clubs.[8] According to another report, there are 360,000 registered Ahli Ultras, with 90,000 of them, or 25 per cent, from Cairo, which is the most influential and

active branch.[9] As for the Black Bloc, a leader of the movement says that of 300 active members, some 200 are from Cairo. The movement itself first emerged in Cairo during the demonstrations of 25 January 2013. It also had a large group from Mansoura (Daqahliya governorate in the Delta), numbering 40 members.[10] The faction of April 6 that has resorted to violence is centred in Cairo, Alexandria and Mansoura.

Urbanisation and Cairo's centrality have played a fundamental role in the tendency of educated, frustrated youth to use political violence. Large cities are one determinant of violence in Egypt, which contradicts Urdal's thesis that cities play a secondary role in the eruption of political violence, whereas the countryside retains the great repertoire of youth violence (Urdal 2006: 624).

1.4 Organisation, ideology, and past experience

Past experience, organisational structure, and ideology are determinants of any group's propensity for violence and its capacity to adopt violent tactics. Among Egyptian youth groups, the Ultras are the only ones with the expertise and organisational form that make violent tactics a viable option. The experience of other youth groups is limited to the violent clashes with security forces during the January 25 revolution, especially on 27–28 January.

Organisationally, most youth movements are fluid and have no clear central leadership. This has given rise to overlapping memberships whereby a great many young people who participated in the revolution were simultaneously involved in multiple organisations rather than holding exclusive commitments to one particular group. This, in turn, has promoted incoherent action by youth movements. A member of April 6, for example, may also belong to the Ultras and the Black Bloc or a radical political organisation such as the Revolutionary Socialists. The political action of these young people was influenced by their multiple affiliations with various organisations and movements. At the same time, the individual experiences of these young people became the basis for youth movements' collective experience as opposed to building a collective around common ideology.

The Ultras are central to understanding youth mobilisation in Egypt on account of having the largest youth constituency in the country, with the exception of the Islamist movements. The Ultras are the most organised of all non-Islamist movements in Egypt. Any study of youth and violence necessitates a focus on the Ultras since they deployed violence prior to the January 25 revolution, and also in its aftermath. They were also key actors in the violent struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood and non-Islamist forces in the lead up to the 30 June revolution. The Ultras fan clubs appeared in 2007. The first was the White Knights, the first fan club in Egypt, followed by the Ahli Ultras, who first made their presence known in the stands on 13 April 2007, during a match between Ahli and Enbi.[11]

The international origin and development of the Ultras is uncertain, although some reports suggest that the first fan clubs arose in China and South America. Their appearance in Europe is associated with fans of the Croatian club Hajduk Split, who first exhibited extreme fan behaviour during a match on 29 November 1950 against the club's traditional rival, Red Star Belgrade, when, after the final whistle, Hajduk fans collectively and methodically stormed the pitch. Ultras groups then emerged in Italy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Fossa Dei Leoni, a fan club of Milan, arrived on the scene in 1968, while other reports indicate that the first Italian Ultras group appeared in Torino in 1951 under the name Fedelissimi Granata. The first to call themselves Ultras were supporters of Sampdoria in 1969, which is the same year that the Inter Boys appeared, an Ultras group supporting Inter Milan.[12]

Ultras in Egypt have adopted a cluster-like organisational form with a number of overlapping circles in contact with a central decision-making core.[13] This organisational structure works to manage Ultras activities, which involve massive numbers of young men, while also maintaining coordinated, consistent action. The main leadership and individual Ultras are linked by the capo, the leader of an individual section. The capo administers the affairs of a cluster group containing hundreds of fans in a particular area, while also coordinating with the leaders of other clusters. The capo's role is clear in cheering activities during football matches, when individual sections each assume a specific role, and the capo is responsible for making sure his section does its part of the exercise in synchrony with the other groups. During matches, the capo leads the cheering and chants, and one can observe clear coordination between capos and between the capo and his section.

According to Mahmoud Abduh Ali,

> The Ultras have no president, but rather a group of founders who quickly recede into the background when the group is able to stand on its own feet. Action within the Ultras is directed by small working groups (top boys), each of which is responsible for organizing group activities such as the design and execution of murals and placards, leading chants in the bleachers, arranging trips, and overseeing the group's financial resources.[14]

This organisational structure and its capacity to support synchronised, coordinated activity is reflected in the Ultras' ability to stage acts of coordinated, sudden violence, as was seen in January 2013, when the fans paralysed the metro system in the capital on the eve of the sentences handed down to defendants in the trial for the Port Said stadium massacre.

The Ultras' adoption of violent tactics has been further fostered by their experience in engaging with security forces since 2007. Elgohary says,

> Since the establishment of the groups in Egypt, the police have tried by all means to contain Ultras' activities in and outside of the stadium. Before the revolution, Ultras members would be subjected

to demeaning searches when entering the stands and the confiscation of items used during the cheering such as flags, banners, and placards for the synchronized entrances. They were even prohibited from bringing in bottles of water to the bleachers.[15]

The Ultras had a generally hostile relationship with the police due to the latter's apprehensiveness, with security fearing potentially uncontrollable violence on the pitch and the fans' capacity to mobilise. Security thus used violence to counter the Ultras. In turn, the Ultras groups adopted a single anti-police slogan that appeared frequently in their graffiti and their synchronised entrances to the bleachers: All Cops Are Bastards, or ACAB.

This provides a window into the ideas underpinning the Ultras. The fan clubs have no coherent ideology, but, in Egypt, are based on two principal ideas: loyalty to a particular football club and rebellion. According to Elgohary,

> The Ultras' strong sense of belonging can be explained by the state of alienation rampant not only in Egypt, but in many other Arab countries – a sense of alienation from the state. These young people thus inevitably created an entity or idea to belong to.[16]

The second pillar of the Ultras' identity is rebellion, which entails both a rejection of authority and a hostility toward security forces.

In this context, many note that Egyptian Ultras groups have been penetrated by various ideological organisations, most prominently the Ahli Ultras by the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis loyal to Hazem Salah Abu Ismail.[17] Although this seems incompatible with the main purpose of the Ultras groups – namely, supporting football clubs – young people's multiple organisational affiliations, discussed above, mean that many Ultras capos also belong to political groups, a fact that led the media to make these allegations of penetration. Overall, however, Ultras groups in Egypt are not associated organisationally or ideologically with any political factions, governed only by the all-important ideas of club loyalty and rebellion.

The Black Bloc was established formally in 2012, specifically after Mohamed Morsi won the presidency. Its *raison d'être* was to bring down the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, and one of its key tactics was to attack the Brotherhood's economic base. The founders of Black Bloc groups have also adopted a cluster-like organisation, with a separate leadership for each cluster that is careful not to reveal the identity of members to any other group. The founding principles of the Black Bloc are rebellion and a rejection of Muslim Brotherhood authority. Indeed, the one thing members share is their hostility to the Brotherhood. The group's founders chose not to adopt a specific ideology to better allow the recruitment of young people from various political movements and factions, motivated and united by the goal of bringing down Brotherhood rule.

Young people in the Black Bloc borrowed the group's name, slogan, and dress code from European and American anarchist groups that emerged in the 1980s, but did not adopt the ideological framework of the latter, largely because they sought to create propagandistic hype through the internationally-known name, slogan and garb. Perhaps the main shared feature of the Egyptian group and the Western movements is the use of violent tactics. The activists were initially involved in peaceful movements and sit-ins, but found that peaceful protest was unable to bring the change they desired; they thus turned to violence. The notoriety that accrued to Black Bloc groups due to their use of violence in the Seattle demonstrations of 1999 and the G8 conference of 2007 was replicated in Egypt, as the Black Bloc became a constant media presence soon after its establishment and following its use of violence against the Muslim Brotherhood in the first half of 2013.

The Black Bloc in Egypt was short-lived, lasting no more than six months. It grew out of Facebook pages for the so-called 'Black Revolutionary Bloc' after groups of Muslim Brotherhood members attacked protestors from secular parties and movements at the Ittihadiya presidential palace in December 2012; and in tandem with the emergence of Hazimun militias (followers of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail), who surrounded Media Production City, the home of satellite channels' studios in Cairo. Discussions on the Black Bloc's Facebook pages revolved around the importance of standing up to Islamist militias, and its first statement stressed that its goal was to 'bring down the Muslim Brotherhood regime and its military arms'. Notably, the group said that it would not accost police and army personnel, but it warned that the Black Bloc would not hesitate to respond to the Ministry of Interior if the latter confronted it. The first street appearance of Black Bloc youth came on 25 January 2013, during celebrations of the second anniversary of the revolution, when dozens of them assembled in downtown Talaat Harb Square wearing the group's signature black clothing and masks.

Organisationally speaking, the Black Bloc adopted a cluster-like structure, forming 14 separate groups of 20–30 individuals, with members of each group unknown to the others. This structure gave the group freedom of movement and made it more difficult to identify its leadership. The previous violent experiences of Black Bloc members were limited to clashes with police in January 2011 and, later, clashes on Mohammed Mahmoud Street in November 2011.

The April 6 movement was established by a group of young people belonging to different ideological and political schools of thought, most of them without any previous background in politics or political action, following the labour strike in Mahalla al-Kubra on 6 April 2008. The April 6 movement had made a call on Facebook for a nationwide strike to express opposition to the 'inheritance of the presidency' from Mubarak to his son, Gamal, and to protest the capitalist policies of the Egyptian government. The group gained renown in the 2011 revolution

when many of its young people led demonstrations and it became an icon of the Egyptian revolution.

The organisational form of April 6 is similar to that of European social movements, with a central leadership and individual groups in each area led by local leaders with decision-making authority. April 6 is an open organisation and sets no conditions for membership, making it more of an umbrella youth organisation. This relatively loose structure and the absence of a specific ideology makes it more of a social movement than a narrow party formation. Its structure also enabled the movement to avoid explicitly defending violence although several of its members were involved in violent clashes with security forces during demonstrations. In principle, the movement is committed to non-violence, as the adoption of tactical violence would diminish its broad membership and undermine its flexible organisational structure.

As is clear from this analysis, Egyptian youth movements involved in either offensive or defensive violence had no specific ideological framework other than an amorphous notion of rebellion. This contradicts Della Porta's thesis that violence requires a rejectionist ideology (Della Porta 2009). Rather, for these movements, the main factor for the use of violence was a confrontation with a specific opponent – for Ultras, the police and for the Black Bloc, the Muslim Brotherhood. In contrast, the broad umbrella-like nature of April 6 acted as a curb on violent tactics, although a great many of its members were involved in fierce clashes with security forces or the Muslim Brotherhood.

2 Self-described view of violence

This study has looked at several factors for the increasing turn to violence by youth protest movements in Egypt following the January 25 revolution, including the population age structure, higher levels of education combined with the inability of the market to absorb millions of new graduates, the failure of cities to absorb contradictions, the transitional period as a critical phase that permits the emergence of violence as an option to resolve pressing political and social issues, shared experience, and the adoption of a strategy of rebellion. But understanding the violence of youth movements in Egypt also requires understanding how young people involved in these movements see violence and examining the stance of various movements on violence. Sole reliance on an objective analytical framework that ignores the subjective risks drawing mistaken conclusions about Egyptian youth movements' general predilection for violence.

An analysis of field interviews and data about youth movements reveals that there is a clear tendency to reject violence in political action and, indeed, a recognition that the success of the Egyptian revolution in removing Mubarak was due to its peaceful nature. Even members of the Black Bloc boast that they are 'the kings of non-violence',[18] noting that no person was killed in their attacks on Muslim Brotherhood property and offices between January and June 2013. In addition, all of

those involved in protest movements stress that it is security forces that typically start the violence and that their violence is purely defensive.

In this context, justifications for violence are limited to self-defence. Hisham, a 27-year-old photojournalist and former Revolutionary Socialist, who was wounded more than once in violent clashes, says,

> Our violence was a response to the violence of the other side, whether security, paid thugs, the Brotherhood, or regime loyalists. The other side was always the one to start the violence so we defended ourselves and protected the other participants in the march.[19]

Hisham justifies his involvement in violence, saying,

> I'm against violence. I would leave home to take part in a peaceful march, but I'd be angered by the actions of the police or the other side and see people in our march killed and injured. Then I'd decide to join the fray and counter the attack and even try to get even and avenge those who were killed or injured.

This highlights another motive for violence – revenge – in addition to the defence of protests and demonstrations.

The picture is not complete, however, without a discussion of intractable elements within marches or demonstrations organised by youth movements. Hisham states,

> There were in fact thugs and [homeless] street children in the marches who would sometimes start the violence. But we can't stop anyone from taking part in the march. Anyway, the police and the Brotherhood also used thugs and street children.

Hisham reached a clear conclusion based on his experience with violence during demonstrations:

> The violence did not help us realise our goals. In fact, it ended with more dead and wounded, criticism of young people, and allegations of thuggery and vandalism. The ideal solution is peaceful action and escalation through strikes or civil disobedience to achieve goals.

Hisham's words distil the trajectory of an ongoing debate among youth groups in Egypt. It starts with the assertion that violence is purely defensive, but then goes on to affirm the use of violence for revenge, followed by the admissions that thugs and homeless children in their own protests helped to inflame the violence. It concludes with a recognition that violence had negative consequences for the achievement of youth movements' ultimate goals. This ongoing dialogue, heard among young people in Egypt, has led to a critique of the use of violence. According to Della Porta, the strategy of violence arises from a collective debate, the result of a dynamic process of engagement between social or political groups. In our case, however, the social debate and engagement between youth groups has ended in a rejection rather than an adoption of violence by the majority.

This does not mean that more radical voices do not exist that hold to the necessity of violence in the face of the police and political opponents, the focus of this study. Islam, a 22-year-old humanities graduate and a fixture of political demonstrations since January 25, is a member of this minority:

The Interior Ministry was and remains criminals and killers, and until it is restructured and reformed, fighting and resisting it is a revolutionary duty. Blood is the fuel of revolutions and the blood of the dead is an incentive to stand firm in the face of the authority. It's a gain.[20]

Islam defends the use of violence as the sole means of changing the regime and countering the security apparatus in the country. He supports the idea of vengeance from a somewhat different perspective:

People from popular areas get involved in violence because they've been oppressed, marginalised, and tortured in police stations, so they have a longstanding grudge against the police.

Vengeance as a motivator is particularly striking among young people who are involved in violence in protests and demonstrations. Motazz, a 21-year-old graduate of a social service institute, emphasises the death of his friend during a post-revolution demonstration as a reason for his use of violence:

I saw my best friend die in front of me and I decided to take part in all the violent demonstrations. Even though I recognise that violence only leads to more bloodshed, I'm venting the grief within me.[21]

Shadi, a 22-year-old Coptic university graduate who belongs to a liberal party, speaks with the same logic:

I've seen friends killed during the events of Mohammed Mahmoud, the Cabinet building, and Maspero, and I've seen people who've been blinded by the police, so I was forced to turn to violence because of these bloody scenes.[22]

In contrast, 29-year-old Sherif Abd al-Younis speaks of violence more as a defensive act:

We aren't thugs. We're defending our right to life against those who want to ground us down yet again [the Muslim Brotherhood].[23]

These young people speak largely for a small segment of radical groups within April 6 or left-wing formations, and they have largely been involved in demonstrations only since the January revolution. Their use of violence is predicated on the logic of self-defence and taking revenge on the security apparatus. This language differs from that used by young Ultras who employ violence. A.A., a 20-something-year-old member of the Ahli Ultras who asked to remain anonymous, says,

Fighting with the Interior Ministry is just something I like to do, even if they haven't done anything. The violence always used to start with the police, but later we started it because we knew in advance that security would attack us.[24]

This view is consistent with the Ultras' perception of themselves as a vital part of the Egyptian revolution that is always willing to engage in violent confrontations. The clashes that took place on Mohammed Mahmoud Street, near to Tahrir Square, involved violent confrontations between youth protestors and the security forces of the Ministry of Interior. The *Al Masry Al Youm* quoted one Ultras member as saying,

> We're not afraid of clashes. The true Ultras member is not afraid. In fact, some of us are happy to be injured because that becomes a memento for him and his [Ultras] brothers.[25]

These, then, are young people who consider the organisation they belong to as more of a brotherhood and see clashes and conflict as part of its doctrine of protest.

Ironically, the Black Bloc, according to one member, see themselves as 'masters of non-violence', saying,

> *The movement did not kill or injure any person and attacked no government institution or building. It was always careful to avoid state property. We largely use Molotovs and birdshot, while the use of firearms is limited to solely threat and protection.*[26]

According to another Black Bloc member, in a testimony given to researcher Hani al-Aasar,

> Violence against the regime [the Brotherhood regime] is legitimate because it is violence directed at an illegitimate regime. Violence has become the only way to express one's opinion and resist the special organization [i.e. the Brotherhood military wing].[27]

The views of several young men involved in clashes and acts of violence clearly indicate that the major justification for violence is revenge, followed by self-defence. It is also clear that there is no coherent ideology or ultimate goal for the use of violence outside of an attempt to punish police. The punitive aspect is how young people justify the violence to themselves, without the need to adopt a clear political objective. Some interviewees did discuss the need for violence to create 'chaos' which might be necessary to curb attempts by the regime to control and suppress liberties, but even this supposition is not based on an integrated political project that employs political violence as a tool. This limited view of violence among the participants themselves makes it impossible for them to maintain the conflict for a period of years. Ultimately, the absence of a youth organisation that explicitly adopts violence as a tactic to realise its political project reduces the risk of continued violence or the emergence of new forms of violence. On the contrary, it indicates that the main arena for violence will remain random violence motivated by a desire for revenge or self-defence.

3 Conclusion

There is no positive correlation between youth movements and violence in Egypt. Youth movements that emerged outside the political Islamist groups resorted to violence occasionally, such as the Ultras and the April 6 movement, while movements that exclusively deployed violence as the only strategy of engagement were more likely to form and then disappear again, such as the Black Bloc. It is a constellation of factors that made the youth bulge predisposed to resorting to violence in the post-2011 transitional period, most notably the high percentage of education among young people, and the sizeable proportion of youth who migrate to the city in search of employment. Against the backdrop of the military assumption of power in the aftermath of the 30 June 2013 ousting of President Morsi, and the confrontation between political Islam and the state, the author believes that youth movements' resorting to violence will significantly decrease.

Notes

*   Researchers Ishaq Essa and Hind Magdi helped gather data for this study; Hind Magdi conducted the field interviews with members of youth movements used in this article.

1   See Mohamed Abdelaziz, *Youth and Silent Protest in Egypt*, 23 October 2015, www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/youth-and-silent-protest-in-egypt and Amr Hamzawy, 'Youth and Daesh', *Al Shorouk* newspaper, 24 November 2015.

2   The April 6 movement was formed in 2008 by young people who initially used Facebook and social media to build a network of resistance to authoritarian rule, but also combined this with street activism. In April 2008, the April 6 movement called upon citizens to show solidarity with the workers of Mahalla al-Kubra (a town renowned for its textile factories), who were demanding their economic rights. See Ezbawy (2012) for a full panoramic overview of the different youth movements, as well as the profile of the April 6 movement.

3   Data collated by the author.

4   Interview with a leader of the Black Bloc who prefers to remain anonymous due to the underground, illegal nature of the organisation.

5   CAPMAS, September 2012.

6   White Knights statement published in *Al Masry Al Youm*, 24 October 2013, www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/331842.

7   Cairo governorate portal, www.cairo.gov.eg/MainPage/DispProvinceInLines.aspx?ID=5.

8   Interview with a leader of the Zamalek White Knights.

9   *Taqrir: majmu'at al-Ultras tajdhIb al-sasa wa tuqliq al-sulta*, CNN Arabic, 25 February 2013, http://arabic.cnn.com/2013/middle_east/1/26/ultras.egypt/.

10 Interview with a Black Bloc leader in Cairo, 29 October 2013.

11 'Ultras: al-nash'a wa al-tarikh', *al-Ahram Misa'I*, 25 September 2011.

12 Hassan Mestikawi, *Yuhaqqiq al-Ultras: al-intima' al-mutatarrif*, 10 September 2011.

13 Elgohary, 'Kayf yumkin an nafham al-Ultras?', *Jadaliyya*, 14 April 2013, www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11119.

14 Ali, 'al-Ultras: al-tawajjuhat al-siyasiya li-jumhur kurrat al-qadam fi Misr', *al-Siyasa al-Dawliya*, al-Ahram, www.siyassa.org.eg/NewsContent/2/107/1939.

15 Elgohary, 'Kayf yumkin an nafham al-Ultras?', *Jadaliyya*, 14 April 2013, www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11119.

16 Elgohary, *ibid*.

17 Abu Ismail is a well-known Egyptian Salafi who ran for president in 2012 before being disqualified due to his mother's US citizenship.

18 The Black Revolutionary Bloc Facebook page, although it has currently been closed down www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdXmU8Kf8HM.

19 Personal interview, Cairo, with a member of the Black Bloc (20 August 2013).

20 Personal interview, Cairo, with a member of the Black Bloc (20 August 2013).

21 Personal interview, Cairo, with a member of the Black Bloc (20 August 2013).

22 Personal interview, Cairo, with a member of the Black Bloc (20 August 2013).

23 Quoted in an Agence France-Presse (AFP) story, *Naqmat shabab al-thawra 'ala al-Islamiyin fi Misr tazdad*, 23 March 2013.

24 Personal interview, Cairo (20 October 2013).

25 *Al Masry Al Youm*, 23 November 2011.

26 Personal interview, Cairo (15 October 2013).

27 al-Aasar, *al-'Unf al-siyasi fi Misr min isqat Mubarak ila muwajahat Mursi*, Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, http://acpss.ahramdigital.org.eg/News.aspx?Serial=118

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The Political Economy of Violence in Egypt

Magdy Rezk

Abstract This article examines the political economy drivers of the uprisings in Egypt in 2011 and 2013. It shows that there was a continuity in neoliberal economic policy from the rule of Hosni Mubarak through to that of Mohamed Morsi, accompanied by an increase in poverty and unemployment. However, it was Egyptian citizens' perception of the political dynamics behind the economic situation that drove them to revolt. In 2011, a sense of intolerable levels of corruption and the prospect of their continuation under Mubarak's son, Gamal, made people responsive to calls for revolution; in 2013, it was the scale of their disappointment at the unmet promises for economic betterment. In both cases, economic conditions were crucial, but political grievances and mobilisation ultimately determined and shaped the revolts.

1 Introduction

There has been a great deal of speculation about whether Egypt's enduring economic crisis, five years after the January 25 revolution of 2011, poses a threat to its stability.[1] The broader issue at stake here concerns the relationship between economic conditions and violence (Richani 1997). Despite decades of interest in the topic, research has reached no conclusive findings about whether economic interests or problems, such as unemployment, poverty, or social inequalities, affect the potential for violence.

The main argument in this article is that economic factors, especially the inequitable income distribution, poverty, and unemployment, are significant determinants of political violence, but each one on its own is insufficient to provoke violence. Rather, these factors come into play in particular political, historic and cultural circumstances contingent on the nature of the system of governance, the political culture or level of democratic development, and the extent of corruption, bribery, and favouritism in a society.

It posits that economic circumstances are the objective condition, which, absent other subjective conditions, may not act as an impetus to violence as a means for political change. In other words, economic

factors are a necessary condition for violence, but alone are insufficient to cause it. Such a political economy approach avoids the pitfalls of simplistic political theory (Krueger and Maleckova 2002) and the narrow approach of economic accounts of violence, both of which are reductionist and disregard history.[2]

The article illustrates this approach with particular reference to the 2011 and 2013 mass uprisings. Egypt after the January 25 revolution is a particularly important case study because it offers a complex picture of various forms of violence. At the outset of 2011 revolution, revolutionaries deployed violence to counter the violence of the Mubarak regime's security forces, and this was followed by bursts of revolutionary violence under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) until June 2012 and for a year under Morsi. Terrorist groups, which declared their existence immediately after January 25, have also used violence, especially in Sinai, and stepped up its use against security forces after 30 June 2012. Since the January 25 revolution Copts, especially in Upper Egypt, and other minority religious communities such as the Shia have been victims of hate crimes. Deteriorating economic conditions, which signal the expansion of the informal economy, seen especially in the spread of sidewalk peddlers and other itinerant vendors, have also generated violence. Finally, violent crime has spiked, fuelled in part by a security vacuum that has considerably weakened legal deterrents. For all this, the analysis below focuses solely on the two major and comparable moments of violence, in 2011 and 2013.

2 The road to January 25, 2011

Two related economic factors underpinned Egypt's 2011 revolution: entrenched poverty, which significantly worsened in the three years immediately prior to the revolution, and the nature and power of the country's business elite. These economic contexts are crucial to understanding the revolution because they were its necessary conditions, but insufficient on their own.

2.1 Poverty

Socioeconomic conditions in Egypt worsened over the three decades of Mubarak's rule, and were especially difficult for its poorest citizens. The first decade of Mubarak's rule (1981–91) saw skyrocketing foreign debt and budget deficits, from which the 1991 Gulf War offered only a temporary reprieve, when Western and Arab donors and the Paris Club wrote off a significant chunk of Egypt's debt burden. This was followed by an IMF-led stabilisation programme, which brought the country's budget deficit to 3 per cent of GDP, brought inflation under control, and stabilised the price of the Egyptian pound (El-Beblawi 2008). This success, however, was followed by a relapse for nearly a decade. While high growth rates returned in 2005, the economic upswing was cut short just three years later by the global financial crisis. The revolution thus took place during an economic downturn, but also after years of propaganda that had portrayed Egypt as a strong emerging economy, the 'Tiger on the Nile'.

A 2011 report by the World Bank's Social and Economic Group on poverty and social welfare in Egypt in 2008/09 gave a comprehensive picture of the evolution of poverty prior to the revolution.[3] The report found that poverty declined in Egypt between February 2005 and February 2008 due to rapid economic growth, but that high inflation during this period had damaging effects on the poorest. Poverty and near poverty declined by some 20 per cent in this rapid-growth period, but extreme poverty (defined as the inability to meet basic food needs) increased by nearly 20 per cent due to rising inflation and food prices, which eroded the purchasing power of the Egyptian pound. But the sudden economic slowdown of 2008/09 amid rapid inflation erased the gains made in reducing poverty in the previous period.

By the end of 2008, the standard of living of the poor and near poor, which had been rising, again began to decline due to the economic recession, with the crisis creating additional tension due to its impact on labour demand. As a result, poverty increased markedly between 2008 and 2009. Despite a decrease in the proportion of absolute poverty between 2005 and 2008, extreme poverty and absolute poverty increased from 2004/05 to 2008/09. In 2008/09 some 1.5 million Egyptians suffered extreme food poverty, about double the number in 2004/05, and absolute poverty rose from 19.6 per cent to 22 per cent. In contrast, the rate of near poverty dropped from 21 per cent before 2004/05 to 19.2 per cent in 2008/09, as many of that cohort moved into the ranks of the poor. According to this analysis, in 2008/09 31 million Egyptians, or nearly 40 per cent of the population, were poor or near poor.

The economic fluctuations especially affected vulnerable populations. A detailed comparison of labour rates and poverty in 2004/05 and 2008/09 shows that many of the poor were marginalised in the period of growth because they had little involvement in the most rapidly growing sectors. Rising food prices and other economic shocks exacerbated the impact. Workers in the informal sector and those with low levels of education sustained long-term damage, as further cuts to already depressed incomes pushed many working families into poverty. The crisis harmed families with children the most, especially those supporting large families, and families that relied on remittances from abroad. Poverty increased in rural Upper Egypt to its highest levels since 1995/96. Indeed, extreme poverty was concentrated in the rural south. At the same time, sluggish job creation limited the opportunities available to migrant workers from densely populated rural areas.

The loss of a job during the crisis year was the principal reason for families falling into poverty. A comparison of family data in February 2008 and February 2009 found that decreased employment rates in the family were responsible for more than one-third of cases of poverty (people who were newly poor). Moreover, policies designed to help families bear the impact of the crisis were inadequate to prevent more poverty. During the crisis, Egypt greatly expanded its food subsidy system and increased bread subsidies. According to World Bank data,[4]

without this expansion the poverty rate would have been at least three points higher, but this support was not targeted at those in need and was extremely costly (at least 1 per cent of GDP). Cash social aid programmes were expanded as well and helped some of the poor to avoid extreme poverty, but the impact was too slight to have any clear effect on national rates.

The rate of chronic or near chronic poverty in Egypt is about half the total poverty rate. The food crisis of mid-2008 sent about 6 per cent of the population into the ranks of the poor for the first time, while others were driven into poverty due to the loss of their jobs. Data from February 2009 indicate that the newly poor were younger than the chronic poor and were more likely to be non-agricultural workers.

According to the World Bank study, the crisis exposed a major weakness in the social welfare system in Egypt. The study found that the food crisis, combined with the impact of the global economic crisis, temporarily stalled and indeed reversed progress made on anti-poverty efforts in 2005–08, indicating that the comprehensive subsidy system could not protect families from shocks. The crisis showed that Egypt did not have a social safety net that offered adequate protection to the poor or those at risk of poverty in the event of an external crisis.

The food subsidy regime played a crucial role in maintaining standards of living, but because of its comprehensiveness, it can only minimally defray the impact on the poor of rising food prices. The report found that were it not for food subsidies, the poverty rate in Egypt in 2008/09 would have been 31 per cent rather than 22 per cent, based on 2008/09 prices.

Inflation rates continued to rise, especially for major foodstuffs that constituted the bulk of expenditure for the poor and those with limited income. The Egyptian Central Bank in September 2010 noted that monthly inflation for August 2010 reached 2.85 per cent, bringing the annual rate (September 2009–August 2010) to nearly 11 per cent. More seriously, the biggest part of the monthly increase was attributable to food prices that were continuing to rise due to limited supply, especially of red meat, poultry, vegetables, fruits, rice, and vegetable oil.

According to the Central Bank statement, increases in the prices of vegetables and fruits for the second month in a row bumped up the monthly inflation rate. The price of poultry increased 30 per cent from January 2010 to the end of August, while the price of red meat rose nearly 25 per cent in the same period. The price of rice increased 43.5 per cent from May to the end of August, while fruits and vegetables went up 10 per cent in the month of August alone. These increases accounted for 79 per cent of the jump in general inflation that month.

During this period, for the first time in Egypt violence occurred over competition for food. A report issued by the Awlad al-Ard Center recorded that 14 people were killed, 190 injured and 137 arrested in fighting over bread in the first half of 2008 (ANHRI 2008). The same

scene was repeated, though on a narrower scale, in the summer of 2010. The press reported on 17 August (Shaath 2010) that a young man had been killed in a fight in a bread line at a bakery in Nagaa Hamadi, in Qena governorate. Daily newspaper *Alsharq Alawsat* reported:

> the sight of lines has again become common with the rarity of butane canisters, the price of which in some areas has risen to LE40, although the official price is LE2.70. The crisis has acquired tragic dimensions as two people were killed in the scrum to buy canisters and citizens suffer in in the exhausting search for them.

2.2 The business elite: monopoly, corruption, cronyism

The perceived corruption of political and business elites was a key driving force behind the 2011 revolution. Berlin-based watchdog Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index* showed that in the years preceding the revolution Egypt faced increasing corruption problems, falling from a rank of 70th out of 158 in 2005 to 115th out of 180 in 2008 (where first place is least corrupt). Moreover, according to a Pew survey (Chekir and Diwan 2012: 2), in 2010 corruption was the top concern of Egyptians with 46 per cent listing it as their main concern, ahead of lack of democracy and poor economic conditions.

The last government before the revolution was formed on 14 July 2004. It included most of the major businessmen close to Gamal Mubarak, while other business leaders held positions in the dominant National Democratic Party (NDP) or in one of the two houses of Parliament, some of them heading the most important committees in the parliament. Among them was Ahmed Ezz, a steel magnate and member of parliament, whose companies dominated Egypt's steel industry after 2000, controlling up to 65 per cent of the local market at times, and who has been accused of having improperly acquired the largest public steel corporation at an artificially low price, generating excess profits, and having lobbied to raise external tariffs to gain protection from foreign competition and for Parliament to pass watered down anti-monopoly legislation.

Ezz was a prominent member of the NDP, a member of its influential Policy Committee, and the chair of Hosni Mubarak's election campaign in 2005. In Parliament, he was the chair of the Budget Committee, which oversaw the work of the Competition Commission (Chekir and Diwan 2012: 2) A second example is Ahmed al-Maghrabi, majority owner of Palm Hills, the second-biggest real estate development company in the country, and simultaneously minister of housing. After the revolution he was accused of using his position to sell large tracts of land at heavily discounted prices to his own company and other individuals connected to the NDP (*ibid.*)

The significance of crony capitalism is that it excludes businesspeople who do not have access to policymakers. Thus many felt that even existing market-based, neoliberal policies were not operating as they should to encourage efficient products and sideline inefficient ones – the

fundamental promise of neoclassical theory and neoliberal policies. A great many businesspeople felt that at a certain point they would either turn over some of their profits to senior politicians or come up against an invisible ceiling that would stop them from further advancement, regardless of their capabilities.

It was therefore no wonder that some took part in the revolution or provided logistic support to demonstrators in Tahrir Square, giving them medicines or other goods. The prevalent sense was that the door of opportunity was closed even to members of the upper-middle and upper classes who had no connections with the political elite. Moreover, as el-Beblawi notes, 'the private sector failed to establish a credible image in the public opinion as a dynamic, creative body. Stories and/ or rumours of corruption and profiteering undermined its picture in the public eyes' (el-Beblawi 2008: 10).

2.3 Political dynamics

For all their importance, these economic factors do not by themselves explain the 2011 revolution, however; political factors, including mobilisation, were also crucial. After the formation of the government under prime minister Ahmed Nazif in July 2004, supported by Gamal, many people realised that the move was laying the groundwork for Gamal's assumption of power. This in turn prompted the formation of the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya), whose defining slogans were 'No to extension' (the extension of a new term of office for Hosni Mubarak) and 'No to inheritance' (Gamal's inheritance of power).

This was followed by the emergence of several movements and frequent demonstrations, strikes, and protests, whose size and geographic scope were unprecedented in Egypt's history. The protests affected a variety of sectors took, and included civil servants and workers from across the country. According to one study, between 2006 and 2009:

> more than 1.7 million workers took part in protests, a stark indication of the qualitative leap taken by the labor movement in Egypt. The vast majority of these strikes and actions were organised by labor leaders outside the official trade unions, which in many cases workers simply abandoned, seeing them as useless' (Al-Mahdi 2012).

With protests gaining momentum and the opposition becoming increasingly vocal, the security apparatus stepped up its activities, and many citizens were treated violently in police stations and detention facilities. Many of these incidents were filmed with mobile phone cameras and posted on social networking sites, causing much outrage, especially among young people. This in turn prompted young protesters to set up the 'We Are All Khaled Said' Facebook page – named after a young man killed by police in Alexandria – which was seen by hundreds of thousands of people in the run-up to the revolution.

In addition, the State Security Investigations (SSI) service tightened its grip. The SSI received much criticism for its interference in public

life and attempts to control politics to ensure the regime's survival. It vetted civil service employment at most significant state departments and agencies, linking employment to background security reports, and it similarly controlled most promotions, also based on security reports submitted to decision makers. Moreover, the SSI was in charge of highly sensitive political matters, including sectarian issues, and obstructed the activities of political parties, organisations and movements, either by direct harassment in the street or inciting schisms and dissent within their ranks. Finally, it kept a hand in the media and various cultural sectors, though its influence declined somewhat after 2005 (al-Aasar 2013).

The key political event that perhaps ignited the repertoire of accumulated rage, especially among the middle classes, was the People's Assembly (lower house) election on 28 November 2010, with runoffs on 5 December, which were flagrantly rigged in a way that surpassed the usual fraud by the ruling NDP. While some parties and movements boycotted the elections from the outset, others – primarily the Wafd and Tagammu parties, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood – fielded candidates. Following violence and blatant fraud in the first round, Wafd and the Brotherhood, which had won 88 seats in the 2005 parliament, or 20 per cent, boycotted the second round. In the final count, the NDP won nearly every seat in the assembly.

Members of the middle classes, most of whom did not vote in the elections, were nevertheless resentful, perhaps because the fraud was conducted in their name. These feelings were stoked further when the NDP and the party's secretary-general, Ezz, the architect of the fraud, took to the pages of daily newspaper *Al-Ahram* on 23 and 24 December, to write that the results were the natural outcome of the party's efforts and the unprecedented economic successes the NDP government had achieved over the previous five years. The chair of *Al-Ahram* pushed the same line, most prominently in an article on 10 December, titled 'Last Word on the Egyptian Elections', in which he commented on the prevailing response among Egyptians to the election results:

> I could not turn the page and move on to other subjects after encountering that outpouring of anger on the part of *Al-Ahram* readers in response to my commentaries on the recent parliamentary elections. Among the many letters I received, there was not a single positive reaction. Admittedly, they represent a relatively narrow segment of the Egyptian people, those members of the middle class who own a computer and act on their urge to comment on the articles they read, whether in Arabic or English, but they form a very proactive and vibrant segment (Said 2010).

Moreover, Mubarak further incensed the public when, during the inauguration of the new session of Parliament on 19 December, commented on the move by members of the political factions and former parliamentary candidates to create a shadow parliament saying, 'Let them have their fun.'

Finally, one cannot deny that the uprising in Tunisia, the popular overthrow of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali on 14 January 2011, was a contributing factor. It inspired the hope among young Egyptians in particular that the people could change their leaders and the state of the country.

All of these events motivated many to respond to the appeal to demonstrate on 25 January. Following violence against protesters, the crowds were bigger on 28 January, the 'Day of Rage', and there was a willingness to meet that violence with counter-violence. The events leading up to the uprising also prompted a very broad coalition of people to join the demonstrations that brought down the regime, a coalition that included businesspeople, the middle classes, unemployed young people, and poor workers and farmers. According to al-Mahdi:

> The people that staged the revolution were not only the middle- and upper-class youth in Tahrir Square who wanted another president. Young and old people in Cairo, Suez, Beni Soueif, and Arish also took part. These people did not want to die in lines for bread, water, or hospitals, be arbitrarily abused by police, or be forced to remove their children from schools so they could work to make ends meet (Al-Mahdi 2012: 218).

2.4 Revolutionary violence

Despite widespread claims that the revolution was peaceful – which perhaps initially helped broaden and diversify the base of supporters and delegitimised security forces' violent interference – the turn to violence in fact happened quite rapidly. Some young people used violence as a means to counter police violence, particularly on the Day of Rage. Groups of protesters also set fire to police stations, burning down 99 in total, and NDP offices (al-Aasar 2012).

Events evolved in an entirely unexpected direction. When the police apparatus collapsed on 28 January, security officials turned to their 'plan B', opening the prisons and releasing criminals. The same night, several shopping malls were looted and automated cash machines robbed. Some claim that police officers directly supervised these crimes, and while this is unverified, it is certain that the police showed no interest in stopping them. Other events followed that were tantamount to a campaign to terrify citizens and encourage them to remain at home. People were frightened by the prospect of roving gangs breaking into homes, and several false appeals for help were heard, particularly using women on television and radio news.

People's response, however, was unexpected: they quickly formed neighbourhood watch committees to guard their homes and shops, searching cars on the streets and even directing traffic. For the first time, they disregarded the curfew that had been in place since 28 January and remained in the streets, guarding their homes and shops throughout the night. Revolutionary committees were set up at the entrances to Tahrir Square to guard against security forces

and hired thugs. It thus became apparent that Egyptian citizens were prepared to fight violence with violence, which brought a rapid end to the organised wave of terror and panic.

The next step regime supporters (or the counter-revolution) took came in the 'Battle of the Camel', when prominent pro-regime businessmen, NDP leaders, and members of parliament paid thugs to use violence to remove the revolutionaries from the square. In an ugly attempt to justify the violent incursion, some said that the assailants were mostly informal day labourers who had lost their livelihoods in the week from 25 January to 1 February. In other words, they sought to portray events as civil strife that had resulted from the deteriorating economic conditions of citizens who rejected the uprising and wanted to reinstate security and the regime. This plan and its justification failed, as the revolutionaries stood their ground; at least 11 people were killed in the ensuing violence and more than 2,000 were injured.

The 18-day uprising ended with the fall of the Mubarak regime and SCAF's assumption of rule on 11 February. Although some hoped to achieve the revolution's objectives peacefully and build the country on more equitable foundations, events did not move in this direction. Indeed, the first outcome of the revolution was the dissolution of the broad-based coalition that made it:

> When the protestors occupied Tahrir Square, first on January 25 and later on January 28, their unified slogan was 'the people want to overthrow the regime.' This ingenious slogan reflected an *ad-hoc* agreement among groups that all wanted to change the system of governance, but not necessarily in systemic ways that would endanger their interests. Others wanted more systemic change to protect their class interests against exploitation. While many of the protestors were part of the broad hegemonic elite, most of them came from the exploited classes. There was thus a momentary union between the upper and middle class and the working classes – a union that did not last long. After Mubarak was ousted, the media and parts of the middle class began to condemn ongoing strikes by the working class, accusing the strikers of advancing 'selfish, parochial demands' (Al-Mahdi 2012: 230).

The first post-uprising protests centred on the demands of workers, especially in various parts of the civil service. These demands included making temporary appointments permanent, wage increases, and wage parity for all workers in the same government body with the same educational qualifications, a particularly strident demand given existing wage gaps unrelated to competence or merit.

Overall, the explosion and continuation of violence that confounded everyone's expectations can be attributed to two primary factors. First, some of those surprised by the continuation of the revolution scrambled to contain it within the narrowest bounds possible. From the outset,

they focused on saluting the noble, non-partisan, non-ideological youth who made the revolution, as if a lack of ideology were somehow praiseworthy and not, instead, the result of decades of moribund politics and gagging of the opposition. This stress on non-ideological youth signalled a fear of youth politicisation, especially after political awareness and participation increased to levels not seen in Egypt for some 60 years.

Second, as it became easier to establish political groups, dozens of parties were formed, along with perhaps hundreds of revolutionary and youth coalitions. Thus were the various groups that took part in the revolution fragmented, with the exception of the ever-cohesive Muslim Brotherhood. That the Salafis and their fledgling party later won a substantial bloc of votes in the parliamentary elections came as a surprise to all, but they too soon splintered, while as a whole the Islamist movement was divided among several parties. In addition, most Egyptians were not involved in any political organisation or direct political action, but instead responded to competing forces' appeals according to their own historical sensibility or because of changes the revolution had made to their lives. As Richani notes, 'Violence increases when the prevailing institutions fail to mediate among the various antagonistic forces unleashed by the socioeconomic and political change' (Richani 1997: 37). The outcome of the political instability and security was a spike in political and social violence unseen in Egypt in the past century.

3 Towards the 2013 uprising

The political instability and lack of security impeded attempts to revive the economy. A vicious circle thus developed whereby the worsening economy led to greater instability and lack of security and vice-versa. Economic growth had fallen to around 2 per cent since January 2011, less than the population growth rate, which led to a decline in the standard of living, with the drop being steeper and faster for the poor. Other problems, such as rising unemployment, exacerbated the impact of poor growth.

In addition, the state racked up a large, persistent budget deficit and a sizeable deficit in the balance of payments, leading to declining foreign currency reserves at the Central Bank and an erosion of the value of the Egyptian pound. Foreign investments also dried up, including indirect investment in stock portfolios and foreign direct investment (FDI), and revenues from tourism plummeted as foreign tourists stayed away. Moreover, there were supply crises, in fuel, for example, and a deterioration of basic services, including electricity blackouts and interruptions of public transport, such as the railways, both of which had repercussions for production and worker productivity (Al-Samhouri 2012).

Unemployment and poverty are perhaps the two most serious socioeconomic issues that require clear, effective solutions because they have the most direct impact on the ability of any regime or political or social coalition to stabilise the political situation and provide security.

3.1 Unemployment in Egypt: manifestations and causes

According to the quarterly CAPMAS labour force survey, by the end of March 2013 unemployment stood at 13.2 per cent, with 3.6 million people unemployed out of a labour force of 27.2 million. In March 2010, by contrast, unemployment was 9.1 per cent, with 2.4 million unemployed. The total number of unemployed people had increased by 50 per cent – 1.2 million – in just three years, leading to an increase in the unemployment rate from 9.1 per cent in March 2010 to 13.2 per cent in March 2013. According to the labour survey, the economy was only created 157,000 jobs during 2012/13, while an additional 200,000 people joined the unemployment rolls during the same period.[5]

Unemployment in Egypt has several distinct features, many of which existed prior to the revolution:

● It is concentrated among youth. Young people aged 15–29 make up 82 per cent of the unemployed. Among the 20–24 age cohort, unemployment stands at 42.3 per cent. This is linked with the second feature of unemployment.

● Unemployment largely affects the educated. Those with an intermediate, above intermediate, or university education constitute 70.7 per cent of the unemployed.

● Unemployment is much higher among women (25 per cent) than men (9.7 per cent).

The jump in unemployment is, as noted above, attributable to low growth rates and depressed economic activity as investment rates declined after the 2011 revolution. The 2010/11 Annual Report of the Central Bank (Central Bank 2012) noted a 1.8 per cent bump in GDP, compared to a 5.1 per cent increase in 2009/10 (*ibid.*) This deterioration in economic growth was due to the events and developments that accompanied the January 25 revolution, which led to a negative growth rate of 4.2 per cent in the third quarter (January–March 2011). As a result, according to CAPMAS data, unemployment increased to 11.8 per cent by the end of June 2011.

While the economy saw a slight improvement the next year (2011/12), as growth climbed to 2.1 per cent (Central Bank 2013), the rate was still far too low to absorb new entrants into the labour market, let alone make a dent in existing unemployment. In consequence, unemployment rose again, from 11.8 per cent in June 2011 to 12.6 per cent in June 2012. Economic growth rates remained low during 2012/13, at around 2.1 per cent, and unemployment continued to climb, reaching 13 per cent by the end of 2012, 13.2 per cent by March 2013, and an estimated 13.3 per cent by the end of the fiscal year in June 2013, which coincided with the end of the rule of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood.

3.2 Poverty in post-revolution Egypt

According to CAPMAS, the most salient features of poverty in Egypt between the uprisings were that:

- Some 25.2 per cent of the population lived below the national poverty line and 4.8 per cent lived in extreme poverty (2010/11). The poverty line was defined as monthly per capita expenditure of less than 256 Egyptian pounds, or a little less than US$1.50 a day using 2010/11 prices. This threshold was closer to capturing poverty than the extreme poverty line used by the World Bank, set at US$1.25 per day. In Egypt, extreme poverty was defined as monthly per capita expenditure of less than 172 Egyptian pounds, or less than US$1 a day, which was lower than the international line. The high poverty line was set at per capita monthly expenditure of 334 Egyptian pounds, or about US$1.80 a day, compared to a global high poverty line of less than US$2.25 per day. If the global measure is used, which includes the poor, extreme poor and near poor, then 42 per cent of the population is poor.

- Poverty was concentrated geographically, with higher rates in Upper Egypt. Using the national poverty line, poverty was highest in Assyout governorate, where 69 per cent of the population was poor. It was followed by Sohag (59 per cent), Aswan (54 per cent), Qena (51 per cent), Fayyoum (41 per cent), Luxor (39 per cent), Beni Soueif (38 per cent), and Minya (32 per cent).

- Unemployment was indisputably a prime cause of this increase in poverty. Egypt required annual investments of 28 per cent of GDP to absorb new entrants into the labour market and avoid adding to the pool of existing unemployment and poverty.

3.3 The informal sector: a source of livelihood tipping into violence

The most significant result of the rapid increase in unemployment after 2011 was that the unemployed turned to the informal sector, seen most visibly in the explosion of street peddlers and itinerant vendors. While Tahrir Square was, for the revolutionaries and the world, the site of the revolution, for a great many unemployed young people it represented a huge market and an opportunity to make a living. In the absence of police, a constant source of trouble for vendors, the square was a boon. According to Okasha, stability and an end to conflict with the police and army was not in the vendors' interest; the revolution gave them room to exercise pent-up liberties and make a living without fear of police harassment (Okasha 2012). In fact, the situation evolved in a different direction. Peddlers sprang up in the streets of Cairo and all over Egypt, adapting themselves and their role to the political situation.

Vendors first began to use violence against attempts to eject them from Tahrir and other squares and streets. The violence was initially deployed with the approval of revolutionaries faced with attempts by the police and army to evacuate public squares. Violence was also at times seen between vendors and thugs, who attempted to collect protection

money, and peddlers themselves came into violent conflict over turf in more than one place in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt.

The remarkable development was the speed with which the position of street vendors evolved and their flexible alliances with various parties depending on their interests. Initially, they joined the revolutionaries against the evacuation of the square. Later, when their conditions had stabilised somewhat and police left them to peddle their wares in peace, they allied with police against revolutionaries. Vendors on July 26 Street confronted a march of revolutionary Ultras and the Black Bloc on 3 May 2013. Following clashes between the two sides, the demonstrators retreated to Talaat Harb Square and from there to Tahrir.

Skirmishes had also occurred between vendors and protesters in support of the judiciary on 26 April. Vendors around the High Court threw stones at demonstrators, accusing them of interrupting their business. These are just two examples of the attitudes of vendors during Morsi's tenure. Peddlers were also present in Raba'a and Nahda Squares during the occupation by the Muslim Brotherhood and their Islamist allies in June–August 2014. After Morsi's removal, they began to confront Brotherhood protesters in Cairo and several governorates, especially Daqahliya and Sharqiya, usually in clashes that involved weapons on both sides.

The passage of time and persistent lack of security have led peddlers to recognise their weight and importance, and they have sought to establish a union to speak on their behalf with other political forces.

Indeed, the executive began to understand and appreciate the value of the violence used by street sellers – who tended to be apolitical – against their political enemies. 'Solving the problem of street sellers requires deliberation and humanity. Instead of confronting them, what is needed is understanding, dialogue, and communication,' *Al-Youm al-Sabia* reported Governor of Cairo Galal al-Said as saying on 28 September. The same story went on to say that he had tasked the deputy governor for the western zone with forming a field committee to find solutions to deal with the street vendors and come up with ways to absorb their numbers in mutually satisfactory ways.

The governor also noted that the peddlers had played a patriotic role in standing up to the riots by the Muslim Brotherhood during the events at the Fath Mosque in Ramsis (*Al-Youm al-Sabia* 2013b). Yet, even as street peddlers confronted political forces to defend their interests, they declared their readiness to confront any other force, including executive bodies, in defence of these same interests. *Al-Youm al-Sabia* on 7 October reported that street vendors in Ezbat Abu Hashish, near the Ghamra Bridge in Hadayeq al-Qubba, had warned the governor and executive agencies in the area not to confiscate their wares on Port Said Street, saying 'It's over our dead bodies if anyone comes near here to take our goods. We're ready to fight the entire republic.' They stressed that the goods were the sole source of their livelihoods (*Al-Youm al-Sabia* 2013a).

In short, the revolution and the security vacuum gave rise to many activities, either in response to opportunities or to mitigate deteriorating economic conditions, but in either case, they were predicated on violence or at least the willingness and ability to use it. These activities were primarily of two types: one criminal and illicit, including weapons- and drug-trafficking, theft and armed robbery; and the other licit, namely the expansion of the informal sector, which had resulted from declines in investment opportunities, economic growth, and the ability of the economy to create jobs in the formal sector. Political instability and a deteriorating economy continued to pose the greatest challenge to those in power, whether under the SCAF or during the tenure of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is not in the scope of this article to address issues such as youth, sectarian or Islamist violence and their trajectories under the SCAF and Morsi. Instead it examines how the political economy was a factor in citizens' response to the Tamarod movement[6] and the protests by millions all over Egypt seeking to remove Morsi and the Brotherhood from power.

3.4 Presidential elections and broken political promises

The first round of the presidential election on 23 and 24 May 2012 revealed a substantial shift in voting patterns compared to the parliamentary elections a year earlier. Morsi, the candidate for the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, came in first place with 5,446,460 votes (24.9 per cent), followed by Ahmed Shafiq with 5,338,285 votes (24.5 per cent), Hamdin Sabahi with 4,616,937 votes (21.1 per cent), and Abd al-Meneim Abu al-Futouh with 3,889,195 votes (17.8 per cent).

The Brotherhood realised the precarious nature of its position, given the very slim gap between Morsi and Ahmed Shafiq, his opponent in the run-off. In fact, the total votes received by liberal and leftist candidates, known more generally as the civil current (Hamdin Sabahi, Amr Moussa, Khaled Ali, Abu al-Ezz al-Hariri, Hisham al-Bastawisi, Ahmed Shafiq, and other marginal candidates) far outweighed those won by the Islamist current (Mohammed Selim al-Awa, Abd al-Meneim Abu al-Futouh, and Mohamed Morsi). The Brotherhood took action to secure sufficient votes for its candidate in the second round by making promises and electoral agreements with representatives of the civil camp, who rejected Shafiq as a representative of the ancien regime.

The most prominent of these agreements, the Fairmont agreement – named after the hotel where the agreement was reached – was concluded between Morsi and representatives of political factions. According to some who were involved, the agreement was finally reached after seven hours of negotiations. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the agreement was its affirmation of a national partnership and inclusive national project that would give a voice to the revolution's goals and all segments of Egyptian society, including women, Copts,

and young people. It was agreed that the presidential team and a national salvation government would include representatives of all national trends, with the prime minister being an independent national figure. The newly formed government soon made it apparent, however, that Morsi was not meeting the terms of the agreement as president.

Soon after, Morsi issued a constitutional declaration on 22 November, which set his decrees above judicial review and immunised the Shura Council (upper house), in which the Brotherhood held a majority, and Islamist-dominated People's Assembly (lower house). The declaration outraged everyone, including the president's advisory team, which was formed to mollify the national forces. The declaration made it clear that the advisory body was simply a facade and that the president's true advisers were Brotherhood members, and several non-Brotherhood advisers resigned. Morsi's declaration sparked off widespread protests, and counter-protests by his supporters, that left two people dead and hundreds injured.

A major turning point arrived when armed Brotherhood militias on 5 December attacked protesters who were staging a sit-in in front of the Ittihadiya Presidential Palace, setting off clashes in which seven people were shot dead and hundreds injured. The president's supporters also detained several people, questioning and torturing them. The events at Ittihadiya set in motion a massive response over the next few days in various Egyptian provinces. According to estimates, more than 1 million took part in the demonstrations on 7 December in protest.

Perhaps more important was the position of the majority who were not directly involved in political action, but simply watched events unfold. As time passed, a great number of Egyptians, particularly those unaffiliated to any political force, realised that the Brotherhood betrayal not only affected political forces that had made an agreement with the president, but themselves as well. Citizens faced numerous hardships in this period, from problems in obtaining butane canisters and diesel, to regular blackouts, piles of rubbish in the streets, and acute traffic jams, all of which the president had promised to resolve in his first 100 days in office (before he had made his constitutional declaration). Nor did the general citizenry feel that any of the economic promises in the president's platform had been fulfilled.

3.5 Ambitious promises, constrained reality[7]
Morsi's presidential platform had addressed all aspects of economic, social, and political life in Egypt, but more than three-quarters was devoted to issues of social justice and economic development. This reflected a society whose electorate complained of economic problems and low standards of living, and where more than 40 per cent of the population lived below or near the poverty line. The platform assumed prominence because the Muslim Brotherhood publicised it as the plan of action that would bring about a major transformation in people's lives. It created enormous expectations, as people awaited the rolling

out of the platform to meet their heightened aspirations. The most significant aspects of the platform are outlined below.

First, the platform clearly embraced a market economy, in which the private sector would play the largest role in realising economic and social development. In a Reuters interview in October 2011 Brotherhood-affiliated businessman Hassan Malek said that the economic policies pursued under Mubarak had been moving in the right direction, but were marred by rampant corruption and cronyism. Malek said that the future of investment in Egypt depended on the private sector and skilled labour. He also said that he supported the decisions former minister of trade and industry Rashid Mohammed Rashid had made, who worked to liberalise industry and attract more foreign direct investment, adding that the government must eliminate corruption and cronyism if it was to achieve development and growth (Awad 2011).

There was no problem with the presidential platform declaring its preference for a market economy; some may even have seen it as a good thing, insofar as it would entail no shake-up in the existing economic order that might provoke unrest or instability harmful to economic development and growth. The problem was that the platform offered no real explanation of how Morsi would rid the economy of corruption and cronyism, with the exception of a glancing reference to 'enforcing the law protecting competition and preventing monopolistic practices, to prevent a group of companies or monopolies from imposing high prices for goods and services.' The same reference was made elsewhere in the platform. Indeed, an existing law ostensibly protected competition and prevented monopolistic practices, but that did not prevent the rise of monopolies that had distorted the market, a fact well known to all. Morsi's platform gave no indication of whether he was satisfied with the law and only sought to enforce it, or whether he had reservations about the law itself.

The lack of a clear stance on this issue in the platform may have raised doubts about the depth of change the new regime was committed to. It appeared to be merely a matter of bringing in a new set of cronies and interests to replace the discredited clique. In turn, this did not constitute a genuine revolution to reshape the economic system and its administration, even within the framework of a market economy. Instead, change was reduced to a conflict of business elites, with a new set of elites moving into favoured positions.

For example, Hassan Malek was selected to act as a bridge between the business sector and the presidency. Malek formed the Egyptian Association for Business Development and also selected the businessmen who would accompany the president on his trips abroad. This provoked objections from some businesspeople, who believed that a new clique of cronies was simply replacing the old regime's cronies. In a workshop that the Carnegie Middle East Center and Partners in Development organised in Cairo on 8 November 2012, businessmen Mohammed Nour and Mohammed Qassem expressed their dissatisfaction with Malek's

association, which they said was clearly involved in partisan battles, given its alliance with the current president. Questioning the association's mission, they dismissed it as just another example of businessmen seeking to trade on their connections to the ruling party for privileges for their industries and to marginalise competitors (Said and Al-Qita' 2013).

Second, the platform was filled with fine-sounding but extremely ambitious goals. Under a heading titled 'Objectives of the Economic Program' the platform aimed at 'reducing current inflation levels of 11 per cent annually to less than half of the annual growth rate'. With annual growth set at 7 per cent on average, the goal was thus to cut inflation to 3.5 per cent annually (or 5.5 percentage points if the goal is to halve current inflation rates). The platform also strove to 'cut the budget deficit by 20 per cent annually' and 'balance the deficit in the balance of payments by the end of 2016/17', 'increase foreign currency reserves to a level that insulates the Egyptian economy against any economic fluctuations', 'reduce domestic and external debt by 15 per cent annually', 'cut unemployment to less than 7 per cent by early 2016', 'double the number of beneficiaries of social security pensions, from 1.5 million to 3 million by the end of the program', and 'reduce poverty rates'.

Other objectives given elsewhere in the platform included plans to 'increase health expenditure to 12 per cent of GDP by the end of the presidential term', to 'affirm the state's guarantees for full health insurance without a minimum burden'; to 'raise the minimum pension benefit, adopt an annual increase sufficient to cover price increases, and set a ceiling on pensions'; and to 'gradually double the education budget to bring it up to global rates and increase allocations for scientific research to reach 2.5 per cent of national income'.

The platform committed to 'redistributing income to achieve social justice and guaranteeing that every person receives enough to meet the minimum threshold of life's needs by setting a minimum and maximum wage and changing the current wage structure to make the basic wage the foundation of one's salary and base incentives and rewards on performance.' The platform did not specify the minimum and maximum wage levels to be adopted, however, and this in a platform filled with numbers and percentages and in the midst of a real social debate about such levels.

While no one would disagree with such ambitious goals in principle, the question was how they might be realised. What policies and mechanisms would be adopted to meet them, especially because the platform set clear quantitative targets to be met in a limited timeframe? In fact, the platform included precious little clarification in this regard, especially in terms of government policies, though when discussing the economic role of the state, the platform alluded to restructuring the state's role to make its two priorities fighting corruption and drafting economic policies (fiscal, monetary, and commercial).

The platform contained stark inconsistencies. In a section on fiscal policy, it supported 'an incremental program to reduce the budget deficit to less than 6 per cent by early 2016', which directly contradicted the target noted above of slashing the deficit by 20 per cent annually. The platform's proposed fiscal policy included 'a short- to medium-term plan to rationalise government spending, reconsider the tax code to ensure an equitable tax burden, and review the subsidy system to ensure it reaches the deserving.'

This section of the platform noted: 'The most important features of any fiscal policy is the attempt to create a climate that fosters a dynamic private sector and generates strong growth, jobs, progress, and development in Egypt.' No specific tax policy was explored or adopted, however, a remarkable omission in a platform so full of numbers and figures. The section only noted that:

> in terms of revenues, tax policy must focus on activating a tax structure consistent with international and regional standards that promotes business competition and cuts tax rates for small and medium businesses, which will bring in more tax revenue overall.

In the event, of course, these goals could not be realised. The platform's hopes were that preservation of the existing tax structure (and tax cuts for some sectors) combined with increased domestic and foreign investment would increase overall economic activity, and that this in turn would enable the elimination of the deficit within five years. The Brotherhood and FJP leaders issued statements suggesting that Egypt had received promises of FDI from multinational corporations amounting about US$200bn over five years, or US$40bn a year, which exceeded the required level of investment (US$33bn the first year).

While campaigning in Nasr City on 6 May 2012, Morsi said that the government had held negotiations with several companies to bring in this level of investment, and the acting presidential spokesman said on 27 June that some US$200bn in foreign investment would be pumped into the economy in the coming period. But this was wholly unrealistic. Foreign investment flows to Egypt between 2005 and 2010 (the best years for FDI in Egypt) were only US$49.6bn. In fact, total FDI in Egypt from 1970 to 2010 was no more than US$73.1bn. That is, in four decades, Egypt had received only 36 per cent of the investments it was ostensibly to receive in just five years.

During Morsi's year in office, the government made no progress towards any of the major objectives cited in the platform or the target growth rate of 7 per cent needed to reduce unemployment and improve living standards. FDI inflows into Egypt from July 2012 to March 2013 totalled US$6.9bn, falling slightly short of the US$7.1bn in FDI in the same period the previous year. Assuming that the target was $30bn for nine months, FDI was only 23 per cent of the target promised in the president's platform. According to data from the Ministry of Planning, growth reached only 2.1 per cent during Morsi's tenure, compared to the target of 7 per cent. As a result, unemployment was up by 0.8 per cent

in late June 2013, reaching 13.3 per cent, compared to 12.5 per cent in June 2012, instead of dropping 1.5 per cent as promised by the platform (Ministry of Planning 2013; Central Bank of Egypt 2014). It was not only these objective conditions, but also the disillusionment arising from unrealised promises, that underpinned Morsi's overthrow.

4 Conclusion

An examination of the political economy drivers that contributed to people reaching a tipping point prior to the 2011 and 2013 uprisings shows that the economic situation continued to decline throughout this period. But in both instances, it was when people felt that the political handling of the economic situation was so unbearable that they reached a tipping point. Both regimes pursued neoliberal policies. But in 2011, it was the increasing sense of indignation among the middle classes and poor over political corruption in the management of economic resources, with no prospect of improvement, that drove people eventually to protest. And in 2013, it was the scale of disappointment at the unmet aspirations for change, and the disconnect between the promises of betterment and the dire economic situation on the ground that convinced people of the need to search for an alternative.

Mubarak pursued a neoliberal policy whose benefits were reaped by a small business elite. Such a policy led to an increase in poverty and unemployment on an unprecedented scale, and the informal sector became the only avenue for job opportunities, which were incompatible with the aspirations of graduates of tertiary and intermediary level education. These factors worked in constellation with growing political corruption, in particular with respect to the inheritance of power from Mubarak to his son, and the practices of the ruling party that led to the disenfranchisement of the middle classes, while the poor fought – and were killed – lining up for bread and cooking gas, basic services deteriorated.

The Muslim Brotherhood did not oppose Mubarak's neoliberal policies, only the levels of corruption that characterised his last years in office. Consequently, the Brotherhood pursued the same economic policies, but replaced Mubarak's men with their own group of businessmen who would endorse and support their regime. Under the Brotherhood's rule, Morsi adopted policies that the opposition perceived as highly exclusionary, but also led to a sense of unmet aspirations among ordinary citizens who were expecting improved livelihoods under the 'Renaissance' (Al-Nahda) project. Instead, they continued to experience difficulty in accessing energy and did not see any improvement in their economic situation.

When leading Brotherhood member Khayrat el-Shatter announced that Al-Nahda was a set of ideas open for discussion and debate rather than guiding an action plan for implementation, people lost trust in the Brotherhood's ability and commitment to deliver on its promises. At that point people became responsive to the Tamarod movement's petition to withdraw trust from Morsi and support the idea of bringing forward the presidential election and removing him from power.

Notes

1 See for example www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/egyptsource/
five-years-on-security-and-economy and http://carnegie-mec.
org/2016/01/21/chasing-egypt-s-economic-tail/it1c

2 See, for example, Collier and Hoeffler (2004).

3 I rely exclusively on the executive summary of the World Bank report
issued in June 2011 (World Bank 2011).

4 *Ibid*.

5 Some claim that real unemployment far exceeds the official rate. In
that year, 357,000 joined the ranks of the unemployed, on top of the
700,000 new entrants who join the market every year. This suggests
a clear contradiction in the data on employment in the years leading
up to the revolution; see El-Erian (2012).

6 A youth-led movement that drew up a petition to call for an early
presidential election on account of the failure Morsi's government
to deliver on its promises, and which was one of the movements that
called on people to take part in a mass uprising against the Muslim
Brotherhood regime on the occasion of its first anniversary in office.

7 References to the content of Morsi's presidential platform come from
Sobhi (2012).

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Glossary

ACAB All Cops Are Bastards
AFAD Disaster and Emergency Management Authority of the Prime Minister's Office
AKP Justice and Development Party
CAPMAS Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
DAFI Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund
FDI foreign direct investment
FJP Freedom and Justice Party
FSA Free Syrian Army
GDP gross domestic product
HDP People's Democratic Party
IDPs internally displaced people
IIE International Institute for Education
INEE Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGOs international non-governmental organisations
IS Islamic State
KCK Group of Communities in Kurdistan
KDP Kurdistan Democratic Party
KLM Kurdish Liberation Movement
MB Muslim Brotherhood
NDP National Democratic Party
NFE non-formal education
NGO non-governmental organisation
NLG No Lost Generation
PKK Kurdistan Workers' Party
PUK Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PYD Democratic Union Party
RAA Rojava Autonomous Administration
SCAF Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SDF Syrian Democratic Forces
SSI State Security Investigations
TEV-DEM Movement for a Democratic Society
UK United Kingdom
UN United Nations
UNDAF United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNHCR UN High Commissioner for Refugees (The UN Refugee Agency)
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
US United States
WASH water, sanitation and hygiene
YPG Kurdish People's Protection Units
YPJ Women's Protection Units
YTF Youth Task Force

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IDS Bulletin

Transforming Development Knowledge

'If we examine the plurality of expressions of dissent from the protests by Syrians in refugee camps, to students protesting educational policies in their school yard, we find forms of political engagement which are fluid, dynamic and may have unexpected ripple effects.'